

Children and Young People's Trust Board

15 September 2011

Report on Partnership Working and Play Strategy

1.1 Purpose of Report

This report and accompanying presentation aims to update members of the CYPT Board on the background, current developments and planned Play Strategy for Extended Services and wider partnership working.

2.2 History and Background

- 2.2.1 The importance of Play is well documented - national and international surveys identify the need for all children and young people to be able to play freely and safely, regardless of ability, background, race, religion or living conditions. Play deprivation is cited by leading theorists (*Brown & Lomax; Hughes & Williams*)¹ as being damaging to children's development and a potential trigger for anti-social and criminal behaviour amongst young adults.
- 2.2.2 Extended Services has supported, championed and delivered Play across the Borough for many years, from the initial appointment of a Play Development Worker in 2005, until the present day with the development of a highly skilled workforce trained in Play as a profession, attaining nationally recognised qualifications to support their practical knowledge.
- 2.2.3 The rigorous Extended Services Review which took place in Spring 2011 resulted in Play and Community Transport being managed together centrally, which has further met the needs of children, young people and families by providing a joined up service and allowing much needed access to play provision via minibus transport.
- 2.2.4 Since 2005, Playworkers have provided unprecedented access to free play provision across the borough, including previously untried schemes in Solihull such as Open Access, Detached Play and supporting and developing the Borough's first and only Adventure Playground, open all year round and fully staffed by skilled workers. Staff have also facilitated residentials for vulnerable children and young people during school holidays, providing valuable experiences for these youngsters and respite for their families.
- 2.2.5 Close liaison and networking across Extended Services and schools/other organisations enables staff to assess and evaluate the value of the service provided, and to identify the beneficial outcomes in school and the wider community of the experiences the children and young people have enjoyed, including positive impact upon behaviour and wellbeing.

¹ Play Deprivation

'For some years, play deprivation has been predicted as a precursor to non-social and antisocial traits of behaviour in children affected by it (Hughes and Williams 1982)

In a study of 26 young murderers, Brown and Lomax (1969) concluded the following: 'what all these studies repeatedly revealed...was that...normal play behaviour was virtually absent throughout the lives of highly violent, antisocial men regardless of demography.

3.1 Current situation

- 3.1.1 Extended Services continues to provide Play across Solihull, including Youth Clubs, Outdoor Learning and Adventure Playground sessions to schools during the school day. Playworkers also provide weekend and out-of-hours activities and continue to offer Open Access and Detached Play during the school holidays, despite the current economic situation which has led to reduction in grant funding including the Big Lottery Fund.
- 3.1.2 Despite the challenges provided by the financial restrictions, Play continues to be given priority and a comprehensive staffing restructure has enabled the Extended Services Leads to continue to provide a quality service.

4.1 Partnership Working

- 4.1.1 Extended Services has a proven track record of strong partnership working, and since the 2011 Review has further strengthened these links and forged new ones.
- 4.1.2 The Leads for Play and Community Transport liaise closely with colleagues in the Local Authority including officers from People and Place Directorate. The recent development of a Steering Group to jointly manage the Meriden Adventure Playground is further evidence of the commitment to continue this close working relationship.
- 4.1.3 Other examples of effective partnership working include Health (CAMHS), Schools (including Specials, PRUs and Academies), SOLO, KITE, voluntary organisations and community groups.

5.1 Financial implications

As illustrated in the attached SWOT analysis (*Appendix 2*), the biggest threat to the continued development of Play is the uncertainty around future funding (schools Local Authority and other partners).

6.1 Supporting Paperwork

- 6.1.1 Play Strategy/Timeline Review – June 2011
- 6.1.2 SWOT Analysis – September 2011

Additional paperwork available on request:

- *Case Studies – Closing the Gap; John Muir Project; Lyndon Project*
- *Play Report & Theory of Play (both updated September 2011)*

7.1 Recommendations

- 7.1.1 That the Board consider recognising a Play Service in Solihull, particularly to meet the needs of 8 – 13 year olds, in the same way as the Youth Service.
- 7.1.2 That Extended Services continues to develop its Play Strategy in close partnership with the CYPTB and other services, such as Early Years and Youth Service, in order to provide a seamless Play experience from 0 – 19.