



# awesome!

## adventure play



Putting Islington Children, Young People,  
Families & Carers at the centre  
of everything we do.

# Annual Impact Report 2019/20

**a!** Fun comes first, the rest follows



# Introduction



I am very pleased to present to you our fourth Annual Impact Report covering the period from April 2019 to March 2020.

This report sets out the highlights of our achievements during this period of which everyone involved can be extremely proud.

In addition to recognising these achievements, I must take a moment to acknowledge the impact that COVID 19 has had on everyone's lives and the uncertainty that many companies face in these difficult times. I applaud the way our organisation has adapted rapidly by implementing new ways of working to ensure the children and families of the local community continue to be supported during the pandemic.

Although we are a relatively young organisation, it is very clear that solid foundations have already been built. The strong leadership of the Senior Executive Team continues to drive the organisation forward, striving for the highest quality in all we do. Our passion to provide a rich and challenging environment for children to play continues to be led through our dedicated Play work staff. The positive comments from children, young people, parents, teachers, health and social care partners are testament to their passion and commitment.

We will continue to creatively adapt to the changing circumstances, to ensure that through our quality offer we continue to have a positive impact on children living or going to school in Islington thus supporting a borough-wide vision to make Islington a great place to grow up in.

The importance of the role we play in helping to ensure that children have what they need in terms of play will never change. We are not able to achieve this without our supporters. The Board are immensely grateful to staff, volunteers, parents, children and others who have all contributed to the success of the organisation.

I hope this report gives you an insight into just a few of the many benefits children can gain from attending Islington's Adventure Playground.



Sian Thomas - Chair



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Residential has the capacity to be life changing experiences. They draw out the best in people, bringing together new friends, rising up and through challenges. The most difficult of which is usually experiencing staying into the night, gaining warmth around a fire or sleeping in a tent and experiencing the night sounds and darkness....!



Jason, aged 9

"It was so much fun. I have new friend that don't go to my school."

Mum

"He hasn't stopped talking about it. I have seen such a difference in his confidence. I am so glad he got to go, as I can never afford the trips away they do at school."



# BEYOND THE PLAYGROUND

Over the last year, there have been many exciting projects and too many to cover in this report. The following are just a few of the projects that we feel had a big impact for Awesome and on children who attend the adventure playgrounds.

Our greatest achievement last year was to win the tender to continue to manage 6 of Islington's adventure playgrounds for the next 15 years. Winning the tender gives us the biggest platform to ensure Islington is a great place to grow up for children and young people.

We also launch a new website at the beginning of last year with new branding that children helped design. The website hosted a newly developed online registration form on our journey to go paperless. We also moved to electronic signing in across all six adventure playgrounds. The feedback from parents/carers has been really positive and we have shared our cost-saving ways of introducing this with other Islington play providers.

Through each Playground applying for Islington Council's Community Energy Fund, we were able to work with children, young people and the wider community to spread the message about energy saving and how we can play our part for the environment. Three Corners playground work with the children and came up with a project that led to children developing an outdoor solar-powered sound system for their stage area.

We took part in the London Mayors Tree planing initiative, which gave children an opportunity to plant new trees on some of our playgrounds during national tree week.

We continued our run of annual awards with the children from Three Corner winning the London Play Award for most inclusive Adventure Playground.

With the support of the East London Business Alliance Toy Appeal, we were able to bring a very special Christmas to Islington children and young who access the adventure playgrounds.

Awesome became a City & Guild's training centre to deliver Playwork NVQ diploma training, creating new pathways for Islington residents and young people.

Over the summer we had 3 separate residentials that were a great success. It meant that we were able to provide opportunities to children that wouldn't normally go away or haven't experienced being away from home. The residentials consisted of 2 canal boat trips and one camping residential that enabled all six playgrounds to attend.



# LAST YEAR WE PROVIDED

Numbers and percentages taken from IYSS reports for the period of April 2019 to March 2020 and Internal children's annual survey.

## 1,488

Girls attended Awesome managed adventure playgrounds.

## 97%

Of children attending playgrounds we manage said they are able to take risks.

## 64,000

Visits from children in Islington across Awesomes six sites.

## 50 weeks

of the year all six adventure playgrounds operated with no unplanned closures.

## 325 meals

Felix project delivered 143 food crates to the six playgrounds. Supporting us to tackle holiday hunger.

## 6,672

Spaces for childcare as part of our Lunch Club offer of 1 hour. (Apr 18 - Mar 19)

## 2,188

The majority of children attending the adventure playgrounds we manage were aged 8 -12 years old.

## 2,078

Islington Children & Young People attended a playground managed by Awesome regularly.

## 486 hours

Saturday Family Play sessions, delivered across the 6 playgrounds managed by Awesome.

In 2019/20 the 12 Islington Adventure Playgrounds worked with more than **2,899** Children and young people aged 6-13 years old.





# MEASURING OUR IMPACT



## Learning

Play is recognised for the important contribution it makes to education and lifelong learning, a finding confirmed by many studies of early childhood. Especially in the writings of developmental psychologists such as Piaget and Vygotsky.

## Creativity

Creative activities help to develop basic maths skills such as geometry (size and shape), measuring, and sorting. There is also a great deal of problem solving and concentration which happens as children learn to take what is in their head, and put it onto paper.

## Health & Well-being

Giving children the freedom to play helps them to feel happier and calmer. Having outdoor space to play means that children naturally get vitamin D, which is proven to help improve moods and create a positive mental attitude.

## Social Skills

Playing with others means noticing social cues, listening, and taking another person's perspective – key aspects to developing empathy. Social play also requires children to share ideas and express feelings while negotiating and reaching compromises. Through offering child led activities,

## Independence

Children experience more independence, which allow them to gain confidence. This teaches children new skills, helps them to develop qualities such as patience, concentration, self-help, cooperation, self-discipline and self-trust.

## Exploration

Children making Slime has been so popular due to exploratory play. Children finding out about objects– their properties, what happens when they are manipulated, what they represent, and how they can be used creatively.



# Health & Well-being

Katie is 8 years old and has been a member and has an older brother who has been attending Waterside since he was 6 years old. They are a family of four and are well known by the staff at Waterside as well as the other parents and children of our local community that use our adventure playground.

Katie when she first attended would follow her brother around the playground and find it difficult to make her own friends, she would also always say "it's boring, i want to go home"

We would try and introduce her to new friends and find ways to get her involved in new games and activities but she remained very withdrawn.

One day her brother had to leave the playground early which left Katie on her own, after a few tears she came up to a playworker that was doing den building and asked if she could have a go.

Katie got a hammer and another child showed her what to do and how to use it safely, the playworker stepped abc and let the magic happen.

For 3 hours Katie was involved in Den building taking part in Den building, being creative and then suddenly telling other children where she wanted things to go and how she wanted it to be, she literally shone!

For the next 6 weeks Katie continued to attend waterside and pushed herself to try new things and she enjoyed it. She set herself challenges, trying to go on the zip wire and seeing how quick she could go down, seeing if she could build the biggest den.

She formed positive relationships with other children that attended and if her brother came over to check on her she would tell him "go away i'm busy i'll see you at home" Her brother would smile and walk away.

Katie's mum one day attended and we asked her to just watch how she was playing from outside and the mum was amazed. She said " she's been playing at home by





# Exploration



## Exploratory Play

### Supporting a young person in overcoming fears around dirt, mud & different textures

S.L. has attended Three Corners APG for two years, since she was 6 years old. On S.L.'s first weeks in the playground, she was very cautious in not getting her clothes, hands and feet dirty. She didn't want to join messy activities and everytime she would get dirty, she would become upset or start crying.

Even though she was interested in painting and other arts activities, her choices in terms of using materials and textures were very limited because of her fear of getting dirty.

We decided to start exposing her gradually to messy activities, explaining that it is nothing wrong in getting messy or getting her clothes dirty. By encouraging her to join exploratory play activities, all her senses would develop healthier and her self-esteem, self-confidence and critical senses would get better.

At her first clay modelling activity, she first got familiar with clay without using water. She then poured water on top and started making clay figurines and flower pots. At the end, she was very happy in manipulating clay and showing her clay making skills to other children.



The next activity she joined was slime, which she loved from the beginning. "I like the feeling of it and how I can make it into anything I desire. It is stretchy and soft." She then faced her fears by joining the "Box of fears" Challenge.

S.L. now regularly does messy play. She doesn't mind getting dirty and loves making mud pies and creating bug hotels.

