

# awesome!

## adventure play

### Annual Impact Report 2021/22

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





# Introduction



**Welcome to our annual report for 2021-22. This year's impact report helps us to reflect on what we have achieved in the last financial year, while continuing to learn from and improve our work, so that we can continue to have a positive impact on ever-more children, young people and the wider community in which we work. As an employee led organisation we are proud to be a learning organisation that continually strives to be the best that we can be.**



At Awesome we believe in putting children, young people, families and carers at the centre of everything we do. Ensuring children have a safe, parent-free, stimulating environment to develop great childhood memories, being with friends and having the freedom to play and express themselves.

Even though this has been a year of getting back to normality, we are proud of what we have achieved. This report highlights both the hurdles overcome and the future aspirations while celebrating the joyful moments we are able to support Islington's children and young people to create. We would like to thank all our partners, supporters and stakeholders, who helped us over the year to give children and young people an Awesome adventurous play space to enjoy as they grow up.

Guy Lawrence  
Managing Director



Fun just creates bubbles







Through play, children develop language skills, their emotions and creativity, social and intellectual skills

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# Our Partners

**Our mission is to give every child in Islington the opportunity to positively develop through play in a fun, safe and challenging environment, and to support, enhance and make a difference in the surrounding community. None of which would be possible without our partners.**

While parents, carers and children and young people were building confidence to live with Covid and start to get out of their homes, they were still facing the increased economic pressures the pandemic had enhanced for families, the borough and society as a whole. Working with partners we were able to offer much more than just a play service.

We worked in partnership with Islington to combat the pressures of no free school meals in school holiday periods. Working with Islington we ensured during the easter and summer holidays that every child attending the adventure playgrounds were able to have lunch and food. Our partners in the Felix project provide food that families could take home to support and enhance their weekly shop. While in the true spirit of adventure play, children and young people helped prepare and cook a meal every day of the holidays that was shared with every child attending the playground as a true universal offer.

We partner each year with ELBA, (East London Business Alliance) as part of their Christmas appeal and general corporate volunteer days. This year felt even more special being the first Christmas in the past few years with no major restrictions due to the pandemic. We worked with our partners to make this an extra special Christmas ensuring those children and families, who maybe struggling financially were able to benefit from the Christmas appeal. Through the donations ELBA received of toys, they were able to make sure Islington's most vulnerable children and young people got a gift for Christmas.

We celebrated a wide range of borough festivals again like the Cally Festival and Islington Playday. Supporting families to build confidence to get out of the home again and involved with the wider community to celebrate.



Lendlease UK  
NHS Property Services  
Volunteers





# Our Year in Numbers

Numbers and percentages taken from IYSS reports for the period of April 2021 to March 2022 and Internal children's annual survey.

## 1,149

Girls attended Awesome managed adventure playgrounds.

## 89%

Of children attending playgrounds feel their ideas are heard and listened to

## 1,713

Children & young people attended more than 5 times in the year



## 50 weeks

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



## 6,672

Spaces for childcare as part of our Lunch Club offer of 1 hour. (Apr 21- Mar 22)



## 1,989

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

## 2,368

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

## 486 hours

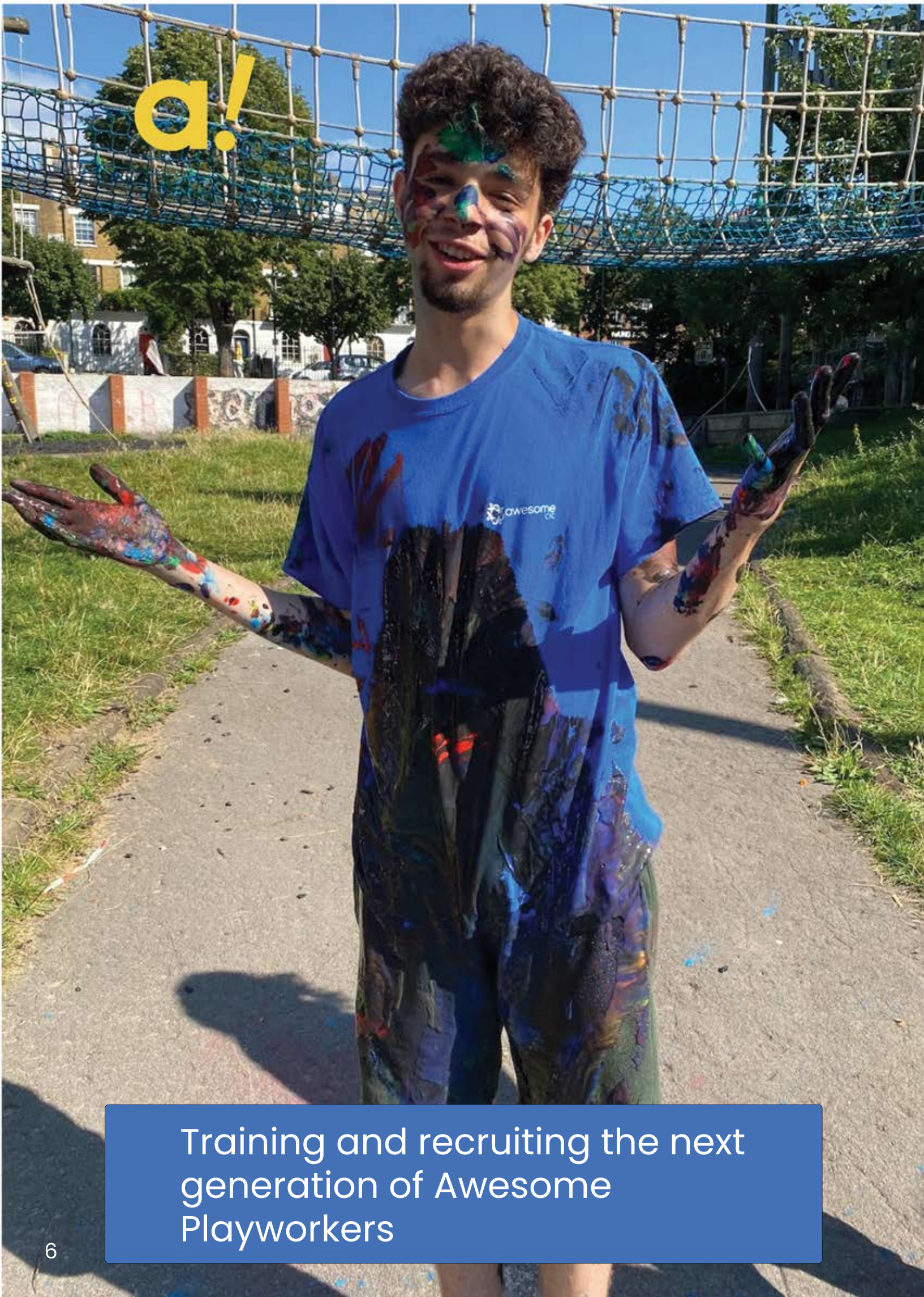
Saturday Family Play sessions, delivered across the 6 playgrounds managed by Awesome.



In 2021/22 the 12 Islington Adventure Playgrounds worked with more than **3,514** Children and young people aged 6-13 years old.



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Training and recruiting the next generation of Awesome Playworkers



# Adventure Playgrounds



"I don't know what we would do without the adventure. I would still be pulling my hair out, while we all get on each others nerves, stuck in our small flat. "

Parent of child at Cape

In the context of life after the pandemic, Adventure playgrounds have been a vital resource for children and families in Islington.

Over this last year, this has meant encouraging children and families to feel confident again in mixing outdoors.

Many children and families had settled into the routine of staying indoors. Children and young people spending long hours on electronic devices. Parents working from home and not needing to venture outside the home environment if needed.

The focus of the last year has been one of encouragement. Reminding parents and carers of the benefits of play and enjoying the outdoors.

The adventure playgrounds continued to promote opportunities for children to play freely, in a safe environment, in their own way, in a parent-free space.

The awesome staff on the adventure playgrounds continued to address the barriers they saw for children and families, such as food poverty. Working with partners to ensure children always had access to food on the playgrounds and a meal in holiday times.

The Adventure Playgrounds are free to attend, children and young people are free to come and go (within reason), play freely and connect with other local children and young people. Ensuring the play service is free and removes financial barriers and the stigma of poverty.

The adventure playground approach, supports children and young people's, independence and choice, and their ability to affect positive change in their own lives and the lives of those around them.



# Measuring our impact



We know as playworkers how a loose part like an empty box can be used by children in their play. Through providing the play space and resource for children to take the lead on their own play, we support imagination, cooperation and fantasy play. This allows children to explore and make sense of the world around them.

Encouraging children to express themselves through creativity is another way we impact children's lives. Through children exploring their art skills they use face painting to become a favourite animal or rainbow that fills them with joy.

Using Play Cues, playwork also supports children's play in the same way a box is used. Being part of the play environment. Letting children direct the play and looking for opportunities to extend the fun



Making fruit smoothies creates and impact on children, from taking part in preparing the fruit to experiencing the taste of different fruit combinations. The learning while having fun doesn't stop. Supporting the children to learn indirectly about fruit and healthy eating.

All year round the playground celebrates a wide range of festivals and holidays. Halloween is always enjoyed by children at the playgrounds. Creating costumes and playing scary games, is all enhanced through the dark nights of the winter months. This opportunity to create a costumes not bought from the shop supports the inclusive nature of the adventure playground.

Measuring the impact of children creating a sculpture that represents a super vehicle out of old tires are difficult to put in words. While also difficult to find environments like the adventure playgrounds and playworkers who would support this creativity.



# on the Adventure Playgrounds



Gathering around a fire pit to have a group discussion, all led by children. Sometimes just giving children the space to decide their own rules or to navigate differences of opinions has the biggest impact.

Adventure playgrounds by their nature offer a wide range of opportunities to explore and take risk. Climbing a tree or scaling the side of a structure looking for the next hand and foot hole. The confidence and independence this builds within children carries forward through life. The social friendships that are made through building a fire and roasting marshmallows. The stories of how the day was at school or what a child is looking forward to, all have an impact.



Exploration in a safe environment is so important for children's development and something that is encouraged on an adventure playground. Children getting messy and playing with mud. The impact of sharing this experience with a group of friends, invaluable.

Learning to manage and evaluate risk, while under the supervision of experienced Playworkers, who knows when to intervene and when to just observe. Children jumping off a platform on to a crash mat, evaluating risk and having fun testing their abilities and boundaries in a safe environment.

Play is crucial to children's development and that is all that we are about at Awesome, creating play opportunities for children to develop and grow.



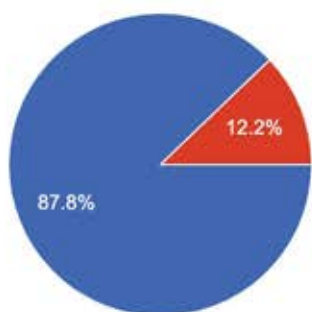


# What the children & parents said...



Through our annual consultation we received feedback from children, young people and parents and carers about our play offer across the six adventure playgrounds.

We asked parents and carers if the current opening days of the week meet their needs.

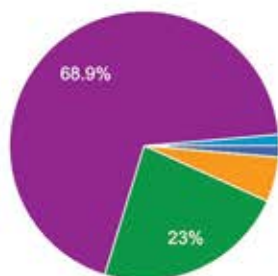


● yes  
● No

**75%** of children attending the six adventure playgrounds said they can use other materials in the playground to create new spaces to play (wood, tyres, mud, water,).

**85%** of children attending the six adventure playgrounds said they can play anything they want at the Adventure Playground.

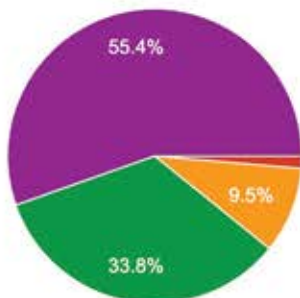
We asked parents and carers if they found the staff approachable if they need to voice any concerns they may have.



● Strongly Disagree  
● Disagree  
● Neutral  
● Agree  
● Strongly Agree  
● Don't know

**92%** of children attending the six adventure playgrounds said they like all the structures in the outside Adventure Playground to play on.

We asked parents and carers if they felt their child was safe at the Adventure Playground.



● Strongly disagree  
● Disagree  
● Neutral  
● Agree  
● Strongly agree





Adventure play, where imagination  
inspires science and creativity.  
From making perfume to potions





# Future Plans





Cornwallis Adventure Playground is one of the six playgrounds we manage on behalf of Islington Council. The Adventure Playground has been supporting generations of Islington children and young people for more than 45 years. The Log Cabin had come to the end of its life span.

Over the last 18 months, we've been working with Islington Council and the children and young people, who attend Cornwallis Adventure Playground on the design of a new adventure play building at Cornwallis Adventure Playground.

The ideas of local children and young people have fed into the design of the new building.

The new building will use sustainable construction methods and materials and will replace a run-down timber log cabin that has fallen into disrepair. It will support and encourage free play for children in the area by creating a light, bright and healthy indoor play environment.

The new building will incorporate a number of green technologies including air source heat pumps and solar PV panels. A biodiverse roof will minimise surface water discharge and improve biodiversity on site.

Alterations to the existing access from Cornwallis Road are proposed in order to create an improved level of ramped access for wheelchair users, and to create a better more active street frontage.

We will also be removing a tree in the front of the building is in poor condition with a limited remaining useful lifespan and replacing it with six new trees planted across the Adventure Playground site.

The aim was to start work on the new building from the end of May 2022.

While the adventure playground is closed, due to the construction of a new building, the play the team will continue to work in the community.

The Awesome Cornwallis team will be working remotely across the Tollington Ward delivering play opportunities from local parks and green areas on local estates during the closure phase of the adventure playground.





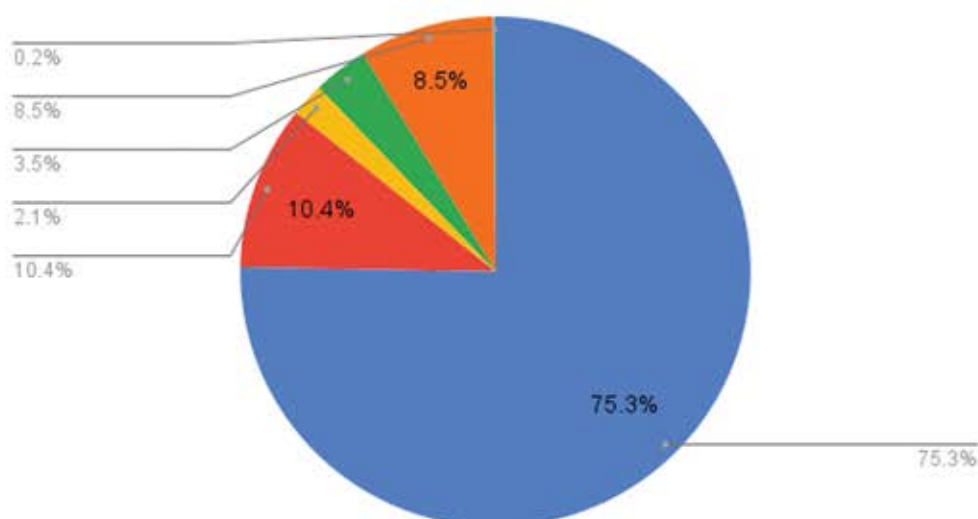
"Once upon a time there was a newt called Mr. Newton Newt; he lived in a little damp house amongst the buttercups at the edge of King Henry's pond."



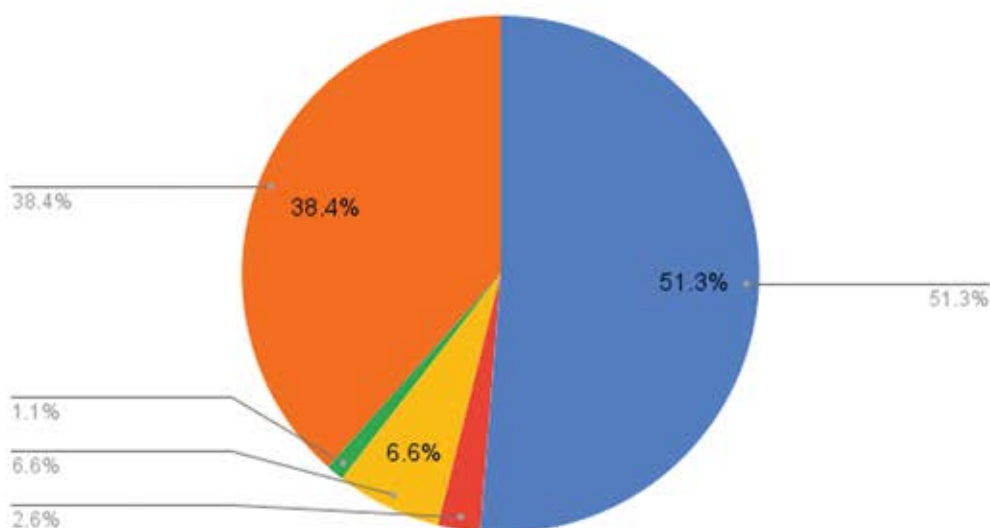


# 2021 – 22 Finances

<b>Income</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>%</b>
Islington Council - adventure playground contract	589,449	75.29%
Facilities Hires	81,592	10.42%
Holiday Lunch Club	16,550	2.11%
Grants & Donations	27,234	3.48%
Other Income	66,926	8.55%
Interest Receivable	1,175	0.15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>782,926</b>	



<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>%</b>
Staff & Training Costs	400,604	51.25%
Building Repairs & Maintenance	20,694	2.65%
Structure Building & Maintenance	51,589	6.60%
Service Delivery & Overheads	8,774	1.12%
Administrative expenses	299,941	38.38%
<b>Total</b>	<b>781,602</b>	







Special thanks to Islington's children,  
families, partners and volunteers,  
who support the work we do.



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