

Free play

Free minds

I ♥ PLAY
ISLINGTON PLAY ASSOCIATION



Annual Report 2011

Registered Charity 1086165

Welcome to the Annual Report for 2010-2011

This has been a very busy year for us at Islington Play Association (IPA), with many distinct projects aimed at improving the life and play opportunities of the children of Islington. We have developed and honed our approach to challenging play with an exciting level of risk, leading to the increase of self-esteem and self-confidence in children living in an extreme urban environment.

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It has been a year of much external recognition for the value of our work. As well as being the Mayor's Charity 2010-2011, chosen due to the massive impact that IPA has had on the lives of children in the borough over the last four decades, our Paradise Park Children's Centre has been awarded an OFSTED rating of GOOD for our excellent work for children. Also, Waterside Adventure Playground, designed and built by IPA, is open and its innovation and creativity has been celebrated; being voted runner up in the Children and Young People Now's annual awards.

We have had a full team of enthusiastic playworkers and the office has been buzzing with ideas. We have been working closely with many partners to improve play opportunities in Islington, including:

- Creating a new water harvesting play feature in partnership with Toffee Park Adventure Playground, London Play and Middlesex University
- Launching our new "World Games" book, containing childhood games from around the globe, in partnership with local community groups and schools
- Proudly welcoming a new playgroup to our Priory Heights Centre
- Developing a plan to support Crumbles Castle Adventure Playground, ensuring that children in the deprived Caledonian Ward get good quality services from ages 6 to 14

- Starting our new Nature Project, funded by the Big Lottery Fund through Natural England, with many sites in Islington applying to join us in creating nature reserves across the borough

Our fundraising efforts for children's play have continued throughout the year, with the Mayor of Islington rounding off the year of her support for IPA by hosting a fundraising event at the Town Hall. Mayor Mouna Hamitouche raised over £21,000 for IPA in the year, with all proceeds going towards the improvement of play in Islington.



Anita Grant
Director



Finding Nature Through Play



Paradise Park Children's Centre



Waterside Adventure Playground

Our mission

IPA aims to preserve, create, improve and promote places and opportunities for the children of Islington to play.

We recognise that play is a child's right and is fundamental to a happy life. Play is an essential part of the health, education, development and happiness of children. We are committed to improving the quality of play experiences whenever they occur and wherever children are.

Poverty or need can be an obstacle to a happy childhood and so we especially seek to help children and their families who are socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion. This includes children with special needs and disabilities, who often face barriers to using services.

For 40 years IPA has operated as a second tier umbrella organisation; supporting, advising and working with other play providers, as well as being a direct provider of services for children. This enables us to experience the challenges facing play providers and better learn how to respond. Our mission can be described through four overarching aims:

- Excellence in Adventure Play
- Delivering Opportunity
- Wider Play
- Strategy and Campaigning



The current status of play

Children's freedom to play is increasingly limited within society by a variety of factors:

- Increased anxiety about children's safety means they lead far more restricted lives than ever before, eg the distance that unaccompanied children travel from home has fallen dramatically over the last 20 years
- Increased fear of litigation (and misconceptions about Health and Safety) by service providers means that those providing play or childcare facilities are increasingly limiting the types of play opportunities they make available to children
- An increased tendency to view freely roaming children "playing-out" as unacceptable, with an increase in the pressure on parents to ensure that their children are formally supervised at all times. This can obviously have a seriously detrimental effect on children's opportunities for non-directed play
- Recent child-on-child violence in the borough has had an even more restrictive impact on young people's ability to play freely, with parents understandably concerned about safety and with the police and other authorities actively instructing families to keep children at home

As an essential part of the health, education, development and happiness of children, we believe that free at point of use and open access play services are to be strived for. We recognise that children spend much of their life in school and are committed to working with colleagues in education to maximise free play opportunities in and during school time. We are chiefly concerned with children who need adult intervention to create opportunities for play and for those children where play-deprivation will compound other forms of risk, deprivation or need.



Excellence in adventure play

We design and build playgrounds with children, provide information, support, training and model good practice on adventure playgrounds. This work enables settings to provide an excellent experience for the children of Islington that transforms their lives and helps to ameliorate the effects of poverty.

Children gain most through having play space that they can change themselves. This provides the most ideal opportunities for children living in high density urban environments to stretch their bodies and minds and to interact with the world around them in a creative, challenging and free space. We work tirelessly to develop and improve both the practice and environment on these spaces.

The new Waterside Adventure Playground, designed and built by IPA, was launched this year. The design and build were delivered as a play activity, as much as was possible, to enable children's involvement throughout the process.

We have developed and been involved in a plan to support the continued delivery of Crumbles Castle Adventure Playground, which was under threat due to lack of funding. This year saw a big refurbishment of the outside space in partnership with Groundworks and our Nature Project.

Adventure playgrounds are mainly used by children from poorer families. A 2011 analysis by Islington Council of children using these playgrounds found that:

77%

live in social housing

58%

live on low incomes

58%

are claiming free school meals

51%

come from a BME background



Delivering opportunity

At Paradise Park Children's Centre we directly deliver a child-centred service in a play-focused setting, reaching the most excluded families in the community and providing essential services for them.

We deliver this direct service to families with young children in the Holloway area of Islington. We offer a rainbow of services to support children's start in life from antenatal classes and midwives to a nursery and family support, helping parents to bond with their children in playful ways.

The centre focuses on the most vulnerable and excluded in the community but all families are welcome. Our vision for the centre is to promote play and maximise its transformative effects for entire families living in difficult and stressful conditions.



Wider play

We enable and support partners to offer creative, inclusive, challenging and fun play opportunities for all children in Islington – in schools, open parks, etc.

We develop innovative ways to provide free play experiences where children are. We research, evaluate, model and disseminate play methods, values and opportunities so that they can be shared and utilised by others.

We continually fundraise for new projects that deliver cutting edge activities and spaces for children. Our peripatetic project workers travel the borough modeling and improving practice, and directly impacting on the lives of children and families.

Finding nature through play



“This is the best day of my life because I’m really doing things with real tools.”

Lisa, aged 7

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that children see a number of benefits arising from them spending time in nature. However Islington has the second least public green space of all the London boroughs, and it is a further sad finding that children from poorer families are likely to have less contact with nature. We are working to counteract this trend with our Nature Project.

The opportunity for children to adapt their own playgrounds gives them the confidence to make changes in all areas of their lives and a sense of what is possible.

As well as being fun and invigorating, these activities also help children to build a good relationship with nature. Many young people and children in Islington live with

the stresses of gangs, violence and poverty. At IPA we believe that a good relationship with nature, started in childhood, can be restorative and help young people de-stress.

“ Everyone’s always following me if I’m angry and asks me about things. I can’t say then. I feel like hitting someone. I want to be on my own until later. If I’m in the bit where the trees are, at the back and no one comes, that’s all I want. I’ll talk to you after. ”

Leon, aged 9

The “Finding Nature Through Play” project is funded by Natural England through Access to Nature, as part of the Big Lottery Fund’s Changing Spaces programme.



“I couldn’t hammer at the start because I didn’t learn when I was little, but now I’m magnificent!”

John, aged 6, from Waterside Adventure Playground

Treehouse Project

“ The Treehouse Project created a hub of excitement at the playground. Suddenly there were architects, designers, carpenters, instructors, health and safety inspectors, teachers, sculptors, interior designers, critics, defenders, boshers and bangers, debates, proudness, ideas, achievements and enthusiasm. Which in turn brought cooperation, negotiation, working together, creating, risk assessing, task-orientated work, freedom to use tools, physical release of tensions and the status of the power of the drill. After the construction came territorial battles, wars, negotiations around ownership, appointments, secret passwords, hierarchical battles, lots of lovely makeovers depending on who was in residence that day, special occupations, tea parties – including frogs – observation posts and shouting funny rude things to passersby and then disappearing behind the walls. All of this in one project and the list still gets longer! ”

Andrea Quintmere, Toffee Park Adventure Playground.

Our Treehouse Project, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, is driven by the children’s desires, be it building a treehouse, or simply hammering or sawing for the fun of it. The important thing is that everything is made by the children, not adults. Sometimes the children have made toy weapons and the dens have become forts as the project has avoided unnecessary direction or interference in children’s play. The importance of our work is to facilitate a broad range of play while giving the children an opportunity to use real tools and sometimes undertake challenging tasks. In doing so, we confront the fears of parents and playworkers around activities connected with risk.

Strategy and campaigning

We work to ensure play is on everyone's agenda; engaging actively with communities, service users and partners to raise play's profile at a local and national level.

In our campaigning and advocacy work for play, we explain at a strategic level, including sitting on the Children's Trust Board, the barriers to accessing play that children face. Play is recognised as an inherent human right and it is our job to make sure that adults making decisions that affect children are aware of the barriers to play and that together, we come up with ways to mitigate them.

We are also committed to protecting play spaces in perpetuity; ensuring there is no overall loss of space for children to play in Islington. Islington has only 6% of its space available for play in comparison to its neighbours Camden, with 18%, and Hackney, with 42%. We firmly believe that this poverty of living condition can be ameliorated to some extent by the provision of real play space where children can test their abilities and their impact on the world around them.



Protecting children's play spaces

We had exploratory meetings in September and December 2010 with John Foster, the then Chief Executive of Islington Council; Catherine West, Leader of the Council; Richard Watts, Executive Member for Children and Young People; Lord Chris Smith and senior Children's Services' Officers to discuss IPA's proposal to establish a "Land Trust" to take over ownership of adventure playgrounds to protect sites in perpetuity from sale and commercial development.

Public Meeting to Save Play – **October 2010**

Land Trust "In Principle" Agreement – **December 2010**

Exhibition of Children's Postcards Protesting Adventure Playground Closures – **December 2010**

Play March – **February 2011**

The meetings resulted in an "in principle" agreement for the asset transfer of the adventure playground sites to a Land Trust for children.

Alongside these meetings, children, families, local communities and those in the play field banded together to campaign for play not to be a victim on the Council's funding cuts. There was a public meeting to save play at Timbuktu Adventure Playground in October, an exhibition of over 200 postcards written by children, protesting against cuts to the adventure playgrounds in December, and a march for play in February, with children and playworkers walking from Highbury Fields to storm the Town Hall.

We submitted a bid to the City Bridge Trust in 2010-2011 for funding to support the development of a Land Trust and heard about its success right at the end of the financial year. This work will develop next year alongside an adventure play review board, which Islington Council is setting up to identify more sustainable ways to deliver adventure play for the borough's children. The Land Trust proposal will form part of the review.

"With the Play Association, we're working to produce the...Land Trust which is a complicated way of putting the ownership of the land of all the playgrounds into trust so that no one can ever sell off any of the playgrounds. We will never sell the playgrounds, so that's a commitment that we have made today"

Richard Watts, Executive Member for Children and Young People, speaking to the marchers of Play March, February 2011.

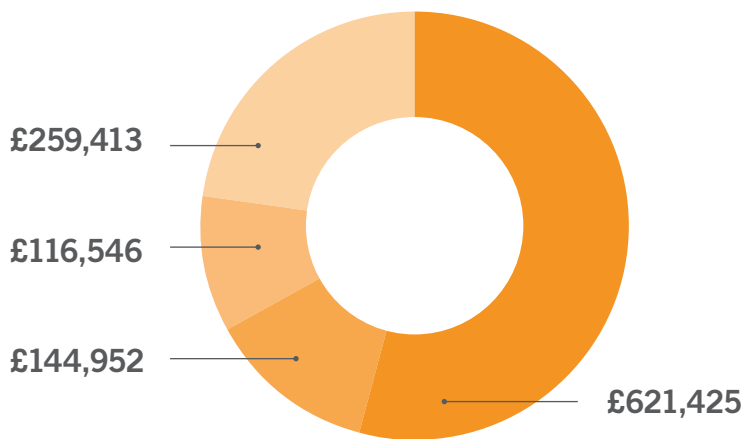
Looking to the future

Financial pressures are increasing with the local authority needing to find massive savings in the budget year on year and with other funders reducing their remit and tightening their requirements. This will call for us and the smaller organisations that we support to become massively more efficient; doing more with less and also becoming increasingly creative in fundraising strategies.

Our plans for 2011-2012 and onwards:

- Increase lobbying, using the expertise of lawyers, HR experts and the voice of the community, to protect the council's spend on play and to safeguard the existing sites by keeping them as locations for children's play in perpetuity. We will strive to push through the council's "in principle" agreement to safeguarding play spaces in the borough in a Land Trust
- Modernise in light of the current economic climate and work to develop a play offer that delivers the best outcomes for children but is more economically viable
- Develop a borough-wide support committee to discuss, explore and promote policy and practice for all open, free play areas in the borough. This play forum would discuss, explore and transform policy and practice to best suit these challenging times, transform existing practice, plan for future delivery based on the assessment of local needs, oversee the lobbying for the transfer of play space to a secure Trust and also encourage a "playable" approach to everywhere children go
- Prioritise fundraising to enable the strengthening and embedding of our strategy of modeling good and innovative play practice with existing services and others working with children
- Support, advise and design new and existing play areas across the borough and build on innovative consultation and design processes being developed
- Sustain and support existing play services by helping them to gain "Quality in Play", a recognised quality mark
- Build on our track record of bringing significant additional resources into Islington, continuing to provide fundraising and business support for adventure playgrounds, including exploring federations, mergers, partnerships and consortia approaches to maximising sustainability of the voluntary and community sector working with children in Islington
- Develop a clear volunteer pathway for those interested in working in play. We offer opportunities to many of the young people, who used the borough's adventure playgrounds as children, to gain work experience through volunteering. Many of these young people come from families where there is generational worklessness and, as such, the young people struggle to join society at the end of their school days. We place a focus on "growing our own" and currently have a number of playworkers and a finance officer who started as volunteers. We have a team of committed professionals who volunteer both by working "face to face" with children and young people and also by becoming trustees for local play organisations

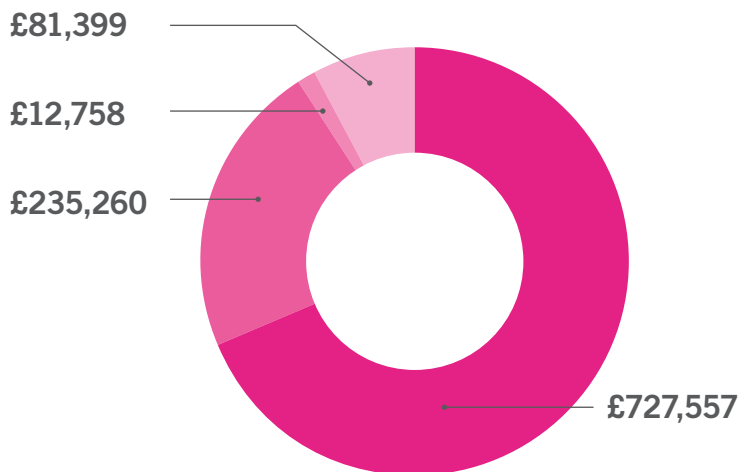
Financial information



Income

£1,142,336

- Islington Council – Paradise Park Children's Centre
- Core Play and project funding
- Big Lottery, charitable trust and donations
- Income from charitable activities, consultancy and bank interest



Expenditure

£1,056,974

- Staff, recruitment and training
- Project costs
- Admin, fees and audit
- All premises costs and overheads

Full accounts are available on request.

Auditor: Chapmans Associates Limited,
3 Coombe Road, London NW10 0EB

Bankers: Barclays Bank,
The Co-operative Bank and
the COIF Charities Deposit Fund

The IPA is a registered charity:
1086165

and a not for profit limited company:
3989283

IPA is grateful to the following funders
for their support in 2010-2011:

- Big Lottery Fund – Playful Ideas
- Big Lottery Fund – Natural England
- Esmée Fairbairn
- Islington Council
- Islington Strategic Partnership
- London Play

Head Office staff

Director

Anita Grant

Deputy Director

Suzanne Murray

Treehouse Project Worker

Wendy Jeeves

Treehouse Assistant

Roxanne Banjo –
Started November 2010

Head of Adventure Playground Development

Paul Durr – Started August 2010

Finding Nature Through Play Worker

Lucy Benson – Started October 2010

Finance & Admin Manager

Biniam Ghebreyesus

Finance Worker

Bruna Ibraj

Development Worker

Max Mueller – Left September 2010

Access Developer

Morgan Leichter-Saxby –
Left May 2010

Inclusive Playworker

Ilias Speis – Left July 2010

Paradise Park Children's Centre lead staff

Lead for Early Years and Families

Simon Fry – Started September 2010

Leader of Learning

Helen Richards

Senior Family Support Worker

Kemi Lawal

Family Support Worker

Joy Ayeni

Family Support Worker

Onyi Anyanwu

Administrator

Nick Carley

Centre Reception and Outreach

Sarah Ghartey

Nursery and Crèche team

Shakherah Akhtar, Onyi Anyanwu, Pauline Atkinson, Fatima Bahmani, Tracey Everitt, Marie Forde, Tracey Hollis, Stacey Jeakins, Julita John, Patricia Okwan, Jermaine Payne, Emma Smith, Danielle Dyer (left August 2010), Shirley Smedley (left July 2010), Hatice Arik, Chelsea Freed, Margaret Gaskin, Keesha Green, Letisha Hunte, Heruth Iyasue, Katie Kyriacou (June-December 2010), Reneika Pommell (July-October 2010), Nazifa Rahman (started June 2010), Fiona Roberts (Started January 2011), Gennet Teclé

Café team

Filippo Di Giorgio (May 2010-March 2011), Lisa Wales, Turkan Arik, Aysel Gulec, Hayley Jeakins, Petia Somnez (left July 2010), Pasquale Tortora (started July 2010), Darren Hazelwood (started November 2010)

Volunteers

We would like to thank the many volunteers that make our work possible including our fantastic Trustees.

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Management Committee**Chair**

Jonah Grunsell

Treasurer

Lucia Garratt

Secretary

Christopher Hignett

Trustee

Jennifer Chan

Trustee

Kelle Dittmar

Trustee

Linda Dyer – Resigned 19/01/11

Trustee

Dawn Jennings – Resigned 19/01/11

Trustee

Paul Hocker

Trustee

Alan Sutton



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“All children need a place to play. They need space, informality, freedom to run around and make a noise, to express themselves, to experiment and investigate. In surroundings which stimulate their imagination and challenge them to face and overcome risks, they will be helped to build up their self-confidence and independence.”

Lady Allen of Hurtwood

