

**The Cabinet - 12 September 2007**

**Report of the Director of Children's Services**

**The Dudley Play Strategy and Children's Play Initiative**

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Cabinet of the £690,320 Big Lottery Fund award for the Dudley Children's Play Initiative as part of the Dudley Play Strategy endorsed by the Council in December 2006.

**Background**

2. In November 2005, the Big Lottery Fund made indicative allocations of lottery funding to all local authorities for children's play based on child population and weighted by deprivation. The aim of the national programme was to create, improve and develop inclusive play provision across England. To access the lottery funding local authorities had to produce a play strategy which set out the local priorities, procedures and intended outcomes for the programme.
3. During 2006, the Council and the Children and Young People's Partnership conducted a wide ranging consultation programme with local, regional and national stakeholders including over 6,000 children, young people and members of the general public across the Borough.
4. The final Dudley Play Strategy was adopted by the Cabinet on 13 December 2006. Over the last ten months the Dudley Play Strategy has received widespread support including being commended by MPs on the All Parliamentary Group on Children's Play at the House of Commons in April 2007. The strategy was presented to MPs who said it was a 'shining example' of local authority strategy development, particularly the way in which the Council had involved children and young people in the policy development, consultation and decision making processes.

**Big Lottery Fund application**

5. The Dudley Play Strategy and Children's Play Initiative application for £690,320 was submitted to the Big Lottery Fund in March 2007 and approved by the National Awards Committee in July 2007.

## **Dudley Children's Play Initiative – Just Enjoy**

6. The Dudley application was funded in full with no additional conditions of grant or changes in the portfolio. The quality of the Dudley application was praised by the Big Lottery Fund and used as a model of best practice to other authorities.
7. Below is a list of the Dudley projects approved by the Big Lottery Fund in July 2007.

### **Revenue Projects**

	Award
KIDS Orchard Partnership - Play Project	£ 50,000
Me2 MENCAP - Play Project	£ 50,000
Rollercoasters - Summer Play Programme	£ 45,000
NCH Dudley Young Carers - Play Project	£ 10,000
Dudley Home and Hospital - Play Project	£ 10,000
Fizzog Theatre Company – Play Project	£ 65,000
Free2Play - Community Play Rangers Project	£ 66,500
Dudley Environment Zone - Local Play Partnership Project	£ 29,387

### **Capital Projects**

Chapel Street - multi use games area (MUGA).	£ 37,500
Belle Vue Primary School - children's play area.	£ 74,401
North Dudley Skate Park.	£ 65,000
Ellowes Hall Sports College - Play wall	£ 15,000
Netherbrook Primary School - MUGA and children's play area.	£ 60,000
Wollescote Park MUGA	£ 43,500

### **Management and monitoring team.**

SMART Team - central management and monitoring team	£ 69,032
Total awards	£ 690,320

8. The Council will be the accountable body for the £690,320 lottery grant and be responsible for all the management, monitoring, evaluation and overseeing all projects including drawing down all funding. Ten percent of the lottery grant has been allocated for the management of the programme and no additional Council match funding has been required.

## **Progress so far**

9. The Dudley Children's Play Initiative was launched on Wednesday 1 August 2007 on National Play Day in Sedgley. Over the last few weeks over 2,000 children have already been involved in the programme across the Borough. The programme will run for three years and will end on 31 July 2010. The programme aims to deliver one million new play hours for up to 10,000 children and young people across the Borough. The programme will be monitored by the Dudley Play Partnership which will be led by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the first meeting will be on Thursday 1 November 2007.

## **National changes on children's play**

10. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) are jointly promoting a drive to develop fun, safe and effective children's play. The success of the Dudley Play Strategy places the Council in an excellent position to maximise the potential for the Borough.

## **Local Strategies**

11. The Dudley Play Strategy has been framed within the aims of the Community Strategy and Council Plan to help improve the quality of life for all children, young people and adults across the Borough. The Community Strategy and Council Plan specifically identifies the need for more leisure and recreational facilities that meet the needs of children and young people.

## **Council Plan Themes**

12. The Play Strategy consultation and participation road show set out to listen to what local people had to say about play, respond to what they said and then help the Council to respond to their needs and be accountable for the outcomes and value for money. The children's play policy statements and outcomes have been set against the six Council Plan themes of *Caring Matters*, *Environment Matters*, *Learning Matters*, *Regeneration Matters*, *Safety Matters* and *Quality Service Matters*. Play and the improved provision of child focused play facilities are key objectives in the Council Plan (C1 2a). The development of a play strategy for Dudley is also a key outcome of the Cultural Strategy (2006 / 2009) and Children and Young People's Plan (2006 / 2009).

## **Consulting and engaging with children and young people**

13. A major strength of the Dudley play strategy has been the extensive consultation and participation with children and young people. The programme has followed the standards and principles set out in Dudley's formal Consultation Strategy and

the Dudley Community Partnership Code of Practice but went some way beyond the normal standard consultation procedure.

### **Anti-social behaviour**

14. Tackling youth crime and reducing anti-social behaviour are key priorities for the Government and the Council. One of the main aspects of this is the provision of positive activities, which divert young people away from crime and help them develop the skills and behaviours to make the right choices, many of which include play and recreational activities. 'Respect' published in January 2006 and the Respect Action Plan refers to the enormous benefits of providing constructive and purposeful activities for young people, and supports the commitment made in Youth Matters to ensure that all young people have access to activities that they find interesting and exciting in their local area.

### **Managing risks locally**

15. All play activities funded through the programme will be planned and managed using the Council's online risk assessment and management service at [www.offsite.org.uk](http://www.offsite.org.uk). Over the last four years, over 16,000 activities have been planned and approved with no accident or claim against the Council's insurers on an offsite activity being made in this time. All children and young people can have their own access card at [www.activmag.net](http://www.activmag.net) so they can record their activities and find out about the play programmes across the Borough.

### **Corporate Parenting**

16. A high priority has been placed upon programmes for children and young people looked after by the local authority. All programmes funded by the lottery programme will ensure that looked after children are included and will benefit directly from the initiative.

### **Information Technology/e-Government**

17. The programme has already pioneered the use of the internet in consulting and engaging with children, young people and applicants. All programme information and activities, including video, audio, animation and polling results have been published on dedicated project website [www.justenjoy.tv](http://www.justenjoy.tv). The site has received over 35,000 requests for information since it was opened in June 2006 and over 2,000 children have completed the online questionnaires.

### **Neighbourhood Management**

18. The Neighbourhood Management team have been closely involved in developing the programme including supporting applicants and identifying local priorities.

Several projects have been funded that fall within the most deprived neighbourhoods in the Borough.

### **Asset Management**

19. As part of the development of the Dudley Play Strategy, an audit of play provision was undertaken by Community and Cultural Services. In addition, a Black Country wide Play Partnership has been established in partnership with Play England and the Black Country Consortium. This will ensure that unnecessary duplication is avoided and programmes are complementary.

### **Gershon Efficiency Savings**

20. Dudley Borough is fortunate in benefiting from a diverse and energetic voluntary and community sector. The contribution of the voluntary and community sector is vital to promoting the quality of life for thousands of children and local people across the Borough. The Compact agreement between the Council and the voluntary and community sector aims to improve outcomes for local people. Over 60% of the total revenue funding for this programme has been directly or indirectly allocated to the voluntary and community sector thus improving efficiencies for the Council and value for money.

### **Finance**

21. The Dudley Children's Play Initiative is being funded by £690,320 from the Big Lottery Fund over the next three years.
22. The Council has been allocated 10% of the grant for overall management, monitoring, evaluation and promotion.
23. The programme will be managed by the Development Office within the Directorate of Children's Services in partnership with the Directorate of the Urban Environment.
24. The Council has not been required to commit any match funding to this programme although opportunities have been included for complementary funding alongside the Fair Share, Liveability programme and Section 106 projects.

## **Law**

25. The contents of the report relates to a range of statutory provisions including the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, the Children Act 2004, the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, the Open Spaces Act 1906, the Public Health Act 1875 and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

## **Equality Impact**

26. The overall aim of the Council's equality and diversity policy is to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations between people of diverse backgrounds. The purpose of the Dudley play strategy equality and diversity impact assessment was to pre-empt the possibility that the Dudley children's play policy could affect some racial or disability groups unfavourably.

## **Race Impact Assessment**

27. All projects within the programme have been screened for their impact upon disadvantaged communities including minority ethnic communities across the Borough. A large proportion of the funding has been allocated to projects for disadvantaged groups including children with disabilities and those children of disadvantaged communities.

## **Involvement of children and young people**

28. The involvement of children and young people has been central to developing the Dudley Play Strategy and Children's Play Initiative. Young people have been involved at all stages including making the decisions for prioritisation and having the casting vote on the children's play awards panel. They also will be involved closely in the overall monitoring and evaluation of the programme over the next three years.

## **Recommendation**

29. It is recommended that:
- the Cabinet notes the successful Big Lottery Fund award and agree to receive additional reports throughout the lifetime of the programme;
  - the Director of Children's Services working with the Director of the Urban Environment will be responsible for implementing the programme.



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**List of Background Papers**

Dudley Council Plan – Action Plan 2006/ 2009  
Dudley Children and Young People's Plan 2006/2009