

Select Committee on Children's Services - 26 March 2008

Report of the Director of Children's Services

The Dudley Play Strategy

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the recent progress with the Dudley Play Strategy and DCSF play Pathfinder application.

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 few 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.

<u>Revenue Projects</u>	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
<u>Capital Projects</u>	
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
<u>Management and monitoring team.</u>	
SMART Team - central management and monitoring team	£ 69,032
Total awards	£ 690,320

8. The Council is the accountable body for the £690,320 lottery grant and is 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 six months over 12,000 play hours have already been provided through 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 is being monitored by the Dudley Play Partnership which is led by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the second meeting was held on Thursday 13th March 2008.

DCSF Play Pathfinder application

10. On Monday 25th February 2008, John Freeman, Director of Children's Services in Dudley received a letter from Anne Jackson, Director for Child Wellbeing at the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) in London. The letter invited Dudley Council to bid to become one of 15 national play Pathfinders that will start work in April 2008 for the next three years.
11. An application was submitted to the DCSF on Friday 14th March 2008 and if successful, will secure up to £2million of capital and £500,000 of revenue funding for children's play across the authority. If unsuccessful, the authority will still have the opportunity to start a £1million capital 'Playbuilders' programme and bid again to become one of the second wave of 15 Pathfinders in November.

Benefits for all children in Dudley

12. National and local evidence has shown that providing high-quality outdoor play opportunities is very important for a happy childhood, for good child development and for children's general health and wellbeing. Indeed, high-quality outdoor play supports better outcomes across the whole of the Government's national priorities as listed in the National Indicator Set (NIS) for local authorities.

The Children's Plan

13. The results of the extensive national consultation on the Government's ten-year Children's Plan demonstrated that many parents and children care

deeply about play and expect central and local Government to improve provision and play outcomes for all children.

Working with children, young people, parents and local communities

14. As part of the Pathfinder programme, the DCSF wishes local communities to be at the heart of the delivery plan by involving community and voluntary groups and through a process of active engagement and consultation with children, young people and their parents and carers.
15. This is something Dudley has already prioritised in its Play Strategy which has been praised by MPs on the All Parliamentary Group on Children's Play when we presented our strategy in the House of Commons in April 2007.

Public play areas

16. Each of the 30 national Pathfinders will be expected to build or refurbish around 28 public play areas as part of their programme. Each authority spending Playbuilder capital will be expected to develop between 20 to 25 public play areas. This will involve the complete or substantial replacing of old equipment for new or the building of a completely new play area.
17. If successful, the Council intends to replace or refurbish 28 children's play areas in public parks that were identified through the Dudley Play Strategy and Liveability programme.

Finance

18. The Dudley Children's Play Initiative is being funded by £690,320 from the Big Lottery Fund over the next three years. The Council has been allocated 10% of the grant for overall management, monitoring, evaluation and promotion.
19. The Council will not be required to commit any match funding for the DCSF Play Pathfinder programme. If successful £500,000 revenue will be available to provide additional play rangers in public parks.

Law

20. 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.

Equality Impact

21. 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.

Recommendations

22. It is recommended that the Committee:
23. Note the contents of this report.
24. Identify any priorities for further scrutiny.



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