



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Play Service Play Clubs
Date:	August 2011
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development ext 3459
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members, as previously agreed, in regard to the evaluation of the 'Play Clubs' which were introduced on a pilot basis in September last year to be provided through to the end of June 2011.
1.2	Members will recall that the Play Clubs were developed as part of the recommendations of the Play Review. This included the recommendation for Service Delivery to be flexible and to involve outreach delivery of the play service making it available in communities where there is limited existing provision for children and young people (up to age 16) and where there are concentrations of children and young people.
1.3	A comprehensive report of the activities undertaken by the Play Service throughout 2010 was provided to Council at their meeting on 3 May 2011. The report included information on the progress of the Play Club project. An end of year report is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The Play Club model was developed to provide play opportunities for children aged 2-4 years old in areas of need and through a partnership approach, with local volunteers and parents being offered developmental and skills support coupled to a phased increase in their assumption of organisational responsibility and autonomy, in other words, a community development approach through play.

2.2	As agreed by Council, three Play Clubs were to be established in three areas (Ballysillan, Olympia and Whiterock) for four mornings per week. In addition, the Play Service established a Play Club one morning a week in partnership with the Toy Box project for Traveller children.
2.3	The implementation of the model on a trial basis has allowed the identification of key variables that appear critical to the success, or otherwise, of the model. For example, the Play Club based within the Traveller project has been extremely successful and is run in a partnership with the Toy Box project, which works with Traveller families. Assistance has also been provided through the Travellers' Liaison Officer and Community Development Officer. The project has had an average daily attendance of 6.5 (65% of available places).
2.4	The projects were unable to be developed at the Olympia and Whiterock Centres due to insufficient demand and were eventually withdrawn. Staff were re-deployed to other community based projects where demonstrable demand existed coupled to local organisational commitment. The project at Ballysillan has met with minimal success as the demand has been low with an average attendance of 4.7 children (29% of available places). There has also been difficulty in obtaining engagement with the project from within the local community despite the best efforts of the Play Development and Community Development Officers.
2.5	On the basis of the trial experience, the Play Service would seek to develop this model with services based on demonstrable need and an identified partnership with another organisation or local community group. The service would also be restricted to a maximum of two mornings to enable more communities to benefit and to promote longer term sustainability.
2.6	The implications of this would involve discontinuation of the Play Club based at Ballysillan Playcentre. The Traveller Play Club would continue to be provided within the partnership framework and based on there being sufficient demand.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	The resources are within existing resources.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	Changes to the Play Service are likely to have made a positive contribution to the principles and practice of Equality and Good Relations through their impact on greater numbers of children from communities experiencing a range of socio-economic disadvantage.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- To note the report of the Play Clubs;- To agree on the future development of the Playclub model based on a partnership approach and targeted at more areas based on identified need.

6	Decision Tracking
Eddie Jackson to implement committee decision. September 2011	

8	Documents Attached
Appendix 1: Play Club Evaluation report.	