

# Pitsmoor Adventure Playground



Evaluation Report  
August 2017





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*"I like coming here, there's  
always someone to talk to.  
If you look sad, someone  
will say 'are you ok?'"*  
(11 year old girl)

*"I'm so glad you're here, I'd  
never let them make this  
mess at home!"* (parent)

Design by Jamie Marriott





# Introduction



**Welcome to Pitsmoor Adventure Playground's 2017 evaluation report, our first since members of the local community set up a charity to run the playground in April 2014.**

Since then we have considerably developed the playground and our organisation, transforming the site and building, expanding our staff team and increasing play opportunities for young people in the area, while attracting financial and other resources from a range of funders and partners.

The benefits of adventure playgrounds are notoriously difficult to evaluate, and we are grateful to playground trustee Julia Sexton (MA), Senior Lecturer in Childhood Studies at Sheffield Hallam University, for designing and carrying out our evaluation process.

The purpose of this report is to review and evaluate our impact on children, young people and the wider community we live in. We have focused our evaluation activities on the three main differences we aim to make

to children's lives – supporting them to improve their health and wellbeing, to learn new life skills and to become active citizens. We have also aimed to learn from our experience so far to make recommendations for the future of the playground.

***Yanina Koszalinski***  
*Chair of Trustees*  
*August 2017*

***"The staff are kind and helpful, they're funny and make me laugh!"***



# Research methods



We have taken the mosaic approach to evaluation, which uses a wide variety of research methods to record and explore the impact of our activities, to build up into the “bigger picture”. They are often difficult to summarise, and so we have incorporated examples into the Evidence sections of this report. Research methods include:

- Weekly narrative observations focused on the experience of an individual child or a small group of children and their interactions with staff while playing at the playground.
- Weekly tally charts that record the different types of play that children engage in.
- Monthly time sample observations that provide a closely observed description of the activities taking place for a two minute period, recorded every five minutes over the course of half an hour.
- Monthly mapping observations that record the pattern of children’s movements on a map of the playground.
- Monthly learning story observations that provide a snapshot of children’s approaches to getting involved with activities, persisting

with difficulties, expressing their ideas and feelings and taking responsibility in their interactions with others.

- Monthly target child observations that gather detailed information about the experiences of selected children (frequent users of the playground) over the course of a year.
- A questionnaire developed to be child friendly, annually recording children’s feedback about the playground and the activities they engage with.
- Additional mechanisms for collecting children’s feedback, such as a suggestions box, graffiti boards, recording of conversations with children.
- Case studies of individual playground users and small groups of users, exploring how involvement with the playground impacts different aspects of children’s lives.
- Visual evidence of activities, including photographs, videos and children’s drawings.

*“I like baking and getting messy. I made tarts today and I have made buns, cakes, pizza, fruit juice and smoothies.” (9 year old girl)*



# Background and history



**Children from the Pitsmoor and Burngreave community have played at the adventure playground since the 1970s and many local people have been involved over the years with building equipment and putting on activities here.**

For most of this time the site was managed and maintained by Sheffield City Council, with playworkers provided by the Council's health and wellbeing service Activity Sheffield. However, the effects of austerity on local authority budgets over recent years led to the deterioration of facilities on the site and a steady decrease in staffed opening hours.

By 2013 the site was open just 9 hours per week, mainly for sports coaching, when the Council announced it would be closed altogether.

Local residents and members of the community came together to protest against the closure, which was certain to decrease opportunities for play and increase anti-social behaviour in the area. The campaign resulted in the formation of Pitsmoor Adventure Playground Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), which now employs the playground staff team and holds the lease for the site. Amongst the trustees of the charity are local parents/residents, experienced play and youth workers, and people with expertise in community

safety, funding and management.

Through our fund-raising efforts, many supported by the children themselves, we have generated the income to keep the playground open as a staffed facility. We have also made considerable improvements to the site, replacing obsolete equipment with structures that offer new challenges to the children, such as our thrill slide and tractor swing, and installing a kitchen in the building in summer 2016.

Our staff team now consists of Playground Manager, Play Leader, Funding and Finance Manager and three qualified playworkers, working alongside casual staff and volunteers.



## our area



**Burngreave is among the bottom 10% of neighbourhoods as classified in the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015, and the most ethnically diverse ward in Sheffield.**

We have a larger than average proportion of children with 26.4% of the population aged under 15. 90.6% of schoolchildren come from BME groups. Children have significantly low primary and secondary school attendance rates and low educational attainment. Burngreave experiences higher than average levels of crime involving young people (as victims and perpetrators), including drug use, knife crime and gang related violence.

There are significantly high rates of obesity amongst children; a significantly low level of five per day fruit and vegetable consumption; and high rates of A&E attendance and emergency admissions, including for diabetes and asthma (statistics from Sheffield Neighbourhood Health

and Wellbeing profile). At the end of 2014 Burngreave food bank had fed over 5000 customers.

Burngreave is often the first UK home for newly arrived refugees and migrant communities, who have often experienced trauma or discrimination in their home countries and do not speak English as their first language. Currently around 50% of registered playground users are of Roma Slovak ethnicity. As well as recent arrivals, settled communities in the area include those of Pakistani, Yemeni, Somali and White British origin, other European, Arabic, African and Caribbean backgrounds, and many of mixed heritage.

The children who play at Pitsmoor Adventure Playground reflect the characteristics of the area – many are vulnerable, from impoverished households with high levels of unemployment, poor health and housing and low achievement.

*"The playworkers treat everyone the same, you know, equally, and they are fun, they want to spend their time with you." (12 year old boy)*

*"It's exciting here, a mix of people and full of great kids"*

*"They help us at the playground. They help me if I don't know what to do in a game." (9 year old boy)*



# The difference we make: Improving health and wellbeing



**Children who play at Pitsmoor Adventure Playground engage in more active and healthier lifestyles by participating in structured and unstructured play activities, helping them to achieve positive physical and mental health outcomes.**

When we first began our observations, many children would limit their physical activity to low-impact activities such as pool, arts and crafts. They needed reassurance and encouragement to explore the whole of the site and try out the full range of equipment.

Over time our qualified playworkers have developed positive relationships with the children and encouraged them to extend their engagement with physical activities. In consultation with the children, staff have researched and shared ideas to develop the activities and equipment on offer, adapting

the environment to maximise participation. Children now strongly identify the playground as a place where they are physically active.

Our new kitchen has created opportunities to widen the children's tastes and experience of food, improving their diet and their understanding of healthy eating and food hygiene. The staff team have also addressed issues around poor dental hygiene and inadequate clothing.

## Evidence

Tally chart observations show an increase in the types of play displayed by the children over the year and an increase in use of outdoor equipment, especially the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), the slide and den-building area.

Time sample observations demonstrate increased engagement of children with a wider variety of physical

activities, including football, circus skills and large-scale art projects (such as making beach huts and a lighthouse). They indicate that children are broadening the extent of their free play as well as playworkers developing a wider variety of structured activities.

Mappings of children's movements have identified an increased use of outdoor and indoor space, for example more children moving around the whole playground site and more use of the kitchen area.

While factors such as the weather inevitably impact on levels of physical activity, our playworkers are skilled in encouraging children to be more active, to take appropriate risks and to overcome their fears and anxieties regarding physical play. Narrative observations demonstrate how the interventions of playworkers help children to gain the confidence to be more active,



in situations where they may well have given up otherwise.

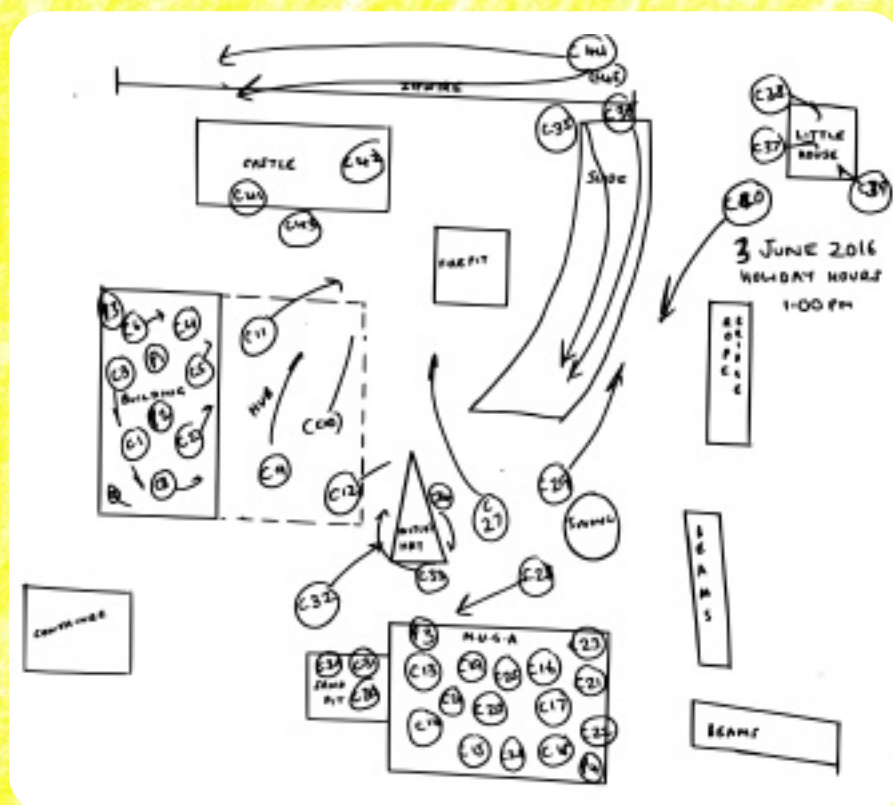
Narrative observations also record how children have reacted positively to activities involving food hygiene and preparation, healthy eating and dental hygiene. The observations show increased awareness of these practices, as well as willingness to try new foods and growing knowledge and experience of food preparation.

All children completing the children's questionnaire said that they take part in physical activities. Swinging, football, sliding and outdoor play were the most frequently mentioned activities.

*"If I didn't play here I'd sit at home at my computer and get bored, but here I build stuff, decorate the hut, run around, get wet and have loads of fun." (10 year old boy)*

## Examples

### Mapping observation – 3rd June 2016



she is feeling and she says she is scared; she wants to go on but now she is at the top it looks too high. The playworker reassures the child and says it is not really that high and it will be fun. Her siblings go down the slide to show her it is fun.

The playworker asks Child A if she would like someone to go down the slide with her. Child A says she would like to go down the slide with the playworker. The playworker says this is ok and asks Child A to count to three with him.

On three Child A and the playworker go down the slide. Child A squeals with delight and her siblings and friends cheer. The playworker praises her for her bravery, and Child A says how good it felt, that it was exciting and that she feels proud of herself for having got over her fear.

She climbs up the slope to have another go and proceeds to go on the slide eight times by herself.

### Narrative observation – 25th November 2015

Child A is watching her siblings and friends go up to the slide as they encourage her to join in. She climbs the slope and the steps and watches as one of her siblings slides down, then sits at the top with her other sibling. Her sibling urges her to have a go, but Child A shakes her head. The playworker calls to

the children asking if they are ok. Child A shakes her head again and her sibling explains that she is too scared. The playworker encourages the child verbally but she still shakes her head.

The playworker climbs up the steps and sits next to Child A. He quietly asks Child A how



## Case study 2016

Two Pakistani boys aged 12 and 14 were referred to Pitsmoor Adventure Playground by health professionals due to their being classed as 'morbidly obese'.

Staff at the playground supported them through open access play and play modelling to become much more physically active and to participate in group sports and physically energetic activities. The boys have also been encouraged to join in with the other children and young people in weekly cooking clubs and healthy eating workshops.

Their weight has been steadily reducing and health professionals report that their overall health and well-being is improving in leaps and bounds. To help them to maintain their progress, the Playground Manager commissioned additional therapeutic support, which helped the children to unpick their weight gain issues.

The play team worked with the children's family to review their eating and lifestyle patterns, an approach that is paying dividends. Through links with Sheffield United Football Club, the boys have buddied up with football players who act as role models for each of them, boosting their self-esteem, their confidence and their motivation to continue losing weight and live healthier lifestyles.



Time sample observation, 3rd August 2016, 1.24 – 1.26 pm

### Indoors

- A volunteer is in the kitchen area talking to the children nearby
- 4 children are getting themselves a drink and some fruit
- 4 children are playing pool and talking to Playworker C about one of their friends
- Playworker F is playing a board game with 3 children and discussing the rules

### Outdoors

- 7 children are painting beach huts with a community artist
- 5 children are building sandcastles in the sand pit with Playworker A
- 6 children are building dens with Playworker B in the den building area
- 10 children and Playworkers D and E are taking part in an obstacle course
- 5 children are making a lighthouse with a community artist
- 3 children are on the slide
- 4 children are on the zip wire
- 2 children are on the swing
- 6 children are playing with the mud kitchen



# The difference we make: Learning life skills



**Children are learning a wide range of life skills – interpersonal, practical and creative – through their play experiences at Pitsmoor Adventure Playground.**

To begin with, a significant number of the children who attend the playground had limited life skills, for example in relation to regulating their emotions, interpersonal skills and personal self-care (especially oral hygiene). Many were recently arrived migrants with English as their second language who often experienced communication difficulties leading to stress and frustration.

In consultation with the children, the playwork team have developed a variety of activities and resources to support and extend life skills. The team use the playwork planning pyramid, a method of planning designed specifically for adventure playgrounds to maximise benefits to children. Children are encouraged to feel respected and valued, enabling playworkers to build positive relationships and role model effective life skills.

Children have increasingly demonstrated interpersonal skills such as co-operation and sharing, problem solving, persisting in the face of difficulty and expressing themselves clearly. Practical skills exhibited by the children include cooking, cleaning, use of tools and utensils and safe behaviour around fire and traffic. Local artists and performers have helped the playwork

team to bring out children's creative skills through arts, crafts, music and drama.

## Evidence

Tally chart observations show an increase in children engaging in deep, social and communication play types. Deep play enables children to experience personal risk, which may be physical, emotional or social. Children thus develop their ability to assess risk, to overcome fear and develop confidence and self-esteem. Social play offers opportunities for children to enhance their social engagement and interaction skills, for example developing and modifying the rules of a game, and learning about positive ways of being with others, involving compromise and negotiation. Communication play allows children to explore language, express their thoughts and deepen their understanding and interactions, for example using language to "think out loud" to solve a problem or to share ideas with others.

Tally charts also show increases in the use of indoor equipment, in particular arts and crafts and use of tools and utensils in the kitchen area.

Time sample observations show children have increased their engagement with practical and creative activities, such as cooking on a fire and large-scale art projects. They also record playworkers setting ground rules for acceptable behaviour, encouraging independent risk taking



and intervening sensitively if required; and increasingly positive interactions between children and playworkers, including playful banter and approaching each other for support.

Target child observations have gathered detailed information about selected children who are regular attendees. These show an increase in life skills, especially communicating with others, problem solving, creativity skills, social interaction, food preparation skills and interpersonal skills, as well as improved engagement with skills sessions and increasing use of kitchen utensils, garden tools and art materials.

Learning story observations have provided a snapshot of children's abilities and interests, helping playworkers to identify their current interests and skills and think of imaginative ways to build on these.

Narrative observations have recorded and evaluated the level of children's life skills and their engagement with skill sessions. They have shown an increase in skills such as regulating one's emotions, personal self-care, use of musical instruments and healthy food awareness. In skill sessions such as cookery club and music workshops, children have been focused and engaged, concentrating for longer periods of time and co-operating with each other and parents/carers.

The children's questionnaire identified that children felt the skills they had developed most were talking to people, sharing, helping, staying safe, staying calm and making friends.

### Examples

#### *Learning story* 11th November 2015

Child P is playing on the slide with her friends and sisters. Playworker E is standing at the bottom of the slide and encouraging the children to go up the grassy bank on the left side of the slide if they want to go back on. This is because the right hand side is slippery due to weather conditions and children have been squabbling about whose turn it is to go down the slide next when children are approaching the steps from both sides.

Child P jumps off the slide at the bottom and asks Playworker E what she is doing. Playworker E explains. Child P says there must be a better way to get children to go up the left side, that does not involve Playworker E standing there all session. Playworker E agrees but says this is all that has worked so far.

Child P goes off to the playground building and returns with some silver tape. She tells Playworker E they should make signs on the grassy bank with the tape so children know which way to go. She asks Playworker E to help her make arrows and crosses on the grassy bank. Child P shows the other children using the slide what the arrows and crosses mean. A child (Child P's sibling) tries to climb up the right side of the slide. Child P goes over to them and shows them the cross. She tells them this means that they cannot climb up this side. She leads the child to the left side of the slide and shows them the arrows and tells the child they should follow the arrows. Child P watches the child climb up the left side and smiles.

#### Review:

- Child P takes an interest and an active role in trying to solve the problem. This shows her sense of belonging within the playground; she feels she can help.
- She pays attention to the problem and is involved in finding a solution through using resources in a creative and innovative way – this relates to her sense of well-being, and confidence to demonstrate her problem solving skills.
- She chooses to find a solution to the difficult problem, she asks for help in sticking the tape into shapes like arrows and crosses; she tries out a strategy. When a child ignores her strategy she actively shows them how it works. This demonstrates her exploration skills.
- She expresses her idea orally to Playworker E and the other children, she physically shows her sibling the idea and she uses easily recognisable symbols such as crosses and arrows. This demonstrates her communication skills.



## Target child observation 15th September 2016

Time	Action	Language
3.40	TC moves away from kitchen counter to wash hands	"I am going to wash my hands"
3.41	TC washing hands	None
3.42	TC puts on apron	"Can you help tie my apron?"
3.43	TC watches PW show how to prepare fruit	"Can I cut up the fruit?"
3.44	TC peels banana	"This is easy"
3.45	TC is supervised slicing banana with a knife	"I can do it, I know how"
3.46	TC weighs strawberries using scales in pairs with C	"How much do they weigh? Can you read it?"
3.47	TC pours strawberries into a bowl	"There you go, there's our strawberries, they weigh zog"
3.48	TC helps C take off the green leaves of the strawberries	"Where shall we put the leaves?" "Oh in that bowl, ok"
3.49	TC is supervised cutting the strawberries with C using a knife	"We have got a lot of strawberries" "Have you finished cutting yours?"
3.50	TC is supervised peeling a mango with C using a peeler	"You hold it and I will peel this bit and then I will hold it and you peel that bit"

[TC = Target Child; PW = Playworker; C = other child]

### Evaluation:

TC is communicating with the Playworker and another child during the cookery session. She asks questions, asks questions to solve problems, asks for help, states what she is capable of and gives instructions to the child she is paired with.

TC demonstrates domestic skills in washing her hands, putting on her apron with help; observation skills in watching the Playworker demonstrate how to prepare fruit; manipulation skills in using utensils, using a knife, scales, bowl and a peeler;

food preparation skills in slicing, pouring, cutting and peeling; maths skills in weighing the strawberries.

TC interacts within a small group. She is thoroughly absorbed in the skills session.

### Narrative observation 4th May 2016

Four children are playing with the mud kitchen. They are pretending to be working in a café and are making mud buns and cakes by putting mud and wet sand into bun trays and pots and pans, and making coffees



and teas by putting sand into plastic cups. Child G says they need a list of what they are making because that is what cafes do. Child H and Child I agree and Child F goes into the playground building and returns with some pieces of card and pens. The children start to create their menus - Child H writes 'Menu' at the top of the card.

The children discuss what they want on their menu. Child G asks how to spell 'coffee', so Child H calls Playworker E over to ask her. Playworker E spells out the word and Child H writes it down. The children talk with Playworker E about what they are doing and ask her to help them spell the other words that they need.



## The difference we make: Becoming active citizens



**Children take pride in contributing to their community and have growing awareness of their civic responsibilities through their activities at the playground.**

Many of the children and families using the playground are new migrants from diverse backgrounds who have experienced disruption and uncertainty in their lives. English is often not their first language and they face barriers to becoming settled in the area. The key to developing children's sense of belonging, citizenship and empowerment is to make them feel welcome and valued. Staff have taken the time to get to know children and their families, showing a genuine interest and building positive and respectful relationships. Staff speak a range of community languages and have an understanding of different cultural traditions.

The children's sense of place and belonging has developed by encouraging them to take responsibility for the playground. Playworkers encourage this by role modelling good practice and involving the children in onsite litter picking, keeping the playground tidy, repairing and maintaining equipment, contributing to planning and consultation exercises, donating equipment, games and recycled items. The children are involved in making the site more attractive by creating decorations and large-scale art projects, gardening and caring for plants. They have fund-raised for new equipment by bag packing at our local

supermarket and taking part in other sponsored and fund-raising activities.

Playworkers encourage awareness of the children's relationship with their local community and their sense of citizenship. They take part in walks in the area, exploring local features and developing road safety awareness. Community artists and performers regularly visit and work with the children on skills sessions, and the playground hosts community events such as a Lion Dance for Chinese New Year (stewarded by the children).

The children take part in external community projects, for example making lanterns for the local lantern festival; participating in a commemoration of the Battle of the Somme in Burngreave cemetery; and making bat boxes that have been put up around the area. These activities have engaged them with the diversity of their community, its history and traditions and the environment.

The children have increasingly shown awareness of their own responsibilities within the local community and have worked co-operatively with playworkers to tackle fly tipping and litter in the streets surrounding the playground, a major source of tension within the community. They have engaged with representatives of the blue light services, local councillors and other local dignitaries, increasing their knowledge of civic roles and responsibilities.



## Evidence

Time sample, narrative and target child observations have demonstrated an increased sense of belonging and citizenship, for example an increase in children getting involved with litter picking and community events.

Learning stories have explored in detail how selected individual children who are regular attenders have developed a strong

sense of belonging and responsibility for their community.

Feedback from a range of partners including the local housing association, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue, the local MP and councillors, Tesco's community champion and other community representatives has been extremely positive about children's behaviour at external events and their contribution to good



community relations. A number of children and young volunteers have been recognised with civic awards.

## Examples

### Time sample observation 10th February 2016

**1:00 - 1:20pm**

**Pitsmoor  
Adventure  
Playground and  
surrounding  
streets**

Preparation for the Sheffield Lion Dance Team's arrival for Chinese New Year celebration.

5 children and 1 playworker and a volunteer are tidying the inside of the playground building.

5 children and 1 playworker are litter picking in the outside area of the playground.

1 playworker and 4 children are going over the preparations for organising and stewarding the event, working out who needs to be where at what time and that appropriate traffic control procedures are in place.

**1:50 – 2.20 pm**

**Pitsmoor  
Adventure  
Playground and  
surrounding  
streets**

25 children are outside with 4 playworkers and 2 volunteers; they are positioned along the street up to the junction with the main road, directing people as they arrive to where they can safely stand and watch the Lion Dance when it begins.

They chat and interact with the people, providing information and guidance about the event when people ask for it. They explain that the Lion Dance will proceed down Melrose Road and end at the playground.

They demonstrate good interpersonal and verbal skills. The older children support the younger children to interact with the people who have arrived.

The Sheffield Lion Dance Team arrives and gets ready to start the procession. 2 playworkers and 5 children make sure the team have everything they need for their performance. They go and check there is a clear path and space for the team to do their dance along the road and that the audience is waiting safely.

The Lion Dance begins, to cheers from the audience. The children monitor the audience's behaviour to make sure they safely follow the procession as it moves towards the playground. The children role model good road safety skills as they guide and direct the watching audience.



## Target child observation 4th June 2016

Time	Action	Language
1.00	TC stands at the bag packing end of the till with C and PW.	"I wonder if we will be busy. Oh here is someone now."
1.01	TC stands at the bag packing end of the till with C and PW.	"Hello, I am from Pitsmoor Adventure Playground and we are bag packing today to raise money to go on a trip in the summer. Would you like your bag packed?"
1.02	TC takes the man's items as they are scanned and starts packing them in the man's bag. C joins her to help as there are many items.	"Oh thanks "
1.03	TC takes the man's items as they are scanned and packs them in the man's bag. She passes a heavy bottle to C to put in a different bag.	"Can you put this in there for me? "
1.04	TC takes the man's items as they are scanned and packs them in the man's bag.	"That is all packed now" "Thanks"
1.05	TC takes the collecting bucket and stands next to PW.	"I wonder how much we will get today"

[TC = Target Child; PW = Playworker; C = other child]

## Narrative observation 8th August 2016

Three children arrive at the playground and tell the playworkers that they are fed up with the rubbish that has been left in the street by fly tippers. They tell the playworkers that it makes the street look dirty and is not nice to see on the way to the playground.

The playworkers agree and explain to the children that they have contacted the council about it but nothing

has been done so far. They ask the children if they have any ideas what to do about it. The children think and one of the children says that although it isn't their mess, they should clear it up as this will make the street tidy again and might show people that they care about the area. Another child says that they can take a photograph of them tidying up and put it on the playground's Facebook page so more people, not just those in the street, will see it and know what they are doing.



The playworkers say that this is a great idea and ask how they can help. The children say that they will need brushes, litter pickers and bin bags to collect the rubbish and they need a playworker to take a photograph and put it on Facebook.

Playworker A takes the children to the storage container to get the materials they need. One of the children goes to see if anyone else wants to help and comes back with more children. The children are given hi-vis jackets to wear, to make sure they are visible to any traffic. The children and playworkers go out onto the street and begin to clear away the litter and fly tipping. Playworker B takes a photograph and puts it on the playground's Facebook page.



# The difference we make: Other activities and benefits



## Supporting vulnerable children

For many children who face particular difficulties the playground offers a safe haven where they know they will be welcomed and included and have their individual needs considered and addressed. The staff team work alongside other children and family services to assess need and develop appropriate support structures.

## Case studies

1. There is currently an increase in gang violence related to drug dealing which has led to intense police activity in the area. While waiting for the playground to open, a group of boys were approached by an older man who asked them to look out for the police and to retrieve a mobile phone he had thrown into a bush at the playground. Staff saw the conversation taking place and intervened, prompting the man to run off and hide. They asked the children for details of what had occurred, as the police firearms team appeared on the scene. The playworkers were able to explain events to the police and point out the direction the man had gone, and they were able to find the mobile phone and apprehend the man.

Staff subsequently spent time with the boys discussing what their responsibilities were in this situation, recent events in the

neighbourhood, and how strangers can be dangerous. Their intervention meant that the boys felt confident to talk to the police and understood how to respond if a similar situation arose. Further work is now planned with playground users regarding these dangers.

2. A 7 year old child and his extended family were introduced to the playground by Early Help staff. He had arrived in the UK from an area of war and conflict as a child asylum seeker and had latterly joined his extended family in Sheffield after being separated from his family in the Yemen. He was a very withdrawn and frightened child, and was malnourished.

The playground provided him with a safe haven to be a child, to play, explore and learn. His English skills have increased through play and he has been able to communicate with an Arabic speaking playworker. His inclusion into the Yemeni and multicultural community in the area has been made markedly easier by his being one of the 'Pitsmoor Adventure Playground children' which has in turn helped him to integrate in school, according to teachers' and Early Help workers' reports.

He is flourishing physically and emotionally and is always one of the first at the gate after school to come into the playground.





3. A group of Roma Slovak girls were demonstrating overtly sexualised behaviours. Staff at the playground supported them to unpick these risky behaviours in culturally appropriate and gender sensitive interventions, using playful learning opportunities as a non-stigmatising approach. This is having a positive effect, alongside joint working with partner agencies to address external concerns that pose a threat to young women.

4. A white English boy aged 8, with a diagnosis of autism, attends the playground daily. His lone parent mother faces many challenges as he only sleeps for four hours per night and is isolated in his community. The playground offers this child and his mother a vital lifeline where he accesses play opportunities and is supported to interact with other children.

His mother sees the playground as a form of respite for the child and herself, staying to take part in family activities and extend her own social interaction.

## Developing community cohesion

The playground welcomes parents and carers as well as children and is always looking for ways to help to integrate new families in the area and improve community cohesion. Activities we have provided include:

- Conversation classes to help parents/carers with very limited English, particularly focused on helping them to communicate with schools, GP practices and other essential services

- A maintenance group that aims to involve more male parents/carers with the playground
- Family days and cultural celebrations where parents and carers come together with their children to share food and learn about one another's traditions and cultures, for example Eid, St Nicholas' Day, Bonfire Night
- Events with partners such as the Big Lunch neighbourhood get together with the Friends of Burngreave Chapel and Cemetery and a Teddy Bears Picnic with Sheffield Green Spaces Forum.

## Improving the image of Pitsmoor / Burngreave

Our area has a poor image in the city and is frequently associated with crime and poverty in the local press. We have worked hard to build positive relationships with local media organisations to promote a more positive image of the area and develop pride in our community. Stories about the playground have appeared frequently in the pages of the Burngreave Messenger, our local community newspaper and the citywide Sheffield Star. We have also featured on Radio Sheffield and Hallam FM. We have invited key influencers in the City to visit us, including the Lord Mayor, Lord Lieutenant, High Sheriff and our local MP. They have all expressed their admiration for our work and the community activism of our children.

*"The litter pick made me feel good and excited that I had done it, I had helped make it different, make it nicer." (12 year old girl)*



# conclusions and recommendations



The playground has successfully engaged significant numbers of children throughout our specified age range over several years, by offering a very varied programme of activities that is reviewed and refreshed continuously. There is a natural throughput of users as older children leave but younger ones start to attend. Extending our provision to unsupervised 6 and 7 year olds is a step towards ensuring this throughput is maintained.

**Recommendation:** Continue to offer varied, fresh play opportunities and experiences to children aged 6 – 13. Consider ways to engage younger children with the playground, for example closed sessions for toddlers, partnership work with primary schools.

Drug use, gangs and knife crime are increasingly serious problems in our area. 2017 has seen the installation of a knife arch in the local secondary school, a rise in gang violence in streets around the playground and attempts to draw some of our users into gang activities.

**Recommendation:** Develop more one to one and group work with young people at risk of being drawn into criminal behaviour and gangs. Educate young people about prevention, resilience and how they can respond in dangerous scenarios. Work with multi-agencies including police and other youth services to make children and parents fully aware of their responsibilities and the impact of gangs, crime and violence on families and communities.

*"It is really good at the playground if you are new to the country because they can help you learn what is what and what you need to know to get on. After a while you won't be new any more and there will be times when you don't need anyone any more because they have helped you be able to do things for yourself. But if there are times when you need someone they are still there for you. You might need different help at different times and they know that." (9 year old boy)*







Over the period 2014 – 2017, we have extended our provision to 15 hours open access per week and to 6 and 7 year olds as well as 8 – 13 year olds. We have additionally increased the number and range of closed sessions we are offering to particular groups (for example music workshops; girls' empowerment project; conversation class); all without significantly expanding the staff team. To maximise value for money, we need to continue to extend usage of the site without significantly raising our costs.

**Recommendation:** Through careful staff planning and strategic use of sessional staff, increase number of closed sessions/extend open access sessions in summer.

We provided a playwork apprenticeship for a young Slovak woman who successfully completed her studies and joined our team as a permanent member of staff. However, there are very few training opportunities specific to playwork in the region and partners report difficulties in recruitment to vacant posts. More training is essential to keep staff reflective and motivated, and to develop playworkers for the future.

**Recommendation:** Using the expertise of our staff and trustees, source and deliver training opportunities for playworkers in the Yorkshire region.

*I don't know anywhere else where I would get to cook marshmallows on a fire. It's real, you can feel the heat on your face and smell the smoke. When they talk to you about being safe with fire you believe them because you can see and feel what happens. If you mess about you will get burnt and the smoke can hurt you too." (12 year old boy)*

With over 150 registered children using the playground regularly throughout the year, and a similar number who are not registered using it from time to time, we estimate approximately 250 children per year are benefitting from Pitsmoor Adventure Playground.

With significant support from our trustee, a Senior Lecturer in Playwork, we have collected a great deal of qualitative evidence that demonstrates the positive impact of the playground on children's lives. However, as an open access facility, we have found it difficult to monitor attendance effectively and to register less frequent visitors. We also need to develop less time intensive ways to collect qualitative evidence that can be done by playworkers.

**Recommendation:** Explore alternative ways to monitor attendance and continue to collect qualitative and quantitative evidence.

In a challenging financial environment and with diminishing reserves, the playground's sustainability depends on achieving core funding for premises and running costs as well as grants for direct work with children and specific project costs.

**Recommendation:** Prioritise core funding streams in fund-raising efforts and strategy. Explore opportunities to increase non-charitable income, for example through the provision of services/site hire to external organisations, to build up reserves.

*"When I grow up I want to work here at the playground or be a teacher or police officer." (11 year old girl)*



# Value for money

	2016/17	2015/16	2013/15 (24 months)
<b>Total income</b>	97088	109724	147512
<b>Total expenditure</b>	126710	110376	78994
<b>Restricted funds carried forward</b>	10000	11010	10714
<b>Unrestricted reserves</b>	28246	67868	68519



## Our expenditure breaks down approximately to:

- 80% staff (salaries, training and expenses)
- 15% activities (play materials and trip/activity costs)
- 5% overheads (site maintenance and administration)
- Capital improvements we have made to the site (such as the thrill slide) have been funded through local fund-raising efforts that the children are directly involved with.

*"This is the best playground ever"*

## our funders 2014-17

BBC Children in Need

Kathleen Hannay Memorial Trust

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue

The Tudor Trust

Sheffield City Council

Tesco Bags of Help

Virgin Money Giving

Chris Cave Foundation

Sheffield Lord Mayor's Charity

Community First

Hilden Charitable Trust

Aviva Community Fund

Arches Housing

Mandy Boyce

Burngreave Tenants and Residents Association

UNISON Northern General Hospital Branch

South Yorkshire Sport

Hallam FM

Finding Our Feet project at Northern Refugee Centre



**the Tudor trust**



**STRONGER SAFER COMMUNITIES RESERVE**

***Our thanks go out to everyone who has supported the playground over the last three years.***