

Acton Report - Dec 23 – Feb 24

Playwork Projects: supporting children to play out earlier and more often

Over the past few generations there has been a significant shift in the age at which children start playing out in their community independently of their parents and/or carers. Where it might previously have been normal to see children aged four or five playing out (often with older children keeping an eye on them) in some communities children now only start being allowed to play out on their own, or with friends, at the age of 10 or 11. This change in culture has occurred for a number of reasons including increases in the amount and speed of traffic, sensationalist media reporting of tragic incidents, greater pressure on parents of young children to work and an over-structuring of children's time outside of school. As a result parents are understandably more cautious about allowing their young children out to play and often struggle to find time for play within the busy schedule of work, childcare and other extra-curricular activities.

This should be a concern for communities because playing out is essential to children forming attachments to their local neighbourhoods and the other people in them. Playing is how children get to know and be known and the positive experiences they have whilst playing will affect how they feel about the places where they live. If children are starting to play out later and if they play out less often they will miss out on vital years of forming positive relationships with their communities.

Our playwork projects support parents, other carers and children to feel more confident about playing out in their local communities and encourage them to prioritise time for playing out alongside other more structured activities. In doing so our aim is to support children to play out from as early as is possible and to continue playing out regularly throughout their childhoods.

Attendance Statistics for Acton (Dec 23 – Feb 24)

	DEC23 - FEB24
Number of sessions	10
Total number of visits	94
Average attendance per session	9
Total number of different children on register	71

From December 23 onwards, in agreement with the community council, we opted to run sessions from one location rather than alternating as we had been through the year. We are pleased to report that this has resulted in an increase of attendance at the sessions as hoped.

In December we noticed an uptake in session attendance resulting in an average attendance of 12 per session. January was not as well attended however this is not cause for concern as this is a yearly trend across all open access provision in Wrexham due to several factors such as weather and change of children's routine.

We have noticed that during February the attendance figures have begun to rise with an average of 9 children per session and we expect this to continue. What is particularly pleasing is that there is a 'core' group of children who are accessing the provision on a weekly basis and are receiving great benefits from this. In particular we have seen the progression of one boy who has really begun to develop strong social interactions and improved confidence due to attending.

In order to promote the project we undertook a targeted advertising drive in Acton by promoting sessions through schools and leaflet drops in the community in addition to our website and social media pages.

As previously reported the response to the play sessions has been overwhelming positive within the community. Evaluation forms completed by children and parents agree that the sessions develop resilience, support emotional and physical health and improve overall well-being. Importantly, service users regularly report their enjoyment with the sessions and children are able to engage in opportunities that are new, novel and adventurous.

The types of play activities children have engaged in have been; den building, sports games, street games, 'traditional' games such as hide and seek, fire lighting and toasting marshmallows and go-karts to name a few. Below are some photos from the sessions.

