

Evergreen Adventure Playground

Free, inclusive, creative, fun, open-access, supervised play
"Outstanding" Ofsted 2015

Annual Report
2020/21

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Evergreen Play Association is kindly supported by;



Who We Are



Evergreen Play Association (Evergreen) is a voluntarily managed, grass-roots, inclusive adventure play project, known locally as 'Adventure'. Evergreen has been providing free, creative, supervised play as well as associated learning activities for over 48 years. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic we had over 600 children registered with us, of this number 10-12% are children with additional needs.

Through the provision of challenging play equipment and a wide range of activities, our objective is to facilitate play that will enhance the progress of our users' physical, intellectual, emotional, cultural and social skills. Evergreen assists in the development of a cohesive community through targeted projects that ensure our service is accessible to all who wish to participate. The

playground is consistently used as a model of good, inclusive play provision throughout the borough and beyond and we have appeared on several TV / radio programmes over the years as a model of excellent provision. This was shown when in the summer of 2015 when we received an unannounced Ofsted inspection which resulted in us being given an OUTSTANDING . The report stated:

“ Children continue to make excellent progress in their development. They are excited and motivated by the extensive range of fun and stimulating activities available for them in this unique playground”.

In January 2020 we were once again visited by Ofsted and were given a “Met” rating.

The green oasis of Evergreen was originally created in response to the local need for a safe place for children to play. With high crime rates, few open spaces and countless urban threats to children's safety; this need remains an increasing problem today.

Evergreen is a project that is important in the lives of local adults and children alike, its picturesque site in the heart of Hackney provides the ideal setting for the 'Adventure' that really works. Children and young people who visit our site are immediately taken with all that there is to explore. They cherish the freedom of choice that they have and take ownership of the playground with their peers. The Evergreen playworkers support the children, their activities and the children's suggestions, enhancing their experiences without excessive adult involvement. It is no surprise that children opt out of less stimulating time in front of a TV or computer, hanging out in the streets or participating in anti-social behaviour so that they can instead enjoy the inspiring and stimulating environment that Evergreen provides. At Evergreen, the welfare of the child is paramount

and we are committed to children's development through play. We endeavour to continuously monitor our provision and develop pioneering projects, which continue to meet the needs of all our present and future users.

We hope you find Evergreen as inspirational as we do. As this report contains merely a summary of all the projects and activities we provide, we would like to invite you to visit the project for yourself and to contact us if you would like any further information.

Covid – 19

Due to the onset of Covid – 19 the playground closed its gates to the children on 17th March 2020 to ensure that we did not inadvertently aid the spread of the virus. We felt we could not guarantee the safety of the children and their families and therefore made the very difficult decision to close. The national lockdown followed on the 23rd March 2020. Throughout the lockdown the inclusion playleader continued to seek funding for when we could reopen and kept in touch with the children and their families where possible. Plans were put in place during this time to ensure we could open safely at the earliest opportunity. Materials were purchased: water butts for handwashing outside, steam cleaner to ensure toilets and equipment was deep cleaned and sanitisers and a thermometer. A new registration form was constructed, and all the children needed to be re-registered. We had 186 individual children attend the playground during this time of which 9% were children with additional needs.

Opening During Covid-19



We opened our gates to the children on 20th July 2020 to provide 6 weeks of summer fun to the children. All children re-registered and were allocated play bubbles of up to 15 children. The bubbles were made with friends and appropriate age groups. We held 3 sessions a day, each session was 2 hours long with time in between each session to deep clean the equipment. We had 6 bubble groups in all during this time with one group for our disabled user group. The children had been in lockdown for nearly 4 months and were very happy to be back at the playground and seeing their friends and meeting new people. All play was outside with the children only coming into the building to use the toilets.

We provided snacks during each session and some children were able to celebrate their birthdays with their friends in their play bubble.

We continued with our bubble groups during term time and all subsequent school holidays.



The Workers



Evergreen has a tightly-knit team of core staff, playworkers and inclusion workers that are pivotal in Evergreen's positive environment. The core staff are made up of two co-play leaders each one with a different focus; Health and Safety, Inclusion and Finance and Administration.



The core staff team work together in the management of the site and the sessional staff. Through good communication and regular meetings, they ensure that the site is running to its full potential and work closely with the children and their parents to create a diverse programme that is accessible and exciting to all. Inclusion key workers are employed year round to work with children with disabilities and enable the children to fully realise the Evergreen experience. During school holidays, the team is at its largest, incorporating additional playworkers and support workers to ensure that the greater numbers of children can be accommodated. All employees are police checked and the entire site is inspected and approved by Ofsted. We also have an external play audit completed every year to ensure all our equipment both inside and out meets with Health and Safety regulations. This year the staff worked hard to ensure the play site was a Covid safe environment for the children and in turn, their families.



The core staff members hold a number of qualifications; both of the core staff members have attained an NVQ Level 3/Diploma in Playwork. Our inclusion Playleader has achieved her NVQ Level 4 in management and has a degree in Biomedical Science. The Inclusion Co-Leader and Health and Safety Co-Leader have completed British Sign Language to levels 2 and 1 respectively in order to work with deaf children

who access the playground. All staff members attend regular training in child protection, health and safety, food hygiene, first aid, inclusion and a variety of other playwork courses.

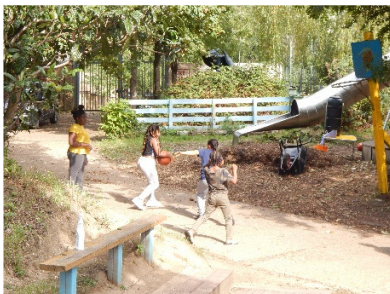
Adventure Play Area



Children enjoy a range of facilities at Evergreen that are not available elsewhere in the E8 area. The entire adventure play area is landscaped and fitted with specific equipment to stimulate the diverse and full range of play types. The equipment is challenging for all children, encouraging positive risk-taking without hazard, while enabling children of all abilities to participate. The children can run, jump, roll, swing, slide, climb and explore any activity that

they can imagine. Children enjoy making their own camps and structures within our forest area.

The obstacle course which traverses the playground allows children to balance, climb and swing around the perimeter of the playground without touching the ground. This is a challenge that all the children like to try.



Evergreen's landscape enables play to take place on a variety of different levels, providing space for children to explore and learn through nature. Children can become absorbed in the quiet and lush Evergreen garden or get involved in a pond dipping activity. In contrast, there is plenty of room for football and other team games as well as ample space for relaxing and socialising with peers. All of these spaces are used freely, and the children change them frequently, depending on the dynamics that the young

people create for themselves. All these opportunities facilitate social development and cohesion.



The football pitch (known as the ‘green space’) is as busy as ever. Children enjoy football games in this space every day while on other occasions, it hosts dance workshops, visiting drama groups and races with aeroplanes(that the children have made), balloon races – great fun - and many other activities.

The Garden and Wildlife



The garden at Evergreen is a place where children can learn about and interact directly with the environment. With two ponds, a towering willow tree, palm trees, reeds, giant lilies, bamboo, succulents, tree ferns and many native plants, children are free to roam and explore the space using all of their senses. The children take an active role in the garden’s fruit and vegetable patches and participate in planting, weeding, composting and harvesting throughout the year.

The ponds are alive with a huge variety of freshwater plants, insects, tadpoles and hundreds of frogs, making it a constant source of fascination and curiosity. . Children have an opportunity to see the cycles of life first-hand and gain respect for the natural world that surrounds them





Evergreen's abundant wildlife is encouraged by the wooded areas and wildflower patches found throughout the playground. Frogs, bees, dragonflies, foxes, fish, water spiders, squirrels, centipedes, butterflies and an array of birds keep the site flourishing with the sights and sounds of nature, providing constant excitement for some of our younger users.

The environment



playground's ability.

Evergreen is committed to sustainable living and through good practice, teaches children and young people how to value and respect the environment. The playground follows a green policy wherever finances allow; the garden has a large composting area for garden waste and a separate compost for food wastage; biodegradable products are used wherever possible and most office supplies and art supplies are recycled goods. Many art projects that the children participate in are based around the use of recycled items from their home or the playground. Evergreen also recycles wherever it is possible and encourages children to do the same with designated recycle boxes. Paper, tin, glass, plastic, batteries and clothing are all recycled to the best of the

The Play Building

The play building which houses an arts and crafts room, soft play room and sports hall was not used by the children this year due to the pandemic. Instead, all activities took place outside under our canopies which kept the children shaded in the warmer weather and dry in the damp weather.

Children were able to play table football, basketball, table tennis and many other games within our outside space. Snacks are provided during all play sessions and children's birthdays were also celebrated at the playground.

Activity Programmes



All of Evergreen's activity programmes are based upon the children's choice in play. Regular feedback and consultancy sessions such as 'Your Shout' meetings provide the foundations



for designing the activity schedules which are a true reflection of the children who access the playground.

Activities include a wide variety of arts and crafts, sports and team games, garden and environmental activities.

Just a few examples of what children participated in this year are: tee shirt printing, glass painting, pottery, wood working, jewellery making, gardening, recycling, composting, pond-dipping, football tournaments, cricket, basketball, water games, fire play and camp building and dancing!



Winter Programmes

We had to close the playground during November due to Government restrictions. During this time we were able to get all our Health and Safety checks carried out. We opened again in December and started planning our Christmas activities. A highlight for the children is our Christmas period when we hold a big party for all the children. We are

very fortunate to receive presents for the children through ELBA's Toy Appeal. This ensures all the children go home with a lovely gift.

The parties were planned, with each bubble group giving a play session with party and presents. A day before we were due to have the parties, further restrictions were put in place – limits to social mixing. We then had to rearrange the parties and hold 5 parties in one day! Each party was an hour long with children having food, collecting their present and going home with a goodie bag.



The New Year brought with it another lock down!
During this lockdown, we kept in touch with the children and sent out art and craft packs to our regular user group. We held a competition where all children who emailed or sent a picture of what they had created received an Argos voucher. We had some fantastic creations!



A few of our great art works!

During the time we were closed to the children we were able to have our climbing nets refurbished and sadly, said goodbye to our boat structure. Through funding received from Clarion Futures, ELBA and UBS we were able to get another structure built in time to welcome the children back in March.



Finance

Our core funding is obtained from the London Borough of Hackney - Young Hackney. 100% of our core grant is consumed by staff costs and overheads. With the costs of running the playground increasing every year, fundraising efforts have grown, and new sources of grants are continually being sought. Contributions from other charities and trusts are a vital source of income to the playground, without which the playground would be unable to remain open. As with all voluntary organisations, we have noticed the effect of austerity on the funding we receive. We have been extremely fortunate in receiving grants and funds from: City Bridge Trust (2 years funding from August 2019 – July 2021) towards our inclusion project, with an additional grant received to help with operating during Covid-19, Hackney Learning Trust for term time inclusion, Clarion Housing Group/Clarion Futures has given and continues to give support to the playground for our holiday scheme and capital build, Garfield Western Foundation and The Edward Gosling Foundation who has given grants to help during the pandemic to ensure we can provide much needed play and support to the children and their families. We were very fortunate to receive 3 years funding from Trusthouse Charitable Foundation in February towards our Inclusion Project and core costs.

Supporting Groups

We would like to give a big thank you to the following organisations who have given us their support over the past year: The London Borough of Hackney; Hackney Learning Trust;; Alwyns Connor Warin(accountants);and all of Hackney's Adventure Playgrounds.

We would like to thank the volunteer groups from ELBA for their hard work and donations during this difficult year.

We would like to thank ELBA for all the work they do throughout the year and for the toys and games donated to ensure the children of Evergreen had a fantastic Christmas party and went home with a gift.

Most importantly, Evergreen would like to thank all of the parents, children and young people who access Evergreen and support us throughout the year.

Human Resources

Co-Play Leaders

Arnold Mahoney: Health and Safety, Arts and Crafts and Child Protection/Safeguarding

Pat Macantsionnaigh: Inclusion, Finance, Fundraising, Monitoring and Administration

Management Committee

Chair: Jennifer Parris

Secretary: Marie Lindor

Treasurer: Jean Lander

Other Members

June Hamlet
Jacki Hoilett

Sessional Playworkers

Leon Williams-Kelly
Kojo Oppong
Jerome Carr
Taimak Nelson
Sheldon Portious
Jhane Parris-Peter

Owen Daley
Cris Karema
Charlotte Alfred

Volunteers
Various groups from ELBA