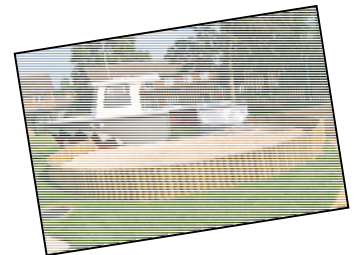
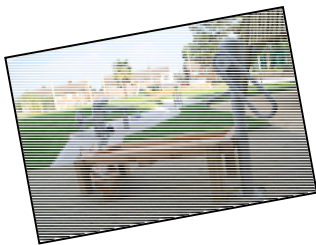


# SYCAMORE ADVENTURE



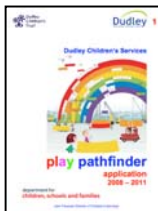
[www.Sycamoreadventure.co.uk](http://www.Sycamoreadventure.co.uk)



## National Context to the development of this Play Service

The National Play Strategy outlines the previous government's nationwide vision for play. The 10 year strategy provides a 2020 vision for play and sets a target of England being the best place for children's play in the world. The vision sees England having a wide range of supervised and unsupervised play opportunities available for all children and young people, making children's play a priority; with play workers becoming qualified and recognised as professionals and there being places for children to play in every neighbourhood. The strategy was supported by £235 million investment in Children's Play between 2008 – 2011 with 30 play pathfinder authorities and 122 play builder authorities.

The importance, benefits and impact of play have been recognised in a wide range of government white papers, legislation and guidance. Organisations such as Play England have mapped the impact that play has on children, young people, families and communities in their statutory guidance "Embedding the Play Strategy". Play has obvious links to all areas of the every child matters agenda, and impacts on a wide variety of National Indicators, helps authorities to meet the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child, the Disability Discrimination Act, the safeguarding agenda, Children and Young People's plan, children's access to five hours of physical activity and reducing childhood obesity.



## Local Background and Service Delivery

Following the success of the Borough's BIG Lottery Dudley Play Initiative Grant funding and the strength of our Dudley Play Strategy, in April 2008, the council was awarded £2,611,263 by the then Department for Children Schools and Families to deliver a Play Pathfinder Programme. The three year programme has seen the development of 28 children's play areas across the borough (over half of the play areas in Dudley). And, the development of Dudley's only operating outdoor and indoor children's adventure playground built at the Sycamore Centre in the north of the borough, and offering a wealth of inclusive play opportunities to children and young people from 0 - 19 years of age. The pathfinder programme also established a new statutory and voluntary sector Dudley Play Service within children's services (The Just Enjoy Team).



The Just Enjoy team provides:

- play opportunities at Sycamore Adventure throughout the year and prioritises this service to local children and those from vulnerable groups, (to include disabled children, looked after children, children from BME groups, young carers, newly arrived children and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children).
- access for schools, children's centres, nurseries, child-minders, youth groups and voluntary sector organisations, ensuring that regular bookings take place at the centre.
- a varied menu of activities, such as Forest Schools sessions, adventure play sessions, and free play opportunities for external services and children from across the borough.

- play opportunities outside of the centre throughout the five townships via play ranging sessions and scheduled play days & events.
- in excess of one million play hours per year.

The play service is based at the new Sycamore Adventure playground, as well as providing play opportunities across the Borough throughout the year. The new play service includes a team of qualified full-time, part-time and sessional play workers who operate within children's services extended services team. The team includes Council employed play workers and sessional play workers from the voluntary sector (Mencap, KIDS, Free 2 Play, Busy Big Hands). The service has also recruited a team of volunteers who are involved in supporting play session and supporting the ongoing maintenance of Sycamore Adventure.



Sycamore Adventure has been developed with inclusion at its heart. A wide range of consultations took place to ensure Sycamore Adventure was fit for purpose. Sycamore Adventure boasts accessible building and landscaping facilities, a full care room, two fully accessible toilets, play equipment suitable for children with a wide range of impairments and a variety of toys, resources and equipment to aid inclusive play. The inclusive nature of the service has been recognised locally and nationally and as such has been awarded Mencap's me2 award following inspection and approval from disabled children and young people. The service prioritises local children (from Dudley's Castle and Priory Ward, statistically the most deprived ward in the borough) and those from a wide range of marginalised groups. Sycamore Adventure is attended on a regular basis by disabled children, looked after children, young carers, children from black and ethnic minority groups and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. A website ([www.sycamoreadventure.tv](http://www.sycamoreadventure.tv)) has been developed to record; quantitative and qualitative data about the varied audience accessing the centre, the play hours delivered at the centre (which can be broken down by township), the impact the centre is having on children attending the service, children's satisfaction with the service and with the staff team, amongst other data.

### **Service Delivery:**

The Play Service offers a vital portfolio of play opportunities for children and young people across the Borough. The service is central to achieving strategic objectives for Dudley children and young people and meeting our children and young people's plan. With the minimum service offer the play service will:



1. Operate Sycamore Adventure. The service runs six days a week for a total of 48 hours; offering morning, afternoon and evening sessions for children and young people of all ages. A wide range of targeted promotion and engagement has resulted in the service being used by some of the boroughs most needy children and young people as mentioned in the section above (with this information being recorded and collated for reporting and monitoring purposes). The play work qualified staff team are able to offer a wide and varied play menu to children throughout the year. This includes providing short breaks for children and families who have profound and complex needs and providing a consistent service to the

borough's looked after children. The team are also able to work with schools, children's centres, child minders and other groups via regular group bookings throughout the year. The team can offer a varied list of opportunities for group bookings including; Forest School sessions, adventure play sessions, team building sessions, sensory play opportunities, to name but a few. Our play service team are responsible for the entire maintenance and running of the centre and have expertise in play, horticulture, structure building, playground maintenance and forestry. Volunteers support the service through delivery of play ranging sessions and supporting the staff team with the general upkeep of the building and grounds.



2. The Just Enjoy team provide a schedule of play ranging events throughout the year. The staff also take a wide range of resources out into our communities to deliver play days and events to children and families. This includes Dudley Play Week, which takes place in five parks across the five townships over five days during the summer holidays. In 2010, Dudley Play Week saw over 1,000 children and young people attend and join in the fun. Our Play Team also attends the Dudley Performing Arts Festival each year and provides play opportunities at this event, amongst others.
3. The team maintains the three dedicated play websites;
  - a. [www.justenjoy.tv](http://www.justenjoy.tv) which promotes play opportunities across Dudley Borough (including revenue and capital programmes)
  - b. [www.sycamoreadventure.tv](http://www.sycamoreadventure.tv) (accessible from the Just Enjoy site), which promotes and manages all activities and bookings for the adventure playground
  - c. [www.playspace.tv](http://www.playspace.tv) which promotes play across the Black Country, (being jointly funded and managed between Dudley MBC, Wolverhampton MBC, Walsall MBC and Sandwell MBC).

These sites promote all play provision, opportunities and events in Dudley, collate relevant data and provide a central hub of information for play.

4. The team are available to offer advice, information and guidance regarding all areas of play development. The team have expertise in play provision and can advise partners in the Children's trust regarding future development in play. This includes sharing of skills, best practice, tools and resources with a wide range of groups.

### **Risks for the service**

The centre and the play service were funded through the Governments Play Pathfinder Grant. Currently contracts are held with 4 voluntary sector organisations (as above) via an SLA to March 2011 to provide sessional play workers. The contracts of the 2 paid members of staff also run to March 2011.

1. **2010/2011** - With the recent change in government, the entire play service has been put into jeopardy. During financial year 2010 – 2011, the service received a 50% budget cut. The team are presently securing additional funds to meet the shortfall for this financial year.
2. **2011/2012** – There are no current indication as to whether there will be any further funding from central government to support Play following this financial year. There is a high risk that there will be no funding.

A detailed business case is being developed to look at means of sustaining the service post March 2011.

