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Birmingham PlayCare Network

Play In Parks

Birmingham PlayCare Network (BPCN) manages a scheme that sees teams of play workers delivering open access play provision in parks and recreation grounds. These schemes run in the school holidays throughout the year and the aim is for children and their families to reclaim the green spaces around their homes, love outdoor active play.

BPCN has delivered the scheme over the last 11 years and during the summer holidays of 2014 delivered the scheme in 12 different parks! BPCN recruit workers, DBS check them, provide basic play work training before they work for the next 4 weeks in their allocated parks in teams of up to 6. The team always consists of 1 leader, 1 deputy and up to 4 play workers and these teams are there purely to facilitate play opportunities. The scheme is NOT childcare and parents retain full responsibility. Children that are coming along to play in parks are free to come and go as they please. It is an open access scheme and there is no registration process and we are not registered or inspected by Ofsted due to the nature of the scheme.

You can find out where when we will be delivering the scheme and in which parks by looking on our website www.bpcn.org.uk

Opportunity for partnership working

In the past BPCN have developed links with the community located around the parks. The links are there purely for partnership working opportunities. It's a chance for the children and community to engage in an informal manner to form positive relationships. Play in Parks aims to promote the ethos of community cohesion and one of the identified outcomes of the play in parks scheme is that anti social behaviour in young people is reduced if they are coming along to the park during their summer holiday. The size of the park and the weather does impact on the number of children attending but just as an illustration, Digby Park in Small Heath attracted between 300 and 400 children each day!

Each recreation space will receive a equipment such as sports, arts and craft, play, games, cooking equipment and loose parts. The scheme will be open access to all of the community which means families can come and go as freely as they please. The project will hold regular community celebrations to ensure ties are made between communities in the areas. Volunteers will be trained over the duration of delivery to equip them with the skills needed to deliver community based projects in the future, leaving a legacy of skills which are accessible to communities. Regular community meetings are held with residents from Friends of Park groups, volunteer organisations and third sector groups to ensure the community are consulted with as part of the planning and delivery stages. BPCN often try to recruit community champions who are elected from residents to try and ensure that play remains high on the park agenda. BPCN work with external partners to ensure as many areas of the community are engaged as possible. BPCN endeavour to empower communities to reclaim their recreational space where residents are at the heart of our project delivery. This project will equip

communities with enough skills and knowledge to set up their own engagement projects to sustain, flourishing, diverse and cohesive communities.

Background of BPCN

Birmingham PlayCare Network was set up in 1995, by a group of playcare professionals, in response to a rapidly expanding area of childcare provision. Its purpose is to voice the issues and concerns of the playcare sector; to share information, facilitate contact, offer support and share best practice in child centred play and playcare within the Birmingham area. We are a member led organisation and we are open to those that work directly or indirectly with children in out of school clubs and play settings. This may include individuals, voluntary groups and organisations, statutory bodies, out of school clubs, play settings and child minders.

