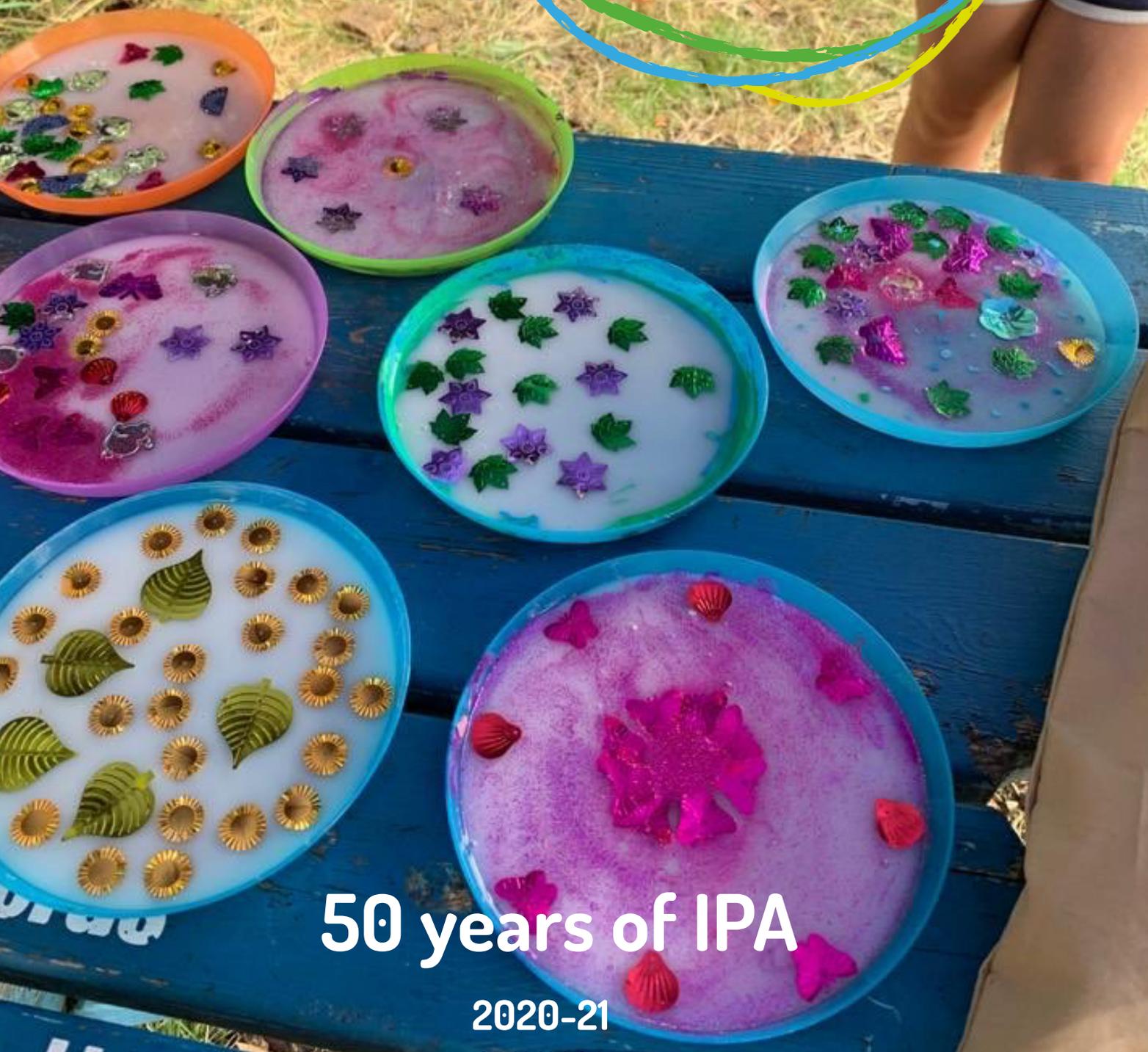




ISLINGTON
PLAY
ASSOCIATION



50 years of IPA

2020-21
ANNUAL
REPORT

itish





2020-2021 has been massively challenging and I am extremely proud of the commitment of our staff who've worked hard throughout these strange times. Their dedication has allowed us to deliver effective, high quality play interventions for children of all ages and their families throughout the pandemic.

We adapted quickly to make the changes needed to support the communities we work with including setting up food banks and creating play packs. Staff have worked with old and new partners to ensure creative projects and responses have been instigated across the borough.

The problems we are trying to solve:

1. Technological impact, specifically social media
2. The impact of the pandemic – an unprecedented period of restriction and isolation leading to a disconnect with environment and peers
3. Unhealthy lifestyles and stress
4. Parental fear around perceived threats from external factors such as cars and strangers reducing independence and agency
5. Information overload.

The things that families tell us make a difference are:

1. Safe spaces to go that are free
2. Welcoming staff with the children's best outcomes at heart
3. Interesting places which are exciting, distracting and involving
4. Friends, people to talk to, places to share experiences
5. Role models, mentors and links to other services that can help.

At IPA we've focussed on our free adventure playgrounds and welcoming children's centre to create the spaces and wraparound that families have told us that they want. The new fifteen-year contract for five adventure playgrounds started in April 2020 and we will continue to deliver open access adventure play at every possible opportunity.

We have been very pleased to have had the benefit of a strong and stable trustee board and robust discussions allowing us to focus on our mission and aims and to make it possible for the organisation to respond to local need swiftly and flexibly including remaining open throughout the pandemic for key workers in the nursery and all young people at the playgrounds.

Anita Grant
Chief Executive

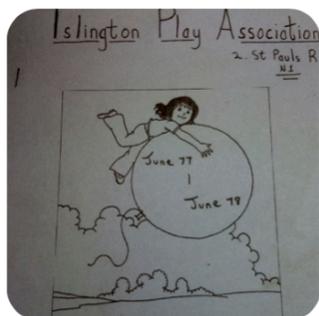


THE HISTORY OF ISLINGTON PLAY ASSOCIATION

Word spread that a play association was to be set up by non locals so a group of Islington residents got together and created a play association of their own.



1971



1973

During the summer of 1973 Islington Council went on strike and so IPA had a chance to organise the playschemes themselves.

1974

In the March of 1974 the Association moved to new offices at 2 St Pauls Road N1 in a building shared with Islington Poverty Action Group, the community Press and the People's Housing Services.



1976

In 1976, The Islington Play Lorry, a three ton converted truck with a mobile Adventure Playground built on its back was donated by ILEA to IPA.

August 23rd 1989 saw the first ever all London Playday. IPA was on the steering group. 1989 was the 30th anniversary since the declaration of the rights of the child. 27 out of the 33 London Boroughs took part.



In September 2000, IPA opened its first Children's Centre on the Priory Green Estate near Kings Cross providing a location for an after school club, extended day holiday playschemes and a range of Sure Start services.



IN 2011/12 IPA spearheaded the campaign to protect the land of the adventure playgrounds and successfully protected all the playgrounds in perpetuity through a land trust.

In 2020 IPA was commissioned for a further 15 years to deliver adventure playgrounds to ensure the longevity of adventure play in Islington. Testament to the commitment of Islington council, in our densely packed, urban borough to the health and wellbeing of children and their right to play.

1989

In 1995/6, IPA amended its constitution and radically restructured its management. It adopted a new mission statement – the IPA Statement of Purpose.

1995



2000

In December 2005 the IPA moved its nursery into a building in Paradise Park where the Council also housed Sure Start services.

2005

In 2007/8, IPA took on full management of all services of the Paradise Park Children's Centre. The centre had a café, run on social enterprise principles, and a new permanent administrative, meeting and training base for the IPA.

2007



2011

2013

In 2013 IPA won the tender to deliver six adventure playgrounds, working with the community to create a network of free play

2020

ISLINGTON
PLAY
ASSOCIATION



ADVENTURE PLAY

To say that 2020/21 was an unusual year would, as you know, be a massive understatement. How could we have planned for the pandemic and subsequent lockdown which meant we had to stop all of our Adventure Play services? Initially, we were stunned by the changes that were needed from us, and concerned for our communities and our children.

Guidelines were put in place to keep the UK safe from infection, this meant that we had to close our playgrounds from March 20th till July 26th 2020. During this time we learnt about the virus and found that the safest place for people was outdoors. This is still the case, COVID-19 is difficult to catch outside. We put together a risk assessment which meant we were able to open to the optimum amount of children in July, as soon as the rules loosened.

We were allowed to open our adventure playgrounds to children in July 2020 and remained open throughout the second lockdown. Our outdoor services were free in every sense of the word. Children who had been

alone and isolated reunited with their friends and made new connections.

Between April 2020 and March 2021 we had 8,359 attendances to our playgrounds by 549 children. This is much fewer children than in previous years because our gates were closed for three months and because we had to control the numbers of children attending. We are still terrifically proud of the achievements of our brave and caring playworkers who opened the gates as soon as it was possible and who stayed open when others couldn't.



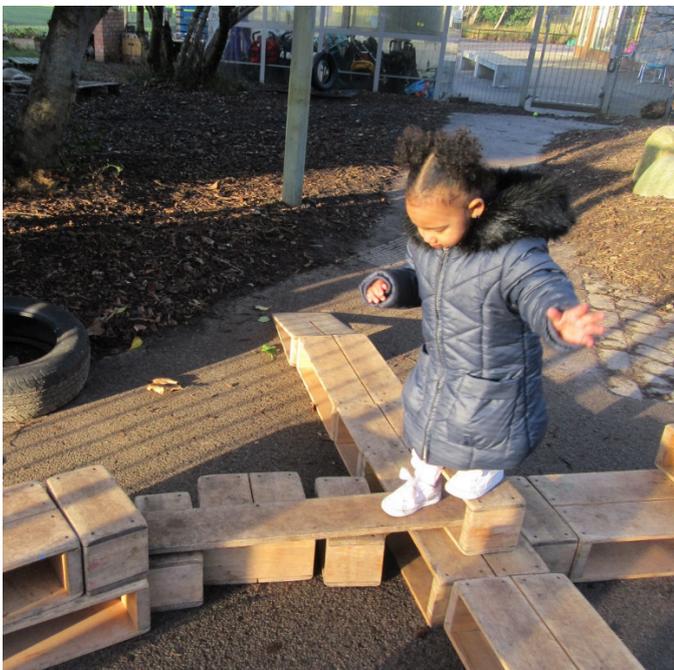
PARADISE PARK NURSERY

The Nursery at Paradise Park remained open throughout the pandemic and we wanted to ensure that families who most needed it continued to have a safe space for their children.

At first, only children who were deemed vulnerable or those of key workers were able to attend. Also due to COVID-19 restrictions, there were a number of activities that we were unable to do such as playing in the sandpit or with playdough and some toys, after they were used, had to go in isolation.

Luckily, at Paradise Park we have a wonderful outdoor area and when the weather stayed dry, which it did for most of the spring and summer of 2020, the children could play freely and escape the world outside the nursery's walls.

As lockdown slowly began to ease, children began to return to the nursery little by little. Parents were worried and some families had been hit very badly by the pandemic. However, with the support and encouragement from our staff the parents were put at ease. By September 2020, the nursery was back and fully open.



The Children's Centre has continued to supply families most in need with healthy food in partnership with the Felix Project.

We would not have been able to remain open if it was not for our outstanding nursery staff. Both staff and children have been resilient and have adapted to our new normal. They managed to celebrate Christmas by hosting a Christmas dinner with all the children and staff. They ate delicious food and played festive games. This was a very special event for everyone.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

FOOD PACKAGES

Adventure Playgrounds are at the heart of some of the country's most financially disadvantaged communities. Our partnership with **Felix Project** meant that we were able to hand out food packages at Timbuktu in the lockdown in March 2020. This work still continues and now takes place across four of our playgrounds and our Children's Centre with added support from **Kitchen Social**. This is an integral response to the fact that Over 40% of Islington's children live in poverty.



'Food Henge' at Toffee Park



PLAY PACKS

With partners in **The Museum of London, Culture Mile** and **The Mayor's Fund for London** we made and circulated wonderful packs full of paint, paper, string, chalk, postcards, books, paintbrushes, suggestions, games, art projects and prompts for happy and playful times. We know these packs helped families during the hard times of home schooling and gave them space for some playful and wild moments. One parent told us **'I have three children on my own and sometimes I felt overwhelmed, the packs gave them something to do when things got too much.'**

GROW BOXES

With **Overgrown East**, we curated food growing boxes to give to families local to Caledonian Road as part of our work with **Gally Fest** and **Islington Council**. We gave out 150 packs which included soil, a tomato plant, wildflower seeds and methods to make pots.

In 2020-21 IPA worked closely with the local authority to support those families with children most impacted by the crisis. Including by attending Islington control board and Islington influencers meetings held weekly and monthly. This allowed the services to respond to themes and queries from across the borough and led to new partnerships.

IPA is firmly embedded in the Cally community and have been leading on **cultivating Cally** and the creation of a **'greening the grey'** project for Freeling street as well as being part of the **'we are cally'** initiative.

IPA has continued to work closely with the **Children and Young People's Voluntary Sector Forum** to support other organisations working directly with young people. Our CEO is also Chair of **Play England** which ensures that we are fully engaged with the wider play community allowing us to share good practice and influence policy. There has been a focus on keeping play on the agenda nationally including letters to newspapers and government and we will lead on the summer of play campaign for 2021 with articles in the Guardian and Telegraph quoting our CEO and raising the profile of play.





OUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The landscape for children is continuing to change as they try to reintegrate into their settings, schools and friendship groups. They are also very affected by parents and carers' experiences and their mental health and well-being. Islington Play will continue to focus on providing high quality play opportunities wherever children are. We will also seek out new spaces and places to make playful and more welcoming for the children that access them.

Our whole community approach means that we work with partners to benefit entire families, supporting them to recognise the importance of and make space for play.

In 2021-2022 we will continue to flexibly deliver our adventure play and children's centre services. We will also seek out new partners to work with that communities' trust and to build our relationships with the schools in Islington. We have plans for a new building at Martin Luther King adventure playground and will be creating an extra nursery room at Paradise Park to continue to expand our play offer.

Play is the way that children can assimilate their experiences, mitigate their traumas and communicate their feelings. Play is what children do when grown ups are not telling them what to do and they certainly need some of that after this year of unprecedented restriction and observation. In 2020/21 Islington Play is in a strong and stable financial position, with a committed group of trustees and an experienced staff team.

The Islington play team will use experience and informed approaches to create play everywhere we can and will champion the power of free play, especially outside for children across the borough.



TRUSTEES OF THE CHARITY

CHAIR

Julie Lowe

VICE-CHAIR

James Sinclair Taylor

TREASURER

Manisha Kaur Kohli

VICE-TREASURER

Richard Stephens

TRUSTEES

Jane Deighton

Adeep Sethi

Amanda Castro





Islington Play Association

020 76079637

Twitter: @islingtonplay

164 MacKenzie Road

info@islingtonplay.org.uk

Instagram: Islingtonplay

London N7 8SE

www.islingtonplay.org.uk

Find us on Facebook



ISLINGTON

MAYOR OF LONDON