

PLAYFUL MAYHEM COMES TO WANDSWORTH! THE REPORT



PROJECT:
PLAYFUL MAYHEM COMES TO WANDSWORTH!
FUNDER:
NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND
AWARDS FOR ALL





Introduction

Playful Mayhem Comes to Wandsworth was an 18 month programme of free parent/carer and child wellbeing drama sessions with a healthy breakfast. It was created for families facing financial pressure, isolation, and limited access to the arts.

The programme ran in familiar community spaces across Battersea Park, Roehampton and Tooting, including Wandsworth libraries and community centres.

Our sessions were joyful, playful and child led. We said yes to children's ideas and built stories in the moment using puppets, props, music and movement. Children developed confidence, communication, language and social skills.

Parents and carers gained simple playful tools to strengthen connection and co-regulation at home.

Over the project we delivered 50 sessions in 10-week blocks and welcomed around 150 families.

The Need

We created this project because many families in pockets of Wandsworth face:

**MONEY
WORRIES**

**LESS
ACCESS
TO ARTS
ACTIVITIES**

**FEELING
ISOLATED**

Before applying for funding, we tested demand through six taster sessions in Wandsworth libraries and short community surveys.

**Survey responses showed:
57% said they would like a snack
alongside the drama sessions
100% said they would attend
if the sessions were free**

A primary school SENCO also noted
“improved social and communication
skills, sharing and turn taking, and
improved self esteem and confidence in
reluctant speakers”.



The Approach



We delivered 50 storytelling and drama sessions with breakfast across Battersea Park, Roehampton and Tooting.

Sessions were led by us, Leia Licorish and Sandy Beech, the founders of Playful Doses Drama CIC. To ensure every child was noticed and supported, sessions were always led by Leia and Sandy, both highly trained practitioners with

46 years of collective experience.



Leia Licorish



Sandy Beech

Sessions were inclusive of children with additional needs and children learning English as an additional language. We used puppets, props, musical instruments and sensory materials so children could join in through movement, play, sound, touch and imagination.

Each session had a clear structure:

- Time to arrive and eat breakfast
- A short group warm up with puppets, silly games, songs and chants
- A short visual story as a jumping off point
- A longer, child led play and story making time
- A group dance, sometimes with bubbles!
- A calming cool down with playful breathing activities, parachute games, and a final song or chant



Children told us:

"I like the Goops and the puppets!"

"It's fun, I like the Goops and the chicken toys."

"Let's have a King of the Goops!"

"The stories made it fun!"

We delivered three 10-week blocks in Battersea Park and Tooting libraries and we delivered two 10-week blocks at Alton Arts Hub in Roehampton and Mushkil Aasaan Centre in Tooting.



Battersea Park Library Setup

Library Feedback Included:

“These sessions are fun, help children build confidence and social skills and give them a chance to learn through play in a friendly environment.”

“We truly appreciate all the hard work and care that went into making it fun and engaging.”

“We hope to see you again next time!”

We followed best practice through risk assessments, session notes, safeguarding forms, and clear GDPR processes for photos and personal data. We also kept safeguarding and paediatric first aid training up to date.

The Impact

What we wanted to find out

We wanted to understand whether families experienced changes in:



What We Discovered

Across feedback and observations, families reported clear shifts in confidence and communication.

Children who were reluctant speakers began joining in more, using more words, and initiating ideas.

Parents and carers noticed improvements in:

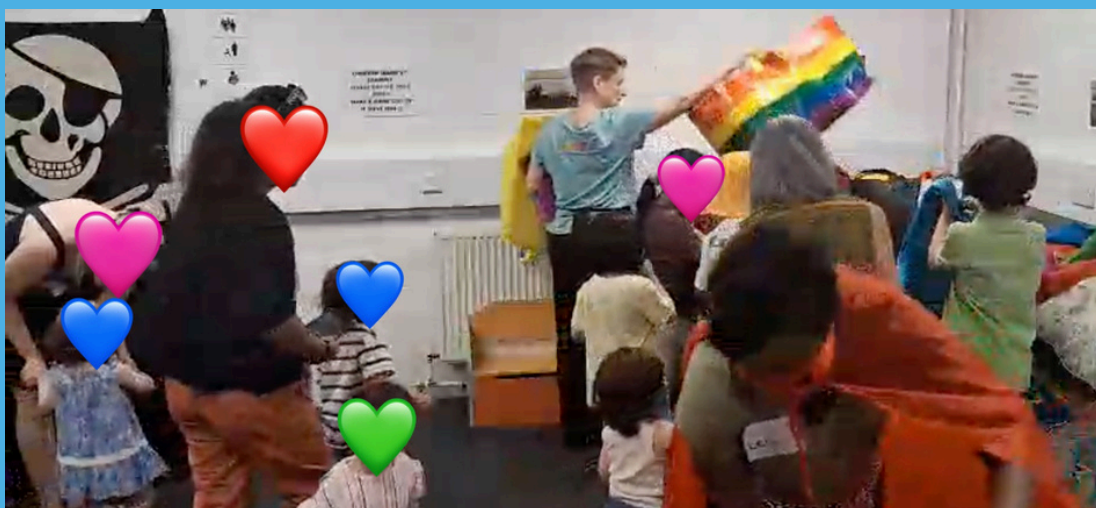


Adults also described stronger connections with their children, including lots of talking at home about their shared Playful Mayhem experiences.



M's Story

Some parents and carers came with toddler siblings, which meant their attention often had to stay on the toddlers' immediate needs. Sometimes that made it harder to play freely with the older child. This inspired us to introduce a simple activity that created quick moments of attachment play, helping the older child feel seen and responded to. Thus, our “ribbons of power” game was born!



Parent/carer feedback included:

“My son is speaking much more English at home now.”

“I noticed differences in my child’s confidence, sharing, ability to sit and listen and focus.”



“I can see my daughter’s confidence building.”

“It has been fantastic for his confidence. I’ve really seen him come out of his shell.”

**“Great to have a structured thing
to do together each week.”**



**“I’ve noticed they have become more confident,
more comfortable joining in with others
and more willing to express themselves.”**

“Brilliant fun for the children and carers.”

How We Collected and Reviewed Evidence

We used:

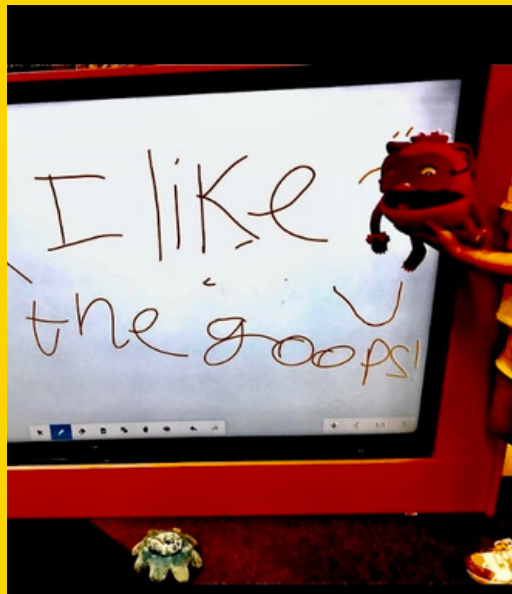
Written feedback forms before and after each block

Child friendly feedback methods such as stickers

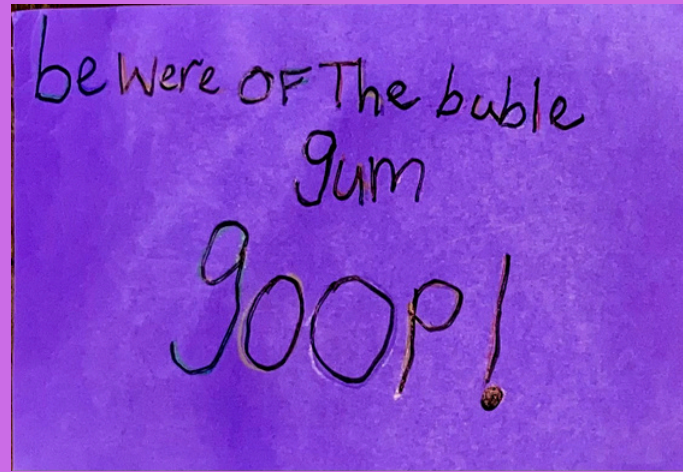
Verbal feedback before, during and after sessions

A feedback book for adults

Booking and attendance data

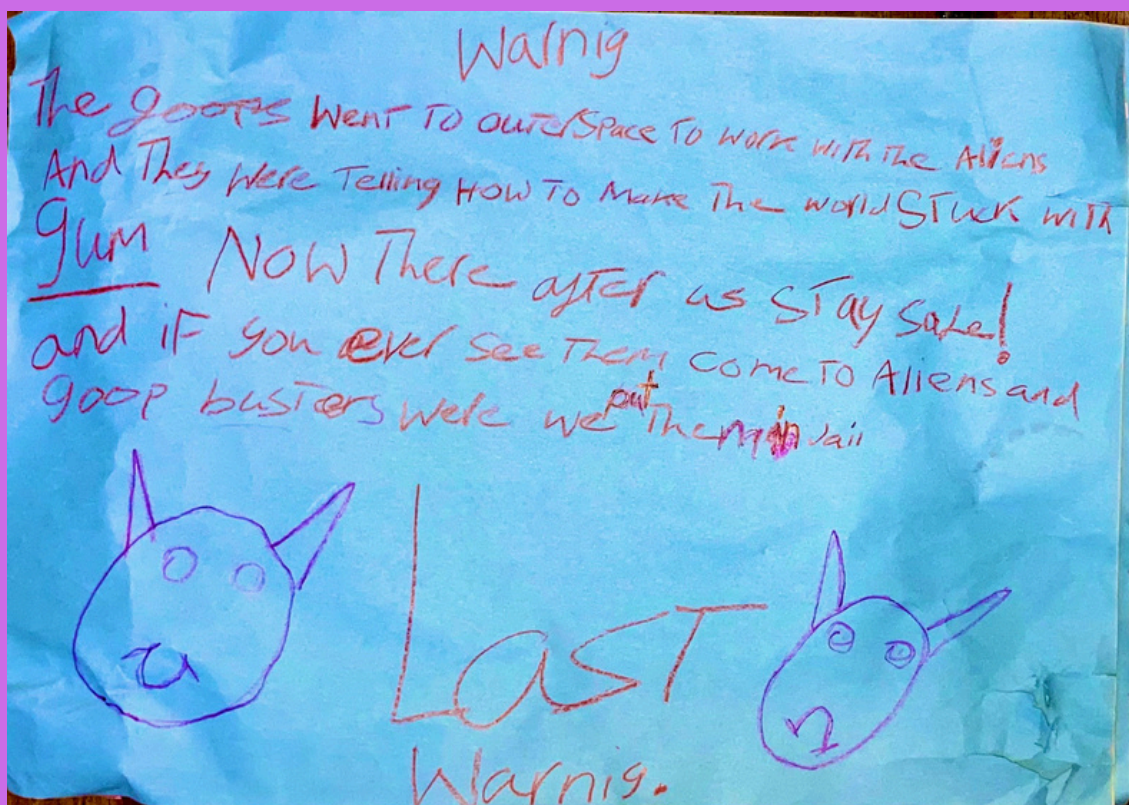


After each session we held reflective review meetings and recorded session notes. We used this learning to shape the next week's story and activities.



K's Story

One older sibling needed something a bit more grown up to help them join in. We noticed they loved making art, so we provided extra materials, inviting them to make signs for the different impromptu stations the other children had created. They then ran with it, writing and illustrating their own story, allowing them to express their own creativity.



Lessons Learnt

Having two practitioners leading sessions gave us great scope to pay attention to each child and parent/carer, observe needs, and respond accordingly.

Families were more likely to attend sessions in libraries, where we were consistently fully booked. We would focus future delivery in libraries, as they continue to grow as community hubs for arts activity.

Families preferred to take food home as snacks, so in future we would provide take home food parcels.

Feedback processes worked well, especially as we regularly refined forms to be more succinct and relevant. Sessions were popular and attendance exceeded expectations.

Parent/carer feedback included:

“Really great this exists for free!”

“We would love another block of Saturday sessions please!”

“We are so grateful this class exists and hope to see you back here soon.”

A big success for us was that families responded enthusiastically to our sensitively crafted, child centered ethos:

**“Really appreciated that nothing is forced,
only encouraged.**

Very fun and safe environment.

There’s no pressure and it’s really fun!”



D’s Story

In the first block of sessions they attended, one parent preferred observing their child intently rather than joining in with the play. However, when they returned with their child the next year, they began joyfully singing along with all the songs, dancing and using the puppets, not just with their own child but also with us and the other children.

Our Legacy

Our evidence suggests the programme supports school readiness through stronger communication, confidence and social skills. It also strengthens parent/carer and child bonds by making playful connection a regular part of family life.



Next, we will sustain and scale up this work by securing funding to continue our sessions for 3 to 7 year olds in Wandsworth.

Since families asked for more of our sessions for under 5s, we plan to develop a toddler version, as younger siblings engaged fully in the Playful Mayhem sessions. We will also secure funding to continue our expansion into Westminster.



We will make it clear our sessions are a play-based support for wellbeing, confidence and communication in early years settings and community hubs, aligned with creative health and social prescribing.



We will also build a bridge into established arts spaces, for example Battersea Arts Centre, so families can move from local sessions into wider cultural life.

A Final Word From Tooting Library



“Playful Doses Drama really brightened up Saturday mornings at Tooting Library, with interactive raucous family fun for children & adults to engage in which they did with gusto!”

“The catchy colourful sessions had elements added every week, which made it perfect for families who attended every session (& there were lots!) but also meant that a newcomer could also follow & enjoy the story.”

“We had such a lot of fun that several parents (especially dads!) have asked me when Playful Doses Drama are coming back! Some asked if we can have them every week which of course we would love!”



“Highly recommended to every library in the country; no sorry - world!”



**Thank you
National Lottery
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for helping us to bring
Playful Mayhem to Wandsworth!**

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