

Active Gloucestershire - building connectivity

Active Gloucestershire has enthusiastically welcomed the Tackling Inequalities funding from Sport England and The National Lottery. The fund has already made a significant difference in our communities, helping organisations to reconnect with residents in need. We are confidently distributing the funding to the areas that need it the most, due to the well-established relationships we have with local organisations, networks, and communities. We have been able to support them financially whilst also taking the opportunity to improve their connections, with immediate and long-term impact.

What did we hear?

Within Gloucestershire significant concerns around summer holiday provision for children and young people were being raised by various local partners. Active Gloucestershire were also contacted by Gloucestershire County Council, who were mapping summer holiday activity provision and were concerned about a general shortfall. As a result, our children and young people's lead was invited to the county council's 'Out of school task and finish' group for vulnerable children and young people, where there was an opportunity to raise the opportunity of the Tackling Inequalities Fund.

We extended the invitation to local charity, Play Gloucestershire to ensure there was input from a delivery-based organisation. Play Gloucestershire deliver award winning 'Play Nurture' - using play work for the therapeutic benefit of children who are experiencing challenge, trauma, or crisis. The CEO of Play Gloucestershire, Pip Levett was the only practitioner at the meeting and was able to highlight that they usually support over 1000 vulnerable children and families each year, in lower socio-economic areas of Gloucestershire. However due to staff having to be furloughed this work would not be possible this year. This was a whole area of community work that the majority of those present at the meeting had not considered

What did we do?

Active Gloucestershire and Play Gloucestershire created a 'Play nurture proposal' for Gloucestershire. This was presented to the Head of Service of the Children and Families commissioning hub. It was proposed that Play Gloucestershire staff would provide child-led outdoor play days for groups of up to 15 vulnerable children in each of the six districts in the county. They would provide a safe and nurturing space where vulnerable children can connect with play rangers and thrive physically, emotionally, and socially through active and creative outdoor play.

What was the impact?

Gloucestershire County Council agreed to provide £20,000 of funding to support 24 days of play nurture support for up to 90 vulnerable children. We had initially anticipated that the Tackling Inequalities Fund would be used to contribute to this programme, but Gloucestershire County Council provided full funding. As a result of the involvement of the county council, Families First practitioners and other lead professionals such as social workers will help connect to vulnerable children who most need Play Nurture support at this point in the Covid-19 recovery phase. The connection made between statutory and the charity sector in this example has led to a significant potential impact on those who have been hardest hit by the effects of the pandemic.

Consequently, Play Gloucestershire staff will be bought off furlough, therefore easing the significant financial pressures on a local organisation that does important work in deprived communities. With their increased capacity, Play Gloucestershire have now successfully applied for a small amount of Tackling Inequalities funding. Through this they will provide 10 days of additional support through a new "Stepping out programme" – providing individual support for children and their siblings and friends in deprived communities by going on 'an everyday adventure' in their home community. Playwork practitioners will meet children outside their homes and go for a physically distanced walk, exploring the natural world. It brings the dual benefits of emotional support whilst being physically active in key communities where Play Gloucestershire staff have delivered community play sessions since 2012.



What additional benefits have there been?

- An increased understanding across the system, of the community work to support vulnerable young people, carried out by organisations like Play Gloucestershire
- Gloucestershire County Council have indicated that as a result of this learning, they want to set up a social care referral pathway to look at a more joined up approach to supporting the most vulnerable children during every school holiday. It is anticipated that this could provide further financial stability to a number of organisations working in the more deprived parts of Gloucestershire
- This programme has showcased the importance of less traditional physical activity and the wider role of play to support the resilience and emotional health of vulnerable children and young people in Gloucestershire
- We will work with staff at Play Gloucestershire to develop a play nurture “bubble” offer for local primary schools, to support vulnerable children as they attend school in September for the first time since COVID. We will support the development of this offer and upscale this model using existing networks and wider partners

The Tackling Inequalities funding has been well received in Gloucestershire and the quick response and distribution of funds means it is having a significant impact on the communities it is serving. This is made possible by the established relationship that exist and the opportunity for organisations to determine their own solutions. An important outcome are the connections being made between organisations, who previously working in silo are now working collaboratively. We are confident that the benefits of these new relationships will far exceed the initial investment.