



City Play Year 2 Evaluation

End of Year Report

September 2019

for



Prepared by:
Dr Martin Needham, Dr Mel Hall,



Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	7
Methods used in this evaluation	10
City Play Nursery Case Studies	13
City Play Reception Case Studies	19
Primary Stars Case Studies	24
City Play’s Informal Continuing Professional Development [CPD]	29
Formal CPD Workshops	31
City Lifestyles and complementarity to City Play	35
Summary and Conclusions	38
References	41
Appendix 1: City Play Interview Guide	43
Appendix 2: Primary Stars Interview Guide	45
Appendix 3: City Lifestyles Topic Guide	46
Appendix 4: CPD Workshop Follow-on questions	47
Appendix 5: City Play Parent Survey	48



Executive Summary

City Play is a weekly programme of active movement sessions designed to support children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The programme is run by City in the Community (Manchester City Football Club's charitable arm) and is provided by a team of trained coaches to over 180 preschools, nursery classes and reception classes in the Manchester area each week. The physical activity development programme is linked to a set of fundamental movements and skills that underpin later team sports. The sessions offer a structured set of movement routines that are repeated but made more varied, motivating and accessible by being linked to familiar and imaginative themes for children's play such as TV characters, pirates, animals and adventure walks.

This report discusses a second year of evaluation activities and presents further information on the influence of City Play on participating children. Following on from the City Play Year 1 evaluation report, this report reviews the information collected in two further rounds of observations and interviews in the spring and summer of 2019. It reports on two further developments in the support offered to early years practitioners participating in the City Play programme, including formal continuing professional development (CPD) workshops as well as informal CPD training through ongoing discussions with coaches around the weekly sessions. It draws from two collective interviews with the City Play coaches; interviews and written evaluations from CPD participants, visits to two preschools, two Reception classes currently involved with City Play plus a comparative Nursery group not participating in City Play in order to consider how children progress across the year. This report also focuses on how children might have benefited from City Play as they move forward into Year 1, based on an analysis of observations of four Year 1 classes alongside interviews with the Primary Stars sports coaches and teaching staff.

In addition to evaluating the core City Play programme, this report also considers the complementarity of the City Lifestyles programme. City Lifestyles is a healthy eating programme consisting of six sessions where parents and nursery children have the opportunity to prepare meals together and talk about cooking and eating with sports nutritionists. The report follows up on families that participated in the City Lifestyles and City Play programme in the last academic year and suggests that the programmes have the potential to influence healthy lifestyles beyond the educational setting.

Key findings with regard to the City Play core programme and briefing materials for early years practitioners in two Nursery and two Reception case study settings:

- The City Play coaches and sessions continued to be highly regarded by staff and children as enjoyable highlights of the weekly routine. (14, 17, 18, 21)
- In the first half of the year, the programme introduced more co-ordination of weekly themes as compared to the previous year. This included more frequent use of picture books as part of the introduction to each weekly session. This development has been welcomed by coaches and practitioners as making a further contribution to children's concentration and communication skills. (19,22)
- In the third term the programme focussed more on games and sports based themes. These extended the existing games repertoire, with games becoming more physically challenging and so creating a strong base for further PE development and energetic playtime routines. (15,16,19,25)



- The themed sessions may be a way of helping more children to participate with the sessions and expanding some children's exposure to the Fundamentals of Movement and Fundamentals of Skills. (15,16,19,25)
- The use of picture books enhanced the participation and comprehension of many of the children and was especially helpful for those with English as an additional language. (17,22)
- The combination of imaginative play with physical activity routines may help children to sustain and add complexity to their physical movement. (9,11,14,20,27)
- City Play makes a valued contribution to the concentration and communication skills of the participating children, which participating schools believe can contribute to improved fine motor skills and academic performance. (17,22)
- City Play sessions made a valuable contribution to the schools' and preschools' policies to promote physical activity. (16,27)

Feedback from Parents

- Feedback from all the responding parents via the online survey indicated that opportunities for physical activity were an important part of their child's day but not necessarily a reason for choosing a setting. The respondents were all aware of City Play taking place in their setting. They all recognised progress in their children over the year, and suggested that games were the most popular element of education settings that children reported and that some of this was connected to City Play. (18,35)

Comparison Group

- Interviews and observations in a non-City Play nursery showed that the setting offered a similar range of outdoor activities and that they were very keen to promote physical activities, also drawing on external consultants to extend children's physical development. (16)

Key findings with regards to progression to year 1 of Primary Stars

- The Sports coordinators in all of the schools that were visited thought that making an early start in promoting physical activity was important and wanted to develop the EYFS activities as part of whole school strategies. (24)
- The Primary Stars Coaches reported that the former City Play children made a quicker and more alert start with Primary Stars activities at the start of year, even compared to older classes, because they were familiar with routines, expectations and receiving directions. (25,26)
- Primary Stars coaches reported that their classes of children who had prior experience of City Play had undertaken more sophisticated skills progressions in many of the sessions across the year as a result of being more receptive to suggestions. They also reported that more children in these classes were successful in responding to these progressions as compared to the other year 1 classes that they taught and in one case as compared to a year 2 class in the same school, which had not experienced City Play. (25,26,28)
- Primary Stars coaches in City Play schools also reported school staff seeking further ideas for stretching their own PE sessions because they recognised the increasing skills and expectations of their classes. (26)



- Schools participating in City Play reported noticeable improvements in turn-taking, social skills and listening for some children who might be more reluctant to participate in other activities when starting in Year 1. (25,26)

Key findings with regard to the value added by including professional development materials

- The three 90 minute CPD workshops were well received by participants who were familiar with City Play. Following the workshops participants reported benefits in being able to support the coaches and extend their school's physical education offering. (31)
- The third CPD workshops were less well received by some of the participants who had not seen City Play in their schools. This is positive in illustrating how much practitioners have absorbed from observing City Play and suggests that a model session or video materials might be required to convey the nature of the sessions to those who are unfamiliar with them. (31)
- Making sufficient time for sharing aims and objectives around the weekly sessions continued to be challenging across the year. As relationships develop with practitioners, some coaches managed to brief practitioners about the content of the sessions in moments before, during and at the end of sessions. Where practitioners are receptive, more cooperative and to make time very successful partnerships are developing. (29, 30)
- Participants acknowledge that the City Play CPD booklets distributed to participating settings as a guide to the philosophy and planning of the City Play sessions could help practitioners to plan City Play activities in their settings. However, interviews with most of those participating in the organised CPD workshop, as well as those in the case studies, suggested that the printed materials were not frequently referred to or drawn upon. Practitioners would value more ideas for activities and sessions being included in the booklet. (29,30,31,)
- A level of self-confidence is required to lead or join in with the imaginative play in front of other adults, and some practitioners may be uncomfortable or embarrassed to do this. The coaches help to model the benefits of this in the weekly settings, and the workshop participants acknowledged this. (29, 30)
- City Play enabled early years practitioners to witness how to keep children moving at a higher level of physical activity for a sustained period in their specific contexts. This was particularly important to those with limited space in their settings. (29,30,31)

The complementarity of City Lifestyles alongside City Play sessions

- Interviews with the parents 12 months after participation suggested that City Lifestyles offers the potential to support healthier eating and portion sizes for participating families. (35,36)
- Children aged 3 to 5 continued to engage in food preparation and cooking activities with their parents at home, sometimes using ingredients that were new to them. (35)
- The information booklets remained a reference for key facts and recipes. (35)



- Some parents reported taking recipes and food messages on at home, indicating the take-up of important messages around reducing certain fats and the amount of salt that they used. (35,36)
- Together City Play and City Lifestyles have the potential to reduce obesity by influencing children's daily routines through parents' and children's eating habits, children's levels of activity in their educational settings and by encouraging their active play and participation in sports. (38)



Introduction

Introducing City Play as a part of the Early Years Foundation Stage

City in the Community offer preschools and schools structured physical education sessions run by their carefully selected and trained coaches. City Play sessions guide the children's participation in physical activity through a thoughtfully structured programme that breaks down complex activities into their constituent parts and helps children explore the coordination of movement in space, moving objects and fulfilling objectives for themselves in the company of others, with modelling by the coach. In the earlier part of the school year, familiar story themes and character narratives were used to structure each session to help the children to visualise, express and mentally accommodate movement patterns in an engaging way. This encouraged the children to participate meaningfully and enthusiastically in the activities and to explore moving themselves and the sporting materials provided in a variety of playfully engaging scenarios. Towards the end of the school year, sessions in the Nursery classes extended these games formats developing children's understanding, concentration, confidence skill and stamina. In the Reception year, the sessions continued to develop confidence through themed games, gradually adopting a more sporting tone, paving the way for more formal physical education sessions in year 1. The focus of this report for the second year of evaluation activities is to explore how revisions to the delivery of the continuing professional development (CPD) for early years practitioners have been perceived by the Nursery and Reception practitioners and coaches. In addition, the evaluation has followed two groups of children who participated in City Play in 2017/18 through to the Primary Stars programme and compared their experiences to those of children in two classes that had not participated in City Play previously.

Both City Play and Primary Stars sessions are structured physical education activities that introduce children to the movement underpinning sporting skills together with requisite communication and social skills. Both programmes offer sessions that last around 45 minutes.

City Play in planned to support the Department for Education's Early Years Foundation Stage framework. Introducing physical education at a fundamental level, City Play draws on games and story characters to connect with children's imaginative worlds and initially focuses less on team working with others. In this respect, it is different to the subsequent, well-established, Primary Stars programme, which follows the National Curriculum and focuses more directly on preparing children for a variety of sporting activities including a range of ball sports and gymnastics.

The City Play coaches follow a regular pattern of activities: introduction or recap of theme using a picture book to set the scene, themed warm-up, themed movement task, themed structured task, theme-based game and a cooling down activity. These activities focus on the identified Fundamentals of Movement (FoM) and Fundamentals of Skills for team sports including ways of moving, spatial awareness, balance, and ball skills (Table 1 below).

Table 1 Underpinning fundamentals from the City Play curriculum.

Fundamentals of control	Balance	Strength	strength	direction height	body awareness	timing
Fundamentals of movement	Running	Walking	Hopping	skipping	Jumping	leaping
Fundamentals of skills	Throwing	Catching	Rolling	receiving with hands	kicking	receiving with feet



Fundamentals of communication	Listening	understanding the game	communication	turn taking	awareness of others	team working
-------------------------------	-----------	------------------------	---------------	-------------	---------------------	--------------

The City Play coaches track children's progress across each year of the programme using a tracking record which clearly shows that overall in 2017-2018; 93% of children improved their FoM/FoS overall (N=2,039). Within this: 86% improved their balance (FoM), 87% improved their running (FoM), 86% improved their throwing (FoS) 87% improved their catching (FoS), 85% improved their understanding and communication. The observations included in this report give an indication of the nature of that development but it is hard to separate what the programme adds from children's individual development. It would be interesting to identify the group scores and progressions for the case study sites and compare these to the average scores for City Play and Primary Stars.

In 2019 the World Health Organisation, for the first time, issued guidance on children's daily "physical activity in response to growing concerns that physical inactivity has been identified as a leading risk factor for global mortality and a contributor to the rise in overweight and obesity" (WHO 2019 p1). The report indicates that while data suggests that 23% of adults and 80% of adolescents are not sufficiently physical active, similar data is not yet available for younger children. The guidelines recommend that children aged 3 and 4 should

Spend at least 180 minutes in a variety of types of physical activities at any intensity, of which at least 60 minutes is moderate- to vigorous intensity physical activity, spread throughout the day; more is better. WHO 2019 ix

The OFSTED inspection framework for the EYFS has been updated in 2019, reflecting these WHO guidelines.

The curriculum and the provider's effective care practices promote children's confidence, resilience and independence. Practitioners teach children to take appropriate risks and challenges as they play and learn both inside and outdoors, particularly supporting them to develop physical and emotional health.

Practitioners provide a healthy diet and a range of opportunities for physically active play, both inside and outdoors. They give clear and consistent messages to children that support healthy choices around food, rest, exercise and screen time.

Physical development is an area of the curriculum that is under increasing consideration and development to ensure that children are developing healthy habits. The schools and Nurseries participating and not participating in City Play interviewed over the course of this year have been very aware of promoting physical wellbeing. The comparator Nursery group not participating in City Play, had developed its own physical development tracker and also brought in external providers to supplement the daily activities in the Nursery with collective aerobic, yoga and forest school sessions in spaces away from the regular classroom area. The lead practitioner, who had undertaken a personal trainer course the previous summer was surprised at how much she had learned about the body's need for exercise. In the Reception class that was not participating in City Play, there was a PE coordinator and a PE leader organising a full programme of PE sessions and out of school activities.

The current policy on the introduction of Baseline Assessment for Reception (Guardian 27.2.2019) reflects a popular view that school readiness can be achieved by presenting children with more



school-like activities prior to starting formal schooling, which will help them to be more successful when they do start school. Longitudinal studies of the influence of different preschool approaches show that overly directive early education can reduce some children's school achievements by undermining their confidence in their abilities in the skill areas that school demands. These studies suggested that a balance between adult directed and child lead playful activities appeared to enable children to make a more successful start in schools (Schweinhart et al Sylva et al 2010). The WHO guidelines also suggest that

Lifestyle behaviours developed in early life can influence physical activity levels and patterns throughout the life course. Active play and opportunities for structured and unstructured physical activity can contribute to the development of motor skills and exploration of the physical environment. (WHO 2019 p1)

There is a broad consensus in the early years literature on how play may influence school readiness: authors assert that play is a nurturing creative space where children have the opportunity to be less directed and free to make mistakes without serious consequences. In play, humans can suspend, manipulate and examine the usual rules of the social and physical worlds (Moyles 2010 and Edmiston 2008). These authors argue that young children learn effectively through having opportunities to explore the world on their own terms, and that through play they will develop social skills, self-confidence, and learning dispositions that will enable them to engage with not just with schooling, but lifelong learning. Recent authors foreground the value of play as space that levels interactions with people, living and non-living things, allowing them to play back (Procter and Hackett 2017).

Early years academics emphasise careful observation of children's play and engagement so that provocations to extended learning are sympathetic to the children's interests (Lenz-Taguchi 2009, Olsen 2009). There is considerable questioning in this perspective of whether children should be giving up this rich personalised learning experience in favour of more organised school-like learning. The question is how the curriculum for older children might be adapted to include more activities that are playful.

It is more challenging to find a consensus in the early years play literature regarding how adults might structure, engage in and direct play in order to help children's development. Authors such as Bruner (2006) and Wood (2010) advocate the provision of a playful environment that allows children to develop their own play because adults tend to disrupt play. Thus, the EYFS recommends that preschool environments offer both adult and child led activities. Authors such as Olsen (2009) and Edmiston (2008) suggest that adults can engage with children's play but they need to abide by the rules of play.

When adults play with children they can likewise enter those worlds not to observe but to participate with children, not only to listen but to interact and shape meaning, and not only to enter imagined space-times but to explore possible ways of acting and identifying with other people. (Edmiston, 2008, P12.)

Given the potential for practitioners and children to reject a programme that is not appropriate, their enthusiasm for the City Play sessions strongly suggests that the coaches bring something each week that continues to be highly valued in participating settings. The City Play sessions are highly directed by the coaches but they offer a playfulness that children, practitioners and other coaches recognise and appreciate. They contain provocations to the children to play within the boundaries of the games they set and to extend the qualities of the movements they make.



The following observation extract gives an indication of the adult-directed but playful nature of the City Play sessions.

Having introduced the pirate theme for the day's session through reading and discussing a short picture book showing images of sailing ships, pirates and treasure, the class moves to their adjoining outside play area, which is approximately 15 metres long and 8 meters wide.

The Coach, David (pseudonym), invites the children to be pirates. Using small, truncated training cones as pirate hats, Sarah (pseudonym for the practitioner) and the children put on their pirate hats and walk around using their hands as telescopes to look for treasure. David says that their ship needs cleaning and says that need to scrub the decks; they all use their cones as pretend brushes and scrub the decks enthusiastically. David invites them to climb the rigging and let the sails down modelling doing this and they all climb the mast to let down the sails and then climb down and use the cone as wheels to steer their ships. The wind gets stronger and their ships begin to move faster, all the class are joining-in, except for one child who has been allowed to pause by the playhouse. The winds calms down and David asks, "Shall we fire our cannons?" He gives each child a ball, pretending that they are really heavy, and asks each child to roll their ball around on the deck to take them to the cannons. "Shall we fire our cannons?" asks David and he models a two handed overhead throw that all the children copy. All this time, Sarah has been joining in, modelling the instructions given by David, and she encourages the children to throw balls in the way David has demonstrated. Now she says, "Let's catch David's ship" and as he moves around the play area, the children throw their balls towards him. "Let's board his ship, throw your ropes and climb aboard".

They all hold on to David and then he gives them all treasure in the form of different coloured bean bags and he asks them to carry them back to their ships by balancing them on their heads.

This is the first fifteen minutes of a forty-minute session which goes on to include throwing and catching with the bean bags and balancing balls and bean bags on cones, followed by a 'hiding and finding the treasure' game and then looking for a missing cannonball. It gives an indication of the invitation to play with the materials, activities and themes that is offered to the children. Each child has the opportunity to improvise their own part within the scenario set by the coach.

Having given an indication of the nature of the City Play programme, this report discusses developments to the programme from the perspective of two Nursery and then two Reception case study settings. This is followed by stakeholders' perceptions of the Professional Development opportunities for practitioners offered by the City Play programme. The second part of the report discusses observations and interviews with coaches and practitioners involved with the Primary Stars programme and explores how the City Play programme prepares children for further physical development activities.

Methods used in this evaluation

Case study sites

Eight case study sites were drawn from a cross section of settings where the coaches identified that staff were engaging with the CPD activities offered. The case study sites consisted of:



- One nursery and one reception class participating in City Play formal CPD;
- One nursery and one reception class not participating in the formal CPD session;
- Two Primary Stars year 1 classes where the majority of children had participated in City Play;
- Two Primary Stars year 1 classes where the majority of children had not participated in City Play.

Each of these sites were visited in the Spring Term and the four City Play sites were visited again at the end of the summer term to gain an insight into children's progress across the year. The four Primary Stars coaches were re-interviewed in the summer term to reflect on the progress of their class over the year.

In addition, a Nursery class with similar facilities to the City Play groups above was identified that was not participating in City Play. This setting's concerns about and challenges to about children's physical development were explored. This comparison group may also offer an insight into the physicality and fluency of children's activities in this setting.

a) Observation

- i) Narrative observation techniques were used to capture the nature of the sessions together with the adults and children's participation in them. The levels of physical challenge that children demonstrated in the City Play sessions and in their outdoor play sessions were also noted in order to investigate the distinctiveness of the City Play sessions and to see if children and practitioners adopted any of the ideas presented in the City Play programme. This provided a basis for discussion in the interviews regarding children's participation in the settings, feedback about relative levels of physical exertion in the City Play sessions and other penetration of the programme into the daily pedagogy of the settings in the earlier and later part of the year. A non-city play Nursery was also visited to compare their approaches to supporting physical play.

b) Interviews (semi-structured interviews)

- i. The research team conducted short focus group interviews with coaches and practitioners, both together and separately, straight after the City Play sessions were delivered. End of year interviews were conducted in June/July. There was also an end of year interview with the four Primary Stars coaches (See Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). Practitioners in the non-city play Nursery was also interviewed to explore their concerns about children's physical play.
- ii. All the City Play coaches were interviewed together as a group in March to help set the agenda for the case study interviews and then again in July to capture reflections on the year.
- iii. Parents from the City Lifestyles sessions were re-interviewed regarding their perceptions of the lasting influences of their children's participation in City Play and City Lifestyles programmes (see Appendix 3).

c) Survey

- i. In addition to the end of session evaluations, Follow up survey questions were sent to those who participated in the spring terms and CPD workshops and agreed to participate in the survey. (see Appendix 4)



- ii. An online survey was developed and distributed to City Play sessions with a request to share this with parents. Parent responses were received from only one setting. (see Appendix 5)



City Play Nursery Case Studies

City Play encourages raised levels of physical activity and physical fluency

The sessions in both nursery case studies exhibited similar levels of engagement and fluency in both the spring and summer visits. In the first part of the year both sessions started with picture books. In one setting, a book about pirates (see the example in the Introduction) was used to introduce the session. In the other setting, a book featuring building site machines was well matched to a nursery setting in the heart of the city where the outdoor play area is on a roof top courtyard overlooked by several cranes, as described below.

There are 24 children in the session, accompanied by three staff and the coach, Frank (pseudonym). Frank has used a picture book about construction vehicles to give the children an image of what they are pretending to be for each activity. They have used cones as steering wheels and have been diggers swerving around the cones, which are holes to avoid. They have driven their vehicles quickly forwards and then slowly in reverse making beeping noises. They have jumped over the holes landing on 2 feet and then 1 foot.

Frank gathers all the children together and shows them the next page from the book, explaining that this is a crane and wrecking ball that is used to knock down the buildings that are not needed any more, and that it has a very heavy ball that it swings against the walls to knock them down. The outside area is still covered with lots of up-turned cones and Frank shows how they can turn the cones over by using two hands to drop a ball down on top of them, which flips them up into the air and sometimes turns them over. Frank explains that it does not matter if it does not turn over and encourages them to try again to see if they can do it. Everyone, both adults and children, are surprised and amazed when Frank demonstrates this.

He explains again that they should try to turn a cone over and if it does not work, they should try again. If it does work, they should turn it over and then go on to another cone. The children set off excitedly to try this out and are delighted by the results. They all quickly find they can make the cones jump into the air and that they often turn over. The coach and staff members encourage the children to try again. Only two of the 24 children drift off task. Frank encourages the children to try it using only one hand and then standing on one leg like the cranes. The children are highly active throughout the majority of the time. They have to run to catch up with their balls and then look for cones that are not in use. The time for explanations are kept short and carefully modelled.

Frank ended by asking all the children to return their balls and a cone back to his kit bag. He asked them to take three slow deep breaths and to put their hands on their hearts encouraging them to notice how much their hearts were beating. He reminded them of all the things that they had done in the session and said that he looked forward to seeing them next time.

In the summer term, the theme of the sessions switched to sports and games but continued to feature familiar characters in a game format (see the Observation below). In one nursery, the games involved Mr Men characters, and in the other involved cars. In both settings, the children were engaged in very active movement games for the first 25 minutes. The following 20 minutes was a



more experimental period where the children had more freedom to explore the balls provided with some guidance and encouragement from the coaches and staff (see Sessions are physically active and challenging). Coach Ray highlighted one of the quieter children who was laughing in the ball-bouncing phase of the summer session, identifying this phase of the sessions as an opportunity to build relationships and celebrate the children's enjoyment of physical control "bringing her out of her shell" not forcing mastery a particular physical skill.

Sessions are playful and fun

The narrative observations illustrate the directed and playful nature of the sessions with the nursery age children and the short tasks that are set for them through the course of a 45-minute session. All the children joined in the sessions enthusiastically initially ; as the sessions progressed, some children drifted away from the tasks set and were encouraged by the supporting staff members to stay on task. If children simply stopped to watch or were distracted by other materials, they were allowed to sit out if they wished. The number of children sustaining interest in the activities for longer periods increased from the spring to the summer term.

The nursery staff, as with the year 1 evaluation, reported how much the children looked forward to the weekly sessions. One practitioner praised the coach's skill in involving all the children and the enthusiasm that they brought.

The practitioners were also impressed by the coaches' ability to judge what the children would be capable of doing.

The coaches' key aim is to make the sessions fun. In the interviews, both of the nursery coaches talked about how they refined the activities and games that worked well and shared ideas with other coaches. They identified how they adapted the best ideas to make them work in the different settings and with the different groups of children.

Coach: "the children like hide and seek so we have done that with pirate treasure this week, we can do a similar task next week but under a different theme."

By the summer term, the children had become familiar with a variety of playground-style games, which had become increasingly sophisticated. In one setting, the coach and then a number of individual children chased down and tagged the 20 children in the class. This took 8 minutes, and was followed by a number of children pretending to be monster trucks, catching others who were pretending to be cars, in order to form limousines (a chain of children). The chain of children then ran around together, becoming longer and longer until everyone was caught. This second game lasted for 10 minutes, during which the children were highly active and thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Such games are potentially very valuable. They can develop children's enjoyment in playground games and help them to see how games can be developed and themed. They involve a high level of activity, getting children used to have a fast beating heart and being hot and sweaty. These positive dispositions to playground play, extended over time, will help them to meet the 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity that is advised per day. The comparator nursery also made a strong link between imaginative play to gross motor activities in the outdoor area that were based more around children's ideas and less in playground games format.



Sessions are physically active and challenging

By the end of the year, the pace and fluency of both nursery sessions had increased and more of the children were engaged throughout the sessions. As an example of this, following on from the warm up chasse activity described above the coach introduced quite a sophisticated football activity where the children tapped the ball forward, looked behind them, put their foot on the ball and flicked it back behind them to change direction. As with the cone flipping in the first term, there was slight air of magic to this activity as the children saw what happened to the ball when they rolled it back and it became a game of changing direction to avoid the coach capturing the ball from them. The practitioner explained that while some sessions did include football skill tasks the coach was careful to mix activities up each week to keep them fun and engaging for all the children. The practitioner was keen to try this activity again and develop it with the children.

Similar to the summer nursery session described above, the first 20 minutes of the second Nursery setting was also very active. The children moved like different Mr Men characters, including Mr Tall, Mr Small, Mr Slow, Mr Rush, Mr Strong, Mr Skinny and Mr Bounce. Between each character change, the children were asked to balance on one leg. Then the coach pretended to be Mr Tickle and chased the children, trying to catch as many as possible. This was followed by the children taking it in turns to do the same. In the second phase of the session, the coaches put down coloured disks and asked the children to be Mr Bounce by finding all the different spots and bouncing their balls on them. This was approached in a variety of ways by the children, each demonstrating slightly different interest and skills.

A girl in pink boots moves carefully from spot to spot. Bouncing her ball carefully from waist height on to the spots, she listens to the coach then continues moving systematically from spot to spot. She starts to stand on the spots rather than bounce the balls on the spots. She does not try to catch the balls. She moves to the top of a slope in the play area so that when she drops it, the ball bounces and then rolls down the slope so that she can chase after it. She takes the ball to one of the adults and throws it to them to catch; they throw it back but she finds it hard to trap in her hands and arms.

A boy in a blue tracksuit concentrates hard and bounces his ball one handed like a basketball. He passes the ball to the coach, who asks him to catch it, but as it reaches the boy he pats it down with his hand and then retrieves it and throws it back. This is repeated several times before the coach shows him how to bounce the ball with alternate hands. The boy keeps trying to practice this, although it is something that he cannot quite manage yet.

A girl in a red dress spends her time moving from adult to adult, throwing her ball for them to catch and then waiting to receive it back. She is able to catch it sometimes in two hands. She does this separately with three different adults and in between times she drops the ball to the ground and then kicks it to chase and catch.

Towards the end of the 15 minutes section of the session, four children take their balls into the playhouse and are hiding their balls in the cupboards.

The children in this group are mostly aged two and three. These observations show the range of interests and abilities that they have, but also displays the fundamental interest of the children in practicing the skills offered in the session.



The observations illustrate that the majority of children were moving actively through most of all four of the observed Nursery sessions. They experienced periods of raised breathing levels and tasks that stretched their physical skills and their ability to coordinate their movements with objects in busy spaces whilst meeting the parameters imposed by the coach.

With regard to the WHO recommendations that children aged 3 and 4 should experience 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per day it has been interesting in the first and second year of the evaluation that the nursery outdoor play sessions outside of City Pyay (unlike the Reception classes) have featured lower levels of physical activity. In both the spring and summer observations, the outdoor play activities that children participated in outside of the City Play sessions included using cars, tricycles, bikes and scooters. Some children spent time hopping but much time was spent chatting in the playhouses, standing by the water tray, listening to storybooks and sitting in the cars. These were low to medium levels of activity, as the children seemed to be happy to sit and chat together with these resources, moving slowly and occasionally. A few children took pleasure in simply running around and playing on a climbing frame, activities that involved medium to high levels of activity.

The children were all active together in the City Play sessions. This is in contrast to the free play activities in the outdoor area at other times. The Nursery practitioners indicated that “Some do more in the City Play sessions, but some are like running round all the time”. The outdoor play activities observed outside of the City Play sessions include carefully structured materials and less adult-led content. Instead, the children developed their own play with the materials put in the outside space. The practitioners thought about the environment that they presented to the children and sought to observe and encourage the children’s play, rather than leading it directly. The practitioners mentioned developing obstacle courses and large constructions with cardboard boxes as examples of physical development activities and found the developing games repertoire helpful.

In the session observed in the Nursery setting that was not participating in City Play, the pattern of available resources and levels of activity were very similar in all respects, with bikes, water, home corner, play house and story books. In addition, the setting had a variety of materials including a fixed chain bridge, a range of tyres and climbing equipment that could be moved to vary the course. The visit to this setting was on a warm sunny day so this feature was perhaps not as busy as it might be on other occasions. The practitioner explained “ *in the morning we don’t really set anything up we encourage the children trythe kids are really big at the moment in building assault courses, they love an assault course, up the planks in an out the tyres up the planks. We believe in risky play, lots of tyres, building blocks, crates, tubes to climb through, tables to climb on and under.... We have balls we do throw and catch, kicking, football*”.

The concerns raised by the WHO and OFSTED that some children may need support and guidance taken in conjunction with the above observations and the more active outdoor play observed in the Reception classes (see p22) suggests that City Play may be very helpful in encouraging children to be more active in the playground.

It takes time for all the children to learn to fully participate in the sessions

Practitioners continued to report on the challenges of involving and sustaining the children in the first term of the year. The practitioners and coaches in both settings acknowledged the helpful role



that using the City Play booklets played in conveying the idea of a theme underpinning the session to the children.

Coach: "We found that the sessions with the younger children before and after Christmas, the sessions were losing interest [in some of the activities], we'd have a theme like cars or transport but without anything to back it up, the children weren't interested; if it was cold you would get five minutes and the children would want to go in. Now with using the books it is a good thirty minutes."

Coach "the children started out the year quite shy but they are starting to get into it now. In September, we get younger ones joining and it takes a while to get them to join in. With the younger ones they have limited concentration and you find what they're interested in and build it up."

At the end of year, the coaches and practitioners gave several examples of the progress made by the children. The practitioners felt that many of the children had gained more in physical confidence as a result of doing things collectively together as part of the City Play sessions rather than informally in the outdoor playtimes. Coach Ray pointed out that in demonstrating bouncing and catching the ball activity, he deliberately let the ball bounce more than once before catching it because some of the children find catching it on the first bounce difficult. The practitioner working with Frank said that the children enjoy the challenge that he brings *"it is always exciting what he brings, I never see a child who goes no I don't want to do that."*

Additional benefits of the sessions

The practitioners also acknowledged the contribution the City Play made to children's concentration and recall. Children who had only managed 10 minutes of concentration earlier in the year were fully involved through 25 minutes. Some of the children have become more involved in the City Play sessions as compared to other sessions in the nursery week and this has helped them to engage more fully in the wider curriculum. There were several examples of children with limited mobility and special communication needs being included in the sessions and participating enthusiastically alongside their peers.

The practitioner's commitment is important to fully realising the potential of the programme

When interviewed together as a group, the coaches continued to identify the challenge of involving some practitioners in the sessions [across both Reception and Nursery]. In both of the nursery case study examples, the staff were keen to participate in and confident to contribute to the City Play sessions. Both of the case study leaders participated fully, asking questions and, unlike some other staff, offering contributions and directions to the whole class rather than just towards individuals. *"She is [great]. As you have seen today, she will just jump in and deflect, jump in and take a role in it. I don't get that necessarily everywhere I go. That's a massive help."* (Coach Spring term). The coaches reported how much more they could do in settings where the children and the venues were ready to start promptly and where there were sufficient staff to allow a few moments of conversation at the beginning, during and the end of sessions. In situations where the practitioners joined in, the coaches said that they learned from their approach towards managing the class and individuals. The participating practitioners shared this perception, *"I find if we join in, the kids will join in more, if we*



sit there writing then there not as engaged, there are some you still need to coax a bit more out of" (Nursery practitioner, Summer term).

The observations of both the Nursery and Reception classes suggest that the Nursery practitioners were more engaged in the summer term. It is important to remember that this is what the coaches would like to see because the practitioners' concentration and engagement endorses and enthuses the children's activity. The practitioner's knowledge of the children also helps to clarify themes and instructions and lifts the playfulness of the session, especially where they share the humour of the coach and children.

"She [the practitioner] has a sporting background, she is creative she joins in with the kids , I have the confidence that what she says will be sensible and reasonable and I can work with it, it isn't always like that in some settings I feel I have to take the lead all the way through. If we are out playing a game she will say something and the children flick straight to it, it is great." (Coach in the summer term).

Feedback from Parents

Survey feedback only came from one setting, which was not part of the case studies. There were only three respondents. All the responding parents indicated that opportunities for physical activity were an important part of their child's day but not necessarily a reason for choosing a setting. The respondents were all aware of City Play taking place in their setting. They all recognised progress in their children over the year, and suggested that games were the most popular element of education settings that children reported and that some of this was connected to City Play.

Summary

The City Play nursery sessions appeared to build-up children's confidence in both movement and communication over the course of the year by being engaging and well matched to children's understanding and abilities. The two case studies are examples of what city play can promote where the practitioners are supportive have a strong working relationship with the coaches. The influence beyond the City Play sessions was linked more to enhanced participation in general nursery activities through contributions to raised comprehension attention and socialisation. The later exploration of informal and formal CPD influences suggests that the practitioners adapted the games and activities introduced by City Play to support outdoor play through the week, which might lead to more active-adult-supported play. Observation of the Nursery play areas across both years of the evaluation suggest that while some children may be active others may not be experiencing the recommend 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per day recommended by the WHO when left to their own free play. The Nurseries including the comparator Nursery setting were concerned to find ways to support and meet this target.



City Play Reception Case Studies

City Play encourages raised levels of physical activity and physical fluency

There is a significant shift in children's development as they move into the Reception year. City Play does not make a formal distinction between the two age groups but the coaches appreciated that Reception-age children, particularly those who had participated in City Play previously, were often more able to concentrate together as a class during sessions. Therefore, within the same weekly themes as the nursery classes, the coaches included more sustained, complex, physical challenges and activities that encouraged the children to work together in pairs and groups. The Practitioners continued to appreciate the "gentle" approach of the coaches, who get to know the children and their special needs and did not force the children to participate in the sessions. The following extracts one from each of the Reception class case studies, show the increasing competency, strength and sophistication of the children in response to the coaches' increasing challenges.

In the spring observed session, Nick (coach pseudonym) worked through the 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' book, reading a double page spread and acting it out with the children. Following the story, the group acted out going through grass, mud and a river using grouped clusters of coloured cones; green for grass, blue for the river and brown for mud.

Nick reads the picture book and shows the picture of the forest they have come to. Emma (practitioner pseudonym) reminds the children of the forest school that they have been to previously, mimes the actions to the rhyme and joins in the rhyme along with the children. Nick has brought them to the green cones and they have a large grapefruit-sized ball each. He asks them to throw the ball high up into the trees and to try to catch it as they move around between the trees. He encourages those that can do this to throw it higher. Emma supports and encourages the children; they are all absorbed in the activity. Nick asks if they can throw it with one hand and catch it with two. Both adults encourage the children to try this as they continue to move between the green cones and each other.

Nick reads the next double page about going through the swirling whirling snowstorm and the children move onto the white cones, where Nick asks them to roll their ball in the snow to make a snowball. Having rolled it with their feet, Nick asks if they can roll it gently with their toes. The children are all still completely absorbed in the activity and do as Nick has asked, taking great care to go around the cones and not to bump into each other.

The group went on to complete the book, finding a bear in a cave and racing back through the different zones, being chased by Nick pretending to be the bear. The session reached a high-energy finale, followed by a cooling off activity where they took off all their wet and muddy outdoor clothing.

In the summer term, increasing sophistication applied to the theme of games and sports allowed the sessions to move towards more abstracted game formats, which were much faster paced and included a much higher awareness of other children's movements and opportunity for the children to think strategically. This is illustrated in the following observation. The format of the sessions, with highly active playground games for the first half and then a more skills-based second half, was still evident.



The coach explains a new variant of a familiar and favourite Spiderman game. In this version there are two spiders, each with different coloured webs (sports bibs) that they throw at other children to capture them. If the web touches a child, they have to sit in the corner associated with that bib. As the children take it in turns to be the spider, it is interesting to see strategic thinking starting to appear.

A boy in glasses looks for a space and skips sideways looking for the two spiders approaching. He changes direction to avoid them, and when one starts to chase him, he concentrates on escaping them. After some time, the other spider catches him when they concentrate on him too. He goes to sit in the green corner pleased to have lasted so long.

A girl in pink tights picks a target child and chases them, throwing the bib from quite a distance. Although it is a good throw, the target is able to see and avoid the web. She starts to anticipate where her target is heading and runs to cut a corner and narrow the gap; she throws accurately from a shorter distance and hits her target.

A boy in a Man U top is very quick in picking targets that are coming towards him and close by. He jumps with two feet towards them, runs and narrows the gap very quickly and traps them with a short accurate throw. He repeats this strategy and wins his round of the game.

In a round of the game where everyone has been asked to hop, a girl in a yellow dress chooses her targets carefully, selecting children who are close by and heading in her direction. Hopping towards them, she then aims carefully and throws accurately from balancing on one leg with a one armed darts-style throw.

After a number of rounds of the game, the children are breathing fast and the coach asks them to rest. He asks what their hearts are doing now when they are beating fast. Different children answer “it is getting oxygen”, “the blood is going to go around”, and the coach says, “Yes that helps you to be nice and healthy”.

As with the Nursery observations, the Reception children extended the vigour and sophistication of their activity in the City Play sessions between March and June. The energy levels and confidence in movement were increased and the children were problem solving and strategizing at a much greater pace, not just in relation to controlling their own bodies, but also in relation to anticipating the movements of the other children.

Nick, the coach for the Reception class described above, explained that he did not coach the children on tactics but was instead very interested in how the different children noticed the organisational and problem solving aspects of the games, confirming the observations above. Nick said that in recent weeks they had been doing team relays and that the winning teams were not always the ones who were most able, but instead were those who figured out how best to win the race and worked smoothly together as a team. Nick identified this as a particularly strong group amongst the settings where he delivered City Play. He acknowledged the contribution that Emma from the school made, both in the sessions and in the playtime playground support work that she leads. *“If you have someone that invested in their physical development and if they are doing that five times a week when they come into this session it is going to be a piece of cake for them [physically]”.*

Sessions are playful and fun, helping to promote broader academic benefits



The activities described above illustrate clearly the continuing playfulness of the sessions and the power of narrative and character to pull the Reception age children together, just as it did in the spring term, creating an increasing confidence and enjoyment of the games themselves. Themes helped the coach to sustain the children's focus and to undertake movements with a greater subtlety than might otherwise have been the case when one compares it to the Primary Stars observation in the section that follows. The coaches developed a good understanding of the children and the group and were able to build on this understanding through the summer term (see below).

The Reception teachers emphasised in interviews how much some of the children looked forward to the City Play session each week and how disappointed they would be to miss it. One commented on how straightforward it was for her to repeat the session because *"All the games and things the kids love. They get engaged.* They described how the City Play sessions secured a higher level of attention and cooperation from some of the children as compared to other subject areas and in the summer term connected this to improved performance in academic areas for some children. In the end of year interviews, the Reception practitioners indicated that the improved gross motor physical skills acquired by the children from participation by the children in City Play, Forest School and daily playground activities supported the fine motor control, listening skills and cooperative social skills of the Reception children.

Sessions are physically active and challenging

The second Reception class observation of the spring term took place outside on a very windy day, because another class required the hall. In the first part of the session, Ray (coach pseudonym) had asked the children to identify their favourite superhero characters as the theme for the week. The children identified male and female superheroes and they improvised ways to move like each character.

Ray called everyone into the middle, gave everyone a cone, and asked them if they knew the things that Captain America had. He confirmed the children's response that Captain America had a shield. Rich invited the children to run and jump and land on two feet like Captain America, holding their shields. He then invited them to run, jump, land, and then throw their shields. The wind caught many of the light Frisbee-like cones and took them for some distance, rolling them along like wheels. The children raced after them, excited by how far they went. Liz (practitioner pseudonym) supported and encouraged the children throughout. After a few throws, the children were scattered over the large playground. Ray called the children back to the middle and provided them with footballs.

The session went on with different superheroes, applying the superpowers to the footballs, rolling and throwing them. The observation illustrates that the City Play sessions can involve longer and more sustained periods of high physical activity, where the themes encourage the children to sustain the activity and bring their different strengths and characters to the movements in the sessions.

The observation of the same Reception class children at the end of the summer term illustrated how much more physically active the Reception classes were when directing their own play as compared to the Nursery Classes. In a 20 minute observation of one class of 30 children, six were observed playing at moderate levels of activity, five playing football and one playing on a tricycle. At High levels of activity; 15 were involved in running and climbing, five were tumbling, climbing running. At low levels of physical activity was one child playing in a water tray.



The City Play session that followed began with a stuck in the mud tag game and in the subsequent interview, Ray confirmed how active the children in this setting were often going from high levels of activity in free play to 45 minutes of high activity in City Play. He also talked about introducing variations to the tag games. *“It’s a tig-catch game that they all know but it must feel different to them in the aspect of what happens when they are tiggled that the thing I can choose to vary and that’s where the enjoyment comes.”*

These outwardly raised levels of activity in the playground represents something of the physical development of children between aged two and five, reflecting the increasing ease and strength of movement. City Play is promoting this type of play in an era when educationalists are increasingly concerned about children spending too much time on screen-based activities and sometimes with limited outdoor play opportunities. City Play is encouraging the whole class to participate and to be confident to move in these sorts of high-energy playground games.

It takes time for all the children to learn to participate fully in the sessions

The observations illustrate the fuller, more complex and more physically active participation of all of the children as compared to the Nursery groups. The class teachers, Teaching Assistant and Primary Stars coaches interviewed noted how much the children had progressed over the year in terms of working together and listening to increasingly complex scenarios. Through the course of the first half of the Reception year as they developed a shared knowledge of the physical movements, games and accompanying language and this created a strong foundation for extension in the summer term. The practitioners and coaches noted the enhanced concentration levels during the year, meaning that the children could now sustain each activity for longer, and how well all the children stayed on task through the sessions. The coaches were very aware of trying to keep children of varying abilities and understandings involved and included.

In order to promote children’s participation, one of the Reception classes split the class into two, with each group taking thirty minutes - rather than having all thirty children participate at the same time. The coach and practitioner both felt that this was helpful in developing the relationships between the children and adults and giving close attention to individual children. While the Year 1 evaluation report identified challenges for the coaches where two classes were combined in terms of extending individual children’s development; the quality of the sessions with Nick illustrates the potential benefits of halving a class of 30 for some sessions.

By the end of the summer term, the focus had switched more from individual skills to team orientated thinking. *“Instead of just thinking about yourself its think about the people who are in the room as well and how they affect your sport and your learning and that is what this term is all about working as a team and bit of competitiveness which these children are great with.”* (Nick)

The class teachers identified how even the reluctant children had come around from the start of the year to be enthusiastic participants by the end of the year. Ray gave a very similar overview of children’s progress at the end of the year and saw the summer term as a good preparation for the following year and Primary Stars. He emphasised that keeping it fun was key and that even though some children might want to do more football at this stage, it is really a multi-skill session and that seeks to keep all the children involved and therefore remains broad in focus. The Primary Stars



coaches identified similar positive features in their classes that had participated in City Play previously, and reported that these had helped their sessions run smoothly from the beginning of year 1.

The practitioner's commitment is important to fully realising the potential of the programme

Both Reception practitioners were tasked with supporting the physical development of groups of children outside the session indicated how much they benefited from seeing the way their respective coaches managed the sessions and the ideas for activities that they used. Both participated alongside the children and contributed ideas to the session.

The observations of the outdoor playtimes led by the Reception staff also reflected high energy levels in both the spring and summer terms. A great deal of thought had been put into the outdoor areas as part of enabling the children to engage fully. Practitioners were keen to learn ideas formally and informally from the coaches and from the City Play workshop in order to support a drive towards developing healthier schools. The expectation on them to lead physical activity at other times appeared to increase their awareness of what the coaches were doing. Although energetic, the activities presented by the practitioners reflected sporting activities more than themes. In one of the Reception settings, in both terms, the children were engaged with chasing each other between widely dispersed equipment and climbing on the equipment to be safe from the chasers. This and the bikes were a high level of physical activity and challenge. There was also a bridge, big building blocks and some hoops that the children engaged with that involved mid to low levels of physical activity. Staff assumed a supportive watchful role in this context. The teacher commented that the Reception play area was a big help in encouraging the children to be active.

In the other setting, several classes shared a large play area where the children engaged with skipping, hide and chase, football, space hoppers, and stilts with medium to high levels of activity. Other lower level physical activities were a pirate ship, sack truck, water play and tyres. Several staff joined in with the children for skipping and football as well as walking around and chatting with the children. This outdoor play continued despite drizzly rain on both visits.

It is interesting to note that practitioners' participation in the outdoor play times was focused more around the organisational and affirmational roles rather than participative and playful. This perhaps reflects the culture around play as a domain for the children to develop between themselves. The coaches seemed more comfortable in the City Play format to slip into the role of player-play leader as compared to the practitioners in the outdoor sessions and this might be an interesting issue for further investigation and for discussion in future CPD workshops. It is also possible that the presence of an observer means that staff might be more reserved.



Primary Stars Case Studies

Four case study sites were arranged, two with City Play feeder classes and two without. The purpose of this was to investigate the ongoing influence of City Play and the opinion expressed by coaches during the first phase of the evaluation that children should progress swiftly through the Primary Stars programmes.

The teachers of the year 1 classes expressed similar opinions to the City Play class practitioners regarding the children's attitudes to the Primary Stars sessions.

"All the children are really interested and really engaged in the Primary Stars programme. They love PE and look forward to PE. They are all participating and they are all motivated. The coaches will make it simpler if they are finding it difficult and more challenging if they want."

Like City Play, year 1 Primary Stars is much more about the skills of participating in a variety of sports. The following observation is presented to illustrate the nature of the Primary Stars sessions. The class had been divided into four groups around four mats, one in each quarter of the hall. There is one empty mat in the centre of the hall. Each group of six have been given a rugby ball, a basketball, a tennis ball and a number of cones.

The children are very attentive as Simon (coach pseudonym) explains that they should sit in their groups to discuss the kinds of balls they have been given and how they might need to throw and catch them in different ways. Then the children work in pairs, passing the ball they have between them. The children stand a good distance apart for the balls that they have, not too close or too far. They throw the ball confidently, eyes focused on the ball without looking away, even when it is a large basketball coming towards them. Each pair of children have a turn with each of the three balls. Simon asks each team to bring their cones to the mat in the centre of the room. Each pair then starts from their home mat, passing a ball to their partner heading towards the centre mat, and then loops around them to receive the ball, taking them closer and closer to the mat in the middle. When they reach the mat in the centre, they run directly back to their starting mat, taking a cone back.

This process was repeated to see which team could get the most cones in the time allowed. This was a tricky task and some of the children need guidance from Simon and the class teacher to get the idea of the looping manoeuvre. The class repeated this practice with the different balls and improved with each practice.

Simon went on to ask the children to share what they had learned about the three different kinds of balls and how far apart they needed to be for each one and why.

This observation is indicative of the format of the four Primary Stars sessions observed. Each was very disciplined; the children were all attentive and focused on what they were asked to do by the coaches. The Primary Stars session contrasted to the four City Play sessions in that there was no imaginative component; the sessions focused directly on the activities as sporting skills. It is hard to attribute any additional attentiveness or improved discipline to any of the groups solely to the City Play sessions. The coaches were all highly regarded by the school-based staff.



Three of the Primary Stars coaches had seen City Play Sessions occurring in some of the schools they attended. They acknowledged the imaginative play and game-playing element as being the significant difference, and they acknowledged their counterparts' ability to engage playfully with the City Play groups.

The PE leads in each of the schools expressed similar aims to each other for their schools. Their objectives included:

- Getting children active
- Reducing obesity
- Helping children to get involved in sport

City Play - improving alertness to sport

The observation above is taken from a year 1 class that had participated in City Play during the previous year. One of the school PE coordinators commented:

“This year 1 cohort is a great group. The Primary Stars coaches start off simple, but this group got in very quickly to the mind-set of the coach, perhaps more than the other year groups. City Play helps with understanding the games outside, and sport and team work... Does City Play make the difference? Yes and no. We have a good cohort because we also have great staffIt helps with that alertness to sport....The children, as you can see, are all on task, they are all active and taking part. Everyone has a ball and is taking part in the game; no one is stood in lines”.

This school had also successfully opened up the afterschool sports activities to include the reception children for the first time.

The following observation is taken from the other group that had experienced City Play previously.

The class are practicing bounce passes with full size basketballs. The children listen carefully to the coach. He explains how he would like them to pass the ball to each other, by keeping a good distance apart and bouncing the ball from a chest pass with the ball landing between the two partners. The ball thrower is to move to a different space and the catcher to bounce the ball back to their partner in their new location. The children undertake this task confidently and, despite the size of the ball travelling quickly towards them, keep their eyes focused on it, passing it on confidently to their partner.

The Primary Stars coach for this class was also positive about the year 1 group's participation. It was suggested that they had made a good start, taking better to instructions, quickly noticing what was being asked of them and being very enthusiastic.

The Primary Stars coaches reported children making a confident start because they were familiar with the types of activity related to fundamentals of movement. The coach's only question mark over the preparation of the class for Primary Stars was that they seemed to expect more of the type of games that form City Play. They wondered whether more might be done in the summer term to move towards a sport rather than play focus. They equally wondered whether they should offer more games as part of the Primary Stars activities.



“Looking back I think I recognised that the children’s attention was flagging after around 10 minutes of activity and I stopped the activity and had a refocussing chat because that was more in line with the City Play format”

In the end of term focus group, the positive start to the year made by the City Play groups was reaffirmed by the Primary Stars coaches:

“I personally think it makes a big difference, I work in a school in North Manchester where they are doing City Play and I notice the difference to year 1’s where they aren’t doing City Play. In schools without City Play, where the Reception teachers are doing PE, the children may experience things like parachute games as PE, or more free play opportunities. Where they have done City Play, they come into a session knowing this is not a free playtime, there is going to be a bit of learning there and a bit of challenge yourselves. They are used to getting ready for PE and are ready to start the lesson quicker and helps us maximise the time with them”

“Familiarity with the equipment from Nursery and Reception to year 1 helped the children settle down quicker. They are in the right frame of mind, they know what to expect, they knew who they were getting and the flow of the lesson”.

“The year 1 group who had experienced City Play were a bit sharper in decision-making in games, like when to throw the ball at someone in dodge ball compared to the year 2 group who hadn’t done City Play. So I was able to push the Year 1 children further in some activities compared to the year 2s”

Only one coach worked across a mixture of two settings with City Play and two without. Their opinion at the end of the year was:

“I think there is a big difference at the end of the year, in that the Year 1 who have done City Play before are further ahead, because I am two or three more progressions ahead, and where other groups get two or three practices in, the City Play groups get four or five in. So, for each lesson I am having to think of a couple more progressions. There are more children in the City Play groups that are ready for those extra progressions”

In the City Play school, the coach also suggested that the teachers had recognised the children’s progress and increasing expectations around PE lessons and had therefore paid more attention to the Primary Stars sessions in order to inform the planning of their own sessions.

The Primary Stars control groups

As has already been stated, the behaviour and participation of the children across the four Primary Stars groups in the spring term was very similar. The children were attentive, eager and complied with the instructions given throughout.

One control group class observed was part of a series of sessions introducing gymnastics. The hall had been set up with two parallel climbing frames on one side of the room, with a bench leading up to the first and away from the second. On the other side of the room, there were six benches set up in three rows, then two gym tables with a bench between, and then four mats in two pairs. The



children moved around the apparatus in pairs, one copying the other. They moved forwards, backwards and sideways, on their fronts and their back along the benches. The children moved with care, control and creativity. They are extremely good at copying each other either side by side or one following the other. There were no similar sessions to this one so comparisons are difficult.

The second control group was a ball skills session, which had more parallels to the other Primary Stars session and to the We're Going on A Bear Hunt scenario. In the hall, the children have been given a warm-up activity by the coach. The children have been moving around the hall as directed, running, hopping, and changing feet as they hop. Freezing and holding their position when asked by the coach. The coach reminds the children that it does not matter if they find something hard, they should keep trying.

The children are provided with a tennis ball each and asked to throw theirs up in the air to catch it. They are invited to try to throw it higher. All of the children are confident in throwing but while many are confident in catching, a few are not. Being worried about the falling ball, some look away and miss their catches. The coach asks the children to see if they can throw and catch with one hand. The group are asked to try a one hand bounce to a one hand catch and a one hand bounce to a two handed catch and then a basketball style bounce. Several children can do these tasks very confidently, others less so. When the group have stopped and been asked to sit down and rest, three children are invited to demonstrate their catching to the rest of the class.

The coach then asks the children to use their feet to dribble their balls around the room. Again, some of the children are very controlled and others less so, kicking the ball ahead of them rather than keeping it under control.

The movements in this sequence are very similar to the Bear Hunt sequence from the one of the reception classes, and to the ball skill activities in two of the other year 1 classes. There is a greater level of control in the year 1 tasks and some of the children demonstrated considerable coordination control in throwing their tennis balls two or three feet in the air and catching it one handed. The year 1 classes undertook similar tasks, with all the children keeping control of their balls in the catching and dribbling tasks, however these were mostly with bigger balls. The Reception City Play class undertook similar tasks with all the children keeping control of their balls in the catching and dribbling tasks. The imaginative elements of the City Play task add more implicit detail into the task. Throwing the ball up into the trees conveys height but it also encourages the children to keep their eyes on the ball. The idea of rolling a snowball with toes conveys an idea of delicacy of movement to avoid breaking the snowball.

Summary: Making a strong start.

In the end of year interviews, the coaches from these schools both identified a strong commitment to PE from the Schools' PE coordinator and senior staff. They recognised the challenges of the transition from Foundation Stage to Year 1 and acknowledged that having continuity of uniform and style would help make a strong start.

The primary control groups illustrated how the City Play tasks prepare the children to be ready to engage with Primary Stars, particularly by being used to working with the coaches and the kind of activities they set. The whole class have had exposure to handling a variety of objects with varying degrees of delicacy, strength and control.



The coaches' priorities for prior skills development was listening skills, changing quickly for PE, fundamental movements (run, jump, skip, sideways), and a little bit of ball control. Each coach also spoke about their key priority being to keep the children engaged and make the sessions fun.

"I remember when I was at school the PE sessions were like being in the classroom. It was done by a class teacher it was supposed to be fun, it was supposed to be happy, and it just wasn't. You have to make it fun for them; you have to keep them engaged. As long as they are happy and engaged they are going to learn something from your session."

Only one of the coaches from the Primary Stars control groups was working across several settings in the current year, some with preceding City Play classes and some without. He said that it was difficult to compare across settings because each school and each class is different and the levels of support from primary coordinators and Headteacher varied a great deal. He had not noticed differences at this point but was interested to look out for this possibility. One of the coaches who was working full time in a single school this year acknowledged the advantages he had witnessed the previous year in schools where City Play was taking place. If the children have had a certain amount of structure previously, he believed that they understand what is required of them and it is beneficial for the continuity of their development from Reception to year 1.

In the end of year focus group, all four Primary Stars coaches agreed with the suggestion that it would be helpful for the two sets of coaches to do more together and to be more aware of what each group was offering. They suggested it was helpful where by chance, the City Play and City Stars coaches were in the same school on the same day and they could gain an idea of what each other were doing. They also wondered if the City Play coaches might do more with year 1 and year 2. They were interested in the idea of using more character-based games and fun activities, particularly in the first term before transitioning to more skills based activities.



City Play's Informal Continuing Professional Development [CPD]

Background

At the beginning of the 2018/19 academic year, all the City Play coaches had been briefed to try to spend at least a couple of minutes each week explaining what their objectives were and how these related to the existing CPD booklet provided to all City Play settings. City Play managers had also planned a number of more formal CPD workshops that would focus on explaining the CPD booklet to practitioners. The CPD booklet explains the aims and key objectives of the programme with regard to promoting physical activity and the Fundamentals of Movement that the programme works towards.

In both the spring and summer focus groups with coaches, participants reported challenges for both the coaches and staff in making time to discuss their thinking about sessions and said that in many settings there was a strong expectation that it was their role to deliver the session. They agreed that as the year went on and their relationships with practitioners developed, *“it became better in terms of pulling them to one side and telling them what is going on... this is what I am doing and this is the reason”*. They were firmly of the opinion that the sessions worked best where practitioners bought into the activities alongside the children. Examples from the Nursery and Reception case studies show that what the coaches perceived to be good sessions, where City Play worked well, were because of the active participation and enthusiasm of the practitioners.

The coaches speculated as to whether the agreement with settings initially might be for the practitioners to lead some parts of the sessions because they felt this would bring more investment in thinking about what was taking place in the sessions. In one Nursery Case study spring interview, the coach and practitioner talked about jointly taking the session and leading different elements, something that did take place in the summer term. In the summer visits, the informal conversations seemed to be working well in all four of the case study sites where those practitioners who had also attended formal CPD sessions indicated that these helped to make aims and activity development clearer.

Learning from observing the coaches

All the case study practitioners reported that they learned ideas for activities from seeing what the coaches delivered and indicated that they did use some of the games and activities that they saw worked well with the children at other times.

“we obviously learn from watching the sessions you learn different ways to do it with the children and Ray learns from us and how the child best reacts” (Nursery practitioner end of year interview) “we do use some of the activities sometimes [through the week] but we more follow what the children are interested in. They enjoy the role playing and things like that”

One of the practitioners acknowledged that she had learned how imaginative themes might be used to support the physical development of the children. She reported not using the CPD pack provided at the start of year but rather learning which activities worked well and using those with children who were not in nursery on City Play days.



One of the Reception teachers who was required to repeat the City Play session with another class on a different day reported learning a lot from observing the weekly session delivered by the coach. In the end of year interview, she talked about learning the games and variants on the games and using these at various times through the year. The other Reception practitioner was a teaching assistant who brought in half the class for 30 minutes each. Having seen the first 30 minute session led by the coach, the Reception practitioner took a greater lead with the second 30 minutes, meaning that she learned from seeing the session twice and being active within the delivery. She has had responsibility for delivering additional lunchtime sessions beyond City Play and said that she learned a lot from participating in the coach led sessions, but she had also attended the formal session to gain further ideas and understanding in order to inform the range of activities she offered to children at lunch times. She attended both the spring and summer term workshops and found these CPD workshops very helpful in explaining the aims and objectives of the sessions. She could now see that the sessions were not fully planned and that there was encouragement to develop and improvise the games. Nick indicated that he also gained ideas for tweaks to activities from the way Emma did things, and learned where he might be able to push some children a little further because she knew the children better than he did.

Nick reported that this was the only school he visited where the City Play session was delivered to half the class, and this was where the informal CPD was the most effective: “we have discussed various things together like how the activities can be adapted to the equipment she has got to the numbers she has got”. This school was requesting additional time to be able to extend the City Play work because the Key Stage 1 leader believed that the increased physical confidence of the children was linked to the increased academic performance they had seen in the school.

The case study practitioners repeated comments made in last year’s evaluation that it would be helpful if they could have the sets of equipment that the coaches use, i.e. balls, cones and beanbags, to allow them to repeat the game more straightforwardly. This point was also made by the Case Study practitioners.

Discussions with the coaches

The case studies confirmed the coaches’ comments that there was limited time without responsibilities for teaching for the coaches and practitioners to review sessions and share intentions and objectives. The coaches did share a little about the themes and checked on how these fitted into other class topics. There was also some discussion to identify class interests and individuals’ progress. The interviews provided a longer time to reflect together than the regular sessions, which was helpful in offering mutual insights. The coach and practitioner in one setting agreed to share the leadership of some of the sessions and the practitioner developed a plan for a lesson and delivered the session with the coach providing feedback. In this setting, the coach reported that the practitioner was very proactive and often asked questions. The practitioner in this setting explained that she and the coach made a little time at the beginning and end of each session.

He comes a little bit earlier and kind of goes through the lesson plan and what he is going to do with them as well, so he is highlighting any ideas them and I can grab them from him. I can use them later on as well to develop the children’s understanding and he will walk me through the plan as he is running through it with the children. (Nursery practitioner)



This practitioner went on to explain how she looked out for the activities and themes the children responded to and developed these between sessions so that the children would be ready to build on these in the next session. They also made time to review the fundamentals of movement checklists together.

In many settings, it was hard for the coaches to see a way around the challenge of finding time to share information around the session. The case study above illustrates that brief conversations over the year can be very effective and required the coaches to have a little bit of time available and for the setting to be prepared for the leader to have a few minutes to talk with coach and be ready to learn in this way. Short Skype meetings later in the day might be another chance to catch up and plan together. One of the Nursery practitioners that was being asked to lead one of the City Play sessions, said that she would be interested in an opportunity to take such a lead, especially if that was linked to a supporting CPD workshop.

Formal CPD Workshops

Overall

The CPD sessions emphasised the fundamentals of movement and making movement fun, as well as the idea that activity needs only limited space and few resources. The sessions did this through the words, text and activities used in the session, with each element complementing the others.

Evaluations collected from 7 participants at the second of the years three workshops all the respondents rated the workshop as good (2) or very good (5) and indicated that the workshop met their expectations in helping them to understand the aims and objectives of the City Play programme. In the summer evaluations from 22 participants, 10 thought the session very good, nine thought it good and three found it to be OK. In both workshops the section that practitioners most valued was the opportunity to work together to plan an activity and indicated that they would like more ideas for activities. Evaluations from the third workshop of the year included feedback from teachers who were not familiar with City Play, who found the planning content less helpful.

Initial interviews with the practitioners also suggest that they appreciated the relevance and value of these messages. Three of interviewees from the case studies said that they do not engage very much with the CPD packs provided at the start of the year. They enjoyed both of the workshops and would welcome something more detailed to follow on from these. The fourth practitioner was much more enthusiastic about the pack and used it to check on aims and objectives. The coaches have also said there is limited time for them to brief practitioners around the weekly sessions and that the practitioners are not able to go through the materials at that time. The twilight CPD session was the first time many of the participants had carefully thought through what the City Play sessions were offering. What practitioners most sought was ideas for promoting physical activity. The addition of further ideas for activities into the CPD packs would be welcomed.

Interviews with practitioners who attended indicated that they felt that the CPD sessions emphasised the potential of the physical activities to develop social skills not just physical skills. In the end of year interviews, the practitioners said that they were more aware of “what the children were getting out of the activities not just the physical side but the other areas as well”. They acknowledged the value of the material contained in the CPD booklet, which formed the spine of the



CPD session, but felt it could be developed by including more ideas for sessions and activities. In the end of year focus group, the coaches agreed that they would seek to give more examples of practical activities in response to the feedback they had received rather than more general teaching and learning principles. The participation of the coaches with the groups in reviewing and discussing possible lesson plans was welcomed in the third workshop of the year and participants said that they would welcome further opportunities to work on developing ideas for activities.

Practitioners reported that the part of the CPD session related to planning covered things that they do all the time. They found the aims and objectives of City Play and explanations of the fundamentals of movement were more helpful.

In the end of year focus group, the coaches reported that in the initial few weeks after the workshops *“they [the practitioners] were well on board asking what we were doing and why”* and that practitioners who had always been enthusiastic supporters of sessions were now doing so with more understanding. Some of these enthusiastic supports were more involved and in some cases leading some activities. The coaches still reported some settings where the practitioners observe rather than support the sessions and they did not feel in a position to challenge this.

Messages about being active and making use of a small area and limited equipment

The warm up activity effectively emphasised high levels of activity in a small space with limited resources. The team working games of passing balls over and under to the back of the line and then racing to the front illustrated the power of competition to motivate and engage.

It might be possible to make the workshop more impactful by paying more attention to expected levels of daily and weekly activity and asking the practitioners to reflect on how active children in their classes are across the week. This might be amplified if the first activity and subsequent activity could do more to raise the heart rate and breathing of the participants for more of the session. This might be followed up with questions about how active children need to be together with the importance of activity across the school week.

The imaginative dimensions of the City Play sessions are emerging as a key feature. The workshop might do more to promote the benefits of this and draw more on an imaginative story as a source of motivation in the discussion and activities.

Fundamentals of Movement

The broad messages related to the aims of the programme in developing fundamentals were clearly conveyed by reviewing the CPD pages in the booklet. The session conveyed the idea that children need opportunities to practice and extend their confidence in movement and this paves the way for more active futures. This might be enhanced by talking about muscle memory. This was something that City Play managers discussed in conversation during one visit: i.e. the brain’s ability to refine body movement and fluidity by selecting the most efficient ways to do things through monitoring repeated activity over time.



The impact of this section of the CPD session might be enhanced by actually running through a movement item such as hopping, getting the participants to try the movements out and showing physically how this is developed in different ways through weekly themes.

Promoting active learning

This is quite a complex term in early childhood education and this was brought out helpfully in the variety of answers that came out in the discussion. Active learning engages children's mental reflection in learning and physical movement is something that can help this mental reflection. There is debate around whether active learning requires physical activity or whether mental engagement is sufficient.

The questions asked in the 'CPD Training City Play Programme' text are quite helpful. Some of the answers offered in the textbooks were quite closed in nature; sometimes, unresolved questions that are explored but not fully answered can be more satisfying. For example: Q: What type of fixed play equipment is available? A: A variety of fixed play equipment should be freely available to all children.

The participating practitioners acknowledged the value of City Play in promoting physical activity for the majority of the children in class, including some who are less active in outdoor play usually. They also acknowledged that children were gaining social and communication skills, and knowledge of the world, through following instructions and physically role-playing the themes introduced in the City Play sessions.

An activity where an extract from a book is used and then played out, followed by a discussion of how the movement brings the ideas in the book to life, might be an interesting addition to this section of the CPD.

Developing and adapting ideas for activities

Asking the participants to develop a game from the resources present in the coach's kit bag worked extremely well in conveying the message that the practitioners could improvise and refine the activities presented in City Play throughout the school week. Each group developed an original game and were reminded of issues of inclusion and diversity as they were delivering them. In the summer term CPD, the participation of a coach with each group, led to interesting conversations about possible ideas for activities, how to deliver them and the benefits of these. Practitioners indicated in the feedback forms and in interviews that this was a very productive session of the workshop.

In the summer term interviews, the City Play case study Reception teachers both indicated that they found section on the development of an activity the most helpful element of the workshop that added to what they experienced in the weekly City Play sessions. *"We enjoyed the practical side of it we were set the task to make up an activity and changed and adapted to the space. That was definitely helpful."* (Reception teacher)

The Impact or the workshops might be further enhanced by thinking about how themes might be overlaid with the activities to extend fundamentals of movement, motivation, energy levels and



wider learning. It might be possible to make the participants think more about how the equipment helps bring life to words and how words bring life to the equipment.

Participation

Most participants contributed throughout the session. They appear to be most keen to gain ideas for activities and games that children will enjoy and that will promote physical activity. The session succeeded in delivering this and was therefore, well received by the participants. The game creation section was particularly helpful because it showed participants that they could improvise and adapt themes and games together. The participants seemed to come prepared to be active and the session could enabled them to be more engaged more energetically throughout in order to emphasise this as a key aim for the programme.



City Lifestyles and complementarity to City Play

Observations and interviews related to City Lifestyles from 2018

In 2018, the researchers visited nurseries where the City Lifestyles programme was offered alongside the City Play sessions. These sessions, introduced in 2017/18, impressed both parents and practitioners, particularly because the portable cooking hobs used at nursery height tables revolutionised the ability of children to participate in cooking as an activity. The children in the City Lifestyles sessions were able to engage with all elements of the preparation process, including cutting and cooking. The children's parents were nearby to support, demonstrate and supervise safety, but the culture of the sessions was for the children to participate as much as possible. Healthy eating messages were shared with the parents in a brief summary and discussion in the 10 minutes before the children arrived. The messages about child-size portions and cooking with less salt were also conveyed in an authoritative non-patronising way alongside interesting facts during the cooking activity.

A group of parents that participated in the sessions last year were invited to participate in a focus group to discuss how the sessions had influenced their family over the last year, in order to explore if there were any lasting influences from the sessions.

Parents' perspectives

Each City Lifestyle session began with a 10-15 minute conversation with the parents before the children arrived from their nursery class. These are some of the parents' comments about the messages that had stayed with them.

Parent: And then you deep fry....the course just scared me about fat, so now every time I go in the supermarket, I'm like [reading] because we were taught to see if less fat, high fat, medium fat, that made me really curious so now like every time I go to the shop, I'm like, okay, that's not good, put it back. It changed. Before, I just used to go to the shop and look at the price like 'that's a good price' and now I still look at the price, I take time to look, for the kids and for my health. So I might buy the fresh chips [potatoes], slice them up myself, put in the oven, it's very nice.

Parent: I used to drink a lot of fizzy drink and give coke to them [children] but now we are drinking water. I sometimes put a tiny drop of Vimto just for taste.

Researcher: What made you do that?

Parent: It's just like the sugar content, I never used to look but like coke, it has got a lot of sugar in it but I'm like this is not good. They [the sessions] tell you the health impact of too much sugar, diabetes, they told us that. I still drink it sometimes but I take water and I put that on the kids.

Researcher: And was it new information or was it how it was told that was new?



Parent: Some of it was new, some just, like with salt, I didn't realise, if you don't put salt in, it won't even taste different so I stopped putting that in it.

The City Lifestyle sessions were also intended to encourage the children and parents to cook together and to encourage the children to try new foodstuffs. The parents quickly identified healthy food items and examples of recipes they were still using and making with their children.

Parent 1, I get home and start cooking, so we don't have takeaway all the time, sometimes, but noodles, but I try to cook healthy some of the time especially at weekends and like you know with the egg, that with spinach, veg.

Researcher: That's one thing you learned

Parent 1: Yes eggs spinach, tomatoes...

Parent 2: And I do the pizza too with the egg, changed the base

Researcher: Do your children like that?

Parent 2: They love it

Researcher: Your older ones too?

Parent 2: Yes, they bake it

Parents continued to use the recipe provided as part of the City Life sessions.

Parent 1: The booklet. It's really helpful, it has instructions about how to cook, step by step, it's really good, I like it.

Researcher: Do you use that anymore?

Parent 2: Yeah

Parent 1: Mine is still in the kitchen, I go through it.

Researcher: And why is that?

Parent 2: It's just easy to look at, if you want a reminder on the recipes.

With regard to City Play, only one parent recalled their child's involvement with City Play.

Parent: Yes, my son did that. He enjoyed it so after that I ended up putting him into football at school. Before that he wasn't bothered, he's shy so I pushed him to that, he's shy, but then he wanted to do it after that.

The interviews with the former City Lifestyle participant parents suggest the strong influence that these workshops can have over an extended period. The parents reported quite significant changes



to cooking and eating habits. The interviews illustrated raised understanding of salt, sugar and fat intake as part of the family diet overtime. Although only one of the four reported a memorable influence of the City Play sessions, the two things in combination have the potential to influence increased interest in physical activity and heathy eating.



Summary and Conclusions

The responses and observations collected in this second phase of the City Play evaluation project provides more detail about the influence of the theme element of the City Play programme including the increased use of picture books to support this aspect of the programme. The observations provide tangible examples of how the programme is being delivered in practice. The examples from Nursery, Reception and Year 1 illustrate how children's skills develop over time and show that these sessions continue to be very popular with staff and children. The observations help to convey the playful nature of the sessions and the coaches' skills in presenting the programme to the children and drawing them into the activities. The observations also illustrate how the practitioner can make a difference to the quality of the activities by the way they support the imaginary scenario, as well as by their support and encouragement for the children. The observations show how the sessions are adapted by the coaches to meet the skill levels of the different groups in response to the children's engagement with the activities and games. The observations of the outdoor play areas suggest a range of energetic activities were planned where the practitioners were adopting an observation, support and facilitator role rather than participating as play leaders. The levels of activity in the Reception classes both in the City Play sessions and in the playground were very impressive with regard to meeting WHO guidelines.

The interviews with the practitioners and coaches reiterate previous findings that the start of the year for the Nursery Year groups presents some challenges as the children learn to understand what the coaches want them to do and in sustaining their joint attention. At the halfway point in the school year when the observations were undertaken, only a few of the Nursery children still found sustaining this joint activity challenging. In order to extend the activities beyond the City Play sessions the practitioners continue to suggest that they would find it helpful to have a class size set of resources similar to the coaches.

The observations and interviews around the Primary Stars classes support the City Play coaches' belief that the City Play children are well prepared to make a strong start to the Primary Stars programme. The teachers and Primary Stars coaches identified additional alertness and receptiveness to the children's engagement in the Primary Stars activities. The observations and interviews suggested that there might be some advantages to use of themes to support the sports coaching in terms of subtlety and in terms of children's participation across the whole class, not just from those who were already well disposed to support. The school leads for sport in each of the four schools emphasised how important promoting healthy active lifestyles were to the school and how important both City Play and Primary Stars were to their strategies. One coordinator expressed how much he appreciated the external funding that made this support available and hoped that it would be sustained as school budgets were coming under increasing pressure. The next phase of the evaluation will investigate if any end of year differences are visible between the case studies.

City Play's formal CPD workshop sessions were well received by the participants who were very conscious of trying to raise the activity levels for the children in their settings. The practitioners acknowledged the relevance of the workshops and found it helpful in understanding the aims of the programme with regard to promoting levels of physical activity and fundamentals of movement. Interviews with coaches and practitioners suggested that finding weekly time for mutually supportive reflection on the programme and children's progress is challenging. Many of the workshop participants had not previously absorbed the CPD messages from the printed booklets



provided or from their coaches. They found it helpful to have the programmes aims and strategies presented in the workshop. The majority of the participants were seeking ideas for activities to do with their classes. They recognised that the workshop supported them in adapting and developing their own activities and games. The participants would welcome more ideas for activities to be included in the CPD booklet. The CPD workshop format or a follow-up workshop might do more to promote the message around the importance of children's participation in physical activity through the week both verbally and practically. Similarly, the CPD workshop or a follow-up workshop might reflect in more detail and through the practical activities, the value of the playful themed games format for both the Nursery and Reception age groups. The next phase of the evaluation will explore the longer-term influence of the workshop and the potential for further workshops.

The City Lifestyles interviews with parents who had participated in the programme 12 months previously, strongly suggest that they continued to be influenced by some of the key messages about food choices. They continued to use some of the recipes and ingredients they were introduced to and they continued to involve their children in cooking. Their recollection of City Play's influence on their children is much less but City Play was reported to have played a role in encouraging one of the family's child to become more involved in football. If one family in four experienced such a combined influence this would be significant. It will be interesting to complete additional interviews in the next phase of the evaluation and investigate pilot City Play sessions for parents.

Recommendations

- The City Play programme is mature and consistent in delivery the coaches and management team have a very clear idea about what helps to maximise the programmes value for promoting physical activity, communication and social skills these things might be identified and incorporated into the working agreements with settings.
 - A regular lead for the sessions who interested to develop physical play activities with the children
 - A regular lead who is who is free-up to talk for a few minutes at the beginning and end of the session to talk to the coach
 - A regular lead who can attend 1 or 2 workshops over the course of the year and would take a leading role in delivering some sessions
 - Encouraging all the practitioners present each week to join in with the activities.
 - Keeping the numbers of children in the sessions to 30 or less and consider sometimes using the time for two smaller groups for 30 minutes each.
 - Making sure the children and the play space are ready to start promptly each week
 - Consider purchasing similar materials to the coaches to allow activities to be repeated through the week

- Coaches and practitioners develop strong working relations over the course of the year, holding CPD workshops in the first year might help to establish relationships and working practices earlier. Focusing the workshops on children's needs for physical activity and the aims of the fundamentals of Movement together with the activity development workshops rather than planning would appear to be what practitioners would find most valuable. The



workshops need to find a location that helps them to be easy to access, with a good presentation area and working tables alongside a space that still allows the practical activity development sessions.

- The CPD booklets provide a helpful outline of the programmes objectives these might be updated to include some of the wide repertoire of successful popular games that the coaches have developed tips for varying them.
- If funding could be identified to provide a similar set of resources to the settings, they might repeat some of the activities more frequently through the week.
- Finding a format to share the City Play activities with parents and children together would enable the messages about the importance of physical exercise to be passed on in the same fun way as City Lifestyles with the potential to further raise children's daily activity together with their families.



References

- Brooker L. & Edwards S. (2010) *Engaging play*. Maidenhead, Open University Press.
- Edmiston, B. (2008) *Forming ethical identities in early childhood play*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Guardian (27.2.2019) *Testing of Under Fives [online]*
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/feb/27/testing-of-under-fives-goes-ahead-despite-teaching-union-objections>
- Lenz-Taguchi, H.2009, *Going beyond the theory/practice divide in early childhood education: introducing an intra-active pedagogy*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon;
- Moyles, J. (2010) *The excellence of play*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- OECD (2012) *Starting Strong III*. Available at <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/startingstrongiii-aqualitytoolboxforearlychildhoodeducationandcare.htm> (accessed 12/10/2014)
- Procter, L. & Hackett, A. 2017, "Playing with place in early childhood: An analysis of dark emotion and materiality in children's play", *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 213-226
- Olsson, L.M. (2009). *Movement and experimentation in young children's learning: Deleuze and Guattari in early childhood education*. London: Routledge
- Rogoff, B. (2003) *The cultural nature of human development* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schweinhart, L.J. (2013). Long-term follow-up of a preschool experiment. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 9(4), 389-409.
- Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2010) A focus on pedagogy, in: K. Sylva, E. Melhuish, P. Sammons, I. Siraj-Blatchford & B. Taggart (Eds.). *Early childhood matters evidence from the effective pre-school and primary education project*. London: Routledge.
- Van Oers, B. (2010) *Children's enculturation through play*. In: Brooker L & Edwards S. (Eds) *Engaging play*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1966) *Play and its role in the mental development of the child*. *Voprosy psikhologii*, 6
- World Health Organization. (2019). *Guidelines on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep for children under 5 years of age*. World Health Organization.
<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/311664>.
- Wood,L. (2010) *Reconceptualising the play-pedagogy relationship: From control to complexity*. In: L. Brooker,& Edwards, S. (Eds.). *Engaging play*. Maidenhead, Open University Press.



Appendices

Appendix 1: City Play Interview Guide

Appendix 2: Primary Stars Interview Guide

Appendix 3: City Lifestyles Topic Guide



Appendix 1: City Play Interview Guide

City Play Evaluation; CPD activities review

Conversation with practitioners and City Play coaches together

Researchers will prepare short anonymous notes during the activities in the City Play sessions. The interview conversation will review how the sessions promote participation and fluency in physical activity together with associated communication and confidence developments in children. The conversation will also explore what personal professional development they have gained from activities with City Play

Review of observation notes from City Play

- How have participants engaged in the city play session's activities?
- What is it about their engagement that suggests learning and progression?
- How do levels of activity in the city play sessions vary from other physical activity sessions offered in the setting?
- How might the activities be followed- up?

Sharing learning; coaches and practitioners

- What opportunities have you had to learn from each other in and around the sessions?
- Have you been able to apply any of this learning in or outside of the City Play sessions?
- If you have attended a CPD session at City Play, how has this increased your ability to support the City Play sessions and wider activities?

Outside of the City Play sessions

- Has the City Play session influenced other activities beyond the City Play sessions?
- What is it about children's engagement in wider activities that suggests learning linked to City Play?
- How might the City Play activities be followed- up over time?



Conversations with practitioners

- How have the children responded to the city play sessions and staff?
- What do you think the children have gained from the project in terms of physical development and in terms of attitudes towards physical activity?
- What do you think you and your staff have learned about the children from the project?
- Has participation in the project encouraged you to revise the way you support children's physical development in anyway?
- Would you suggest any revisions or developments to the programme?

CPD groups

- How have you found the Professional Development opportunities of the sessions?
- How have the Professional Development discussions helped you to understand and support the objectives of the city play programme?
- How have the CPD sessions helped you to plan for and support children's physical skills and activity more generally in your setting?
- How has the City Play pack been helpful to your setting?
- Do you have any suggestions for revising the materials or the CPD sessions?



Appendix 2: Primary Stars Interview Guide

City Play Evaluation; Transition to Primary Stars

Conversation with Year 1 teachers (together with the City Play coaches if possible)

Researchers will prepare short anonymous notes during the activities in the Primary Stars sessions to indicate the fluency and engagement of the children in the Primary Stars sessions.

The conversation following on from the session will review how the sessions promote participation and fluency in physical activity together with associated communication and confidence developments for children.

Review of observation notes from City Play

- How have the class engaged in the Primary Stars session's activities?
- What is it about their engagement that suggests learning and progression?
- How do levels of activity in the Primary Stars sessions vary from other physical activity sessions offered in the setting?
- How have the children taken to the Primary Stars sessions?
- How was the process of inducting them into the City Play sessions?

Conversation with Coaches

- How have the children in this class responded to the City Stars sessions this year so far?
- What do you think the children have gained from City Stars in terms of physical development and in terms of attitudes towards physical activity?
- Children in some schools experience City Play in their previous classes before they start City Stars.
- Have you noticed any differences in the way the children from these different backgrounds engage with City Stars? If you have, can you identify some of the differences?
- How has this particular class engaged with City Stars so far this year?
- What was it like inducting the class into the programme at the start of the year?
- How was this induction process compared to other classes?
- Would you suggest any revisions or developments to the programme?



Appendix 3: City Lifestyles Topic Guide

Parent and child Lifestyle session questions – for use with participants of the healthy eating sessions

Follow up questions

- Could you tell me a bit about mealtimes and the kinds of meals you cook or snacks you provide?
- What did you do in the lifestyle sessions? Have you made any changes because of these? If so, what? Do you prepare food together? Are there any ingredients that you use differently following on from the sessions?
- Are your children more open to trying new foods?
- Have you amended portion sizes or the balance of foods that you eat? What has influenced this change?
- Did you get given any materials at the sessions? Have you used them since?
- Did the children ever mention them after they finished?
- Have you done anything similar since those sessions? Would you like to? What would this be? Who should run them?
- Did your child participate in City Play sessions? Do you think this had any influence on their interest in physical activities or abilities?
- Do you think young children have enough opportunities for physical activity during a typical week?



Appendix 4: CPD Workshop Follow-on questions

1. What do you think the children in your setting have gained from the weekly City Play sessions in terms of physical development and attitudes towards physical activity?

2. What do you think you have gained professionally from participating in and observing the weekly city play sessions?

3. How has the City Play workshop at the Etihad helped you to support the weekly City Play sessions in your own setting?

4. How has the City Play workshop at the Etihad helped you to plan for and support children's physical skills and activity more widely in your own setting?

5. Do you have any suggestions for revising or for developing a further City Play workshop?



Appendix 5: City Play Parent Survey



City Play Survey

City Play Survey: questions for parents and carers.

Dear Parent/Carer, your child has been participating in the weekly ‘City Play’ sports play activities during this school year. The sessions are supported by coaches from Manchester City Football Club’s City in the Community (CITC), and are intended to help facilitate children’s physical development and confidence in their physical movement and skills. There are 16 short questions on one page and it should take less than five minutes to complete.

Manchester Metropolitan University have been working with CITC to assess how this activity is helping children and we would greatly value your opinion about how your child has responded to these activities.

This survey is optional, any information provided is completely anonymous, and your individual comments will be kept confidential. No personal contact details about you or your child are registered when you submit your survey response; we are only asking you to indicate the setting where they attended City Play.

If you are happy to take part in this survey, please complete and submit your responses by the 26th of July. The survey can be completed on most phones, tablets, laptops and PCs’

Thank you,

Dr. Martin Needham. Faculty of Education. Manchester Metropolitan University. M.Needham@mmu.ac.uk

1.1. What is the name of the school/ preschool that your child/children attend? (please type the name in the comment box)

Section 1: Opportunities for Physical Activity at preschool/ school.



2.2. Did the opportunities for physical activity influence your decision when choosing your child's preschool/ school? (select only one answer)

Yes

No

Not Sure

3.3. Are the physical play activities at preschool/school important your child's /children's daily experience? (select only one answer)

Yes

No

Not Sure

4.4. Are there any particular physical play activities that you would like to be made available, or to be discontinued, at your child's preschool/school? (*Please comment in the box below*)

Section 2 City Play

5.5. Did do you know that your child/ children took part in City Play this year? (select one answer)

Yes

No

Not Sure

6.6. Has your child talked to you about the City Play sessions? (select one answer)

Yes

No

Not Sure

7.7. What things have they liked about the sessions? (select any answers)

nothing specifically

the coach

the games



- running
- pretending
- jumping
- catching
- kicking
- balancing
- nothing at all

8.8. What have they said about the City Play sessions? (Please comment in the box below)

Your Child's/Children's interests in physical activity over the last year

9.9. Have your child's/children's interests in physical activity increased as compared to this time last year? (select one)

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

10.10. Does your child/children use any new games, actions or words that might be connected to the City Play sessions? (select one)

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

11.11. Have you noticed any changes to their confidence in their own physical movement? (select one)

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

12.12. How have your child 's/children's physical skills and interests changed over the last year and do you think any of these changes could be linked to the city play sessions? (Please comment in the box below)

An empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin border. It includes standard browser-style navigation icons: a left arrow, a right arrow, and a vertical scroll bar on the right side.

Opportunities for physical activity outside of preschool/school

13.13. *Do you think there enough spaces and times for children's physical play activity outside of preschool/school? (select one)*

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

14.14. Do you think young children need encouragement and guidance to develop their physical skills, movement and stamina? (select one)

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

15.15. Were there any physical play activities that your child was reluctant to join in with where they might have benefited from City Play? (Select any)

- Outdoor play
- Throwing and catching
- Running games
- Climbing
- Sports
- Dance

16.16. What kinds of physical activity does your child like? (Please comment in the box below).

An empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin border. It includes standard browser-style navigation icons: a left arrow, a right arrow, and a vertical scroll bar on the right side.