

POP-UP PLAY SHOP TOOLKIT

CREATED BY
POP-UP ADVENTURE PLAY



THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit was generously made possible by an Awards for All grant. Its goal is to provide information and signpost resources for individuals and organisations interested in the Pop-Up Play Shop model. This grant also funded a feasibility study, examining the potential benefits of this concept on a national level. Those findings are incorporated here.

In 2011-12 Pop-Up Adventure Play ran a pilot Pop-Up Play Shop in a long-empty space in Cardiff's Queens Arcade. This was funded by Cardiff City Council and delivered in partnership with ReCreate Cardiff and Vale Play Association. Since then, Pop-Up Adventure Play has also delivered a market-style Pop-Up Play Shop with Play Torbay, as part of the city's Children's Week, spoken on the topic at multiple conferences and encouraged other groups to reclaim empty commercial space for children's play in city centres around the world. Our mission is to make children's right to play a reality in the neighbourhoods where they live. We do this directly, and by creating communities of supportive adults.

In 2013, Awards for All grant enabled us to commission an independent feasibility study of the potential of the Pop-Up Play Shop model. This was conducted by Adrian Voce, OBE and found that "the Pop-Up Shop Model helps to repopulate and reactivate high streets by catering for families within the built, urban environment. Hard pressed families and their often play deprived children will be able to access and enjoy space where they were previously excluded or under pressure to spend money they may not have. At the same time, boarded-up shop fronts will be replaced by bustling, colourful hives of happy activity".

The Awards for All grant also funded the development and release of this toolkit, which is intended to help curious individuals and organisations through their own processes of designing and delivering city centre, pop-up play provision. Whatever form it might take and whatever city it might enliven, we hope that it brings enormous joy to you and your community.

This toolkit was written by Morgan Leichter-Saxby and Suzanna Law.

POP-UP ADVENTURE PLAY...

Playwork is a way of working with children by supporting their play. It is "non-judgemental, non-directive and largely reflective" (Dr. Fraser Brown) and based on decades of practice in a variety of settings. Playworkers believe that every child has the right to play, in their own way and time, for their own reasons. This field of practice developed out of the adventure playground movement, which began during the Second World War and gained ground swiftly in the UK and elsewhere. Adventure playgrounds are sites dedicated to children's play and offer opportunities for risk, challenge, creativity and freedom that have only become rarer for children in the years since their inception.

At Pop-Up Adventure Play, our approach to playwork is particularly community-based. We believe that sustainable change in children's lives must involve as wide an adult audience as possible, so we provide information and training to professionals, parents, students, and anyone else who is interested in learning more about play. Our versions of adventure playgrounds are temporary and low-cost, "popping up" in public space to seed opportunities for free play in neighbourhoods where they are lacking and inviting everyone to participate. We view children as living within circles of adult influence, and believe that you don't need to be a playworker to apply the lessons of playwork in children's homes, schools and neighbourhoods, today.

Pop-Up Adventure Playgrounds bring together the lessons of our collective backgrounds (educational, parent support, community organizing, anthropology, etc) to help make the benefits of play visible to diverse audiences. Although our primary focus is always on children, we have found that this approach sparks a series of interesting questions - what happens when we focus social change around our most vulnerable citizens? What happens when whole communities come together to play? How can we rethink our public space, our resources, and see their full play potential? We have found that supporting children's play with empathetic non-judgement allows a greater belief to grow in their capacities, and in our own. By noticing the creativity and resilience of children, by seeing how spontaneous, collaborative and opportunistic about play they can be, we slowly relearn how to be the same.

***“I DON’T WANT TO GO HOOOOOOME,
YET.”***

***“WELL, TOUGH. WE’VE SPENT ALL
OUR MONEY.”***

(a conversation between a boy and his mum, overheard by Morgan)

THE POP-UP PLAY SHOP’S BEGINNING

Children play wherever they go - home, school and play-ground certainly, but also the bank, bus stop and post office. Many of the places they spend time are filled with ‘no’, with adults regularly telling them to ‘climb down from there’, stop running up the down escalator, or simply to ‘put that back’. The landscape of most city centres is filled with shops and cafes, places where visitors are consumers and everything is designed to tempt. There may be a small park or play area, which is good if the sun is shining but for people seeking a free place to spend some time the library is often their only option. Unfortunately, while libraries are undeniably wonderful, most allow only the quietest forms of play.

While children and families wander the High Streets, looking for somewhere to go, other shops are standing empty. City centres are supposed to be places where we can all come together, but increasingly people report feeling isolated in the towns they call home. This doesn’t have to be the case. Pop-up shops, restaurants and art galleries all demonstrate that formerly commercial space can be reclaimed in low-cost, temporary projects that enliven public space. Thoughtful, creative projects that engage local residents can help empower them to participate in public life and help build the city centres they want to live in. It is increasingly recognized that pop-up projects may have effects felt far beyond their lifespan, just like a wink.

Two staff members, Morgan and Suzanna, had been play rangers and knew of the UK’s tremendous resources for new projects, including great play associations and fabulous scrap stores. They had helped to create Pop-Up Adventure Playgrounds in museums, parks and parking lots, training

local organizers in ways to improve any environment for children’s play - why not empty shops?

Morgan, who had recently moved to Cardiff, began walking the lengths of High and Queen Street, ringing the numbers of estate agents listed in empty shop windows. She also rang Cardiff City Council. They put her in touch with Re-Create Cardiff and Vale Scrap Store and Play Association (who came on board as a project partner), and mentioned a small funding stream still accepting applications.

WHAT IS A POP-UP PLAY SHOP?

This model uses a “meanwhile” lease to temporarily convert an empty shop into an open access play area. Children and families are able to come and go as they please without charge or registration, and welcome to play as they please with the materials they find.

All ages and abilities are welcome, and they are staffed during open hours by trained playworkers. Although older children might come on their own, we would emphasize that these sites do not provide drop off service, as they would then come under far stricter regulations.

Beyond that, a pop-up play shop is a thousand things every day. Whether they last for an afternoon, a week or a year, Pop-Up Play Shops offer children and parents respite and recreation. They may be a cafe, a welcome place to sit.

They might act as a satellite scrap store, an indoor play area, or community space. They might include aspects of a cardboard village, art studio, or hangout space for teenagers. Successful Pop-Up Play Shops are whatever the children who come need them to be.

WHY A POP-UP PLAY SHOP?

The feasibility study conducted into the pop-up play shop model found multiple benefits.

FOR CHILDREN

"Playing is something all children do, according to their age; almost from the moment they are born. Science tells us that it is deeply instinctive, a fundamental medium for orienting with the world and learning how to navigate it - not through the acquisition of skills, so much as the development of flexible responses, resilience and emotional range.

It is how children explore and experiment, testing themselves, taking risks on their own terms and discovering how they function - what they like and don't like - as much as discovering how their world works and how it responds to them."

(Adrian Voce, OBE, The Pop-Up For Play Feasibility Study)

Children's need to play manifests throughout their environments, and this is an effective way of placing children's play right in the middle of things - of our High Streets, our busy days, and our plans for social change. It's also a great way of meeting children where they are - one of the key aspects of a playwork approach.

FOR CITY CENTRES

"In 2009 the then government released a paper called Looking After Our Town Centres, which outlined the importance of empty shop revival to prevent high street decline. It makes clear that empty property contributes to economic and social decline and that vibrant interim uses of empty property can generate increased activity and footfall, which will benefit surrounding businesses and urban centres as a whole." (Adrian Voce, OBE, The Pop-Up For Play Feasibility Study)

Our two pilots certainly found this to be true. The more brief, market-style pop-up in Torbay brought more people to the shopping area and cafe surrounding the site, and those people stayed longer than usual. The longer-term shop in Cardiff took over a site that had been empty for 6 years - and it was rented only a month after we left.

FOR ORGANISATIONS

"There is no reason why the third sector cannot also use this concept to promote their activities and reach out to new donors and audiences. Fundraising is especially suited to this concept.

People making donations are often unaware of what an organisation does and where their donated money goes - by filling a shop with examples of how the money will be spent or delivery of a service is an innovative way of reaching a new audience." (Adrian Voce, OBE, The Pop-Up For Play Feasibility Study)

This model can work particularly well for scrap stores, which are often based out of town in areas that may be difficult for new visitors to find. Play associations may find that holding short projects in the city centre connects them new previously under-served groups who are not yet aware of the local provision available.

A simple bulletin board may help strengthen relationships with other regional organisations, as playworkers will then be able to signpost visitors to events and programs in their area.

QUESTIONS:

What appeals to you about the pop-up play shop model?

What are your hopes for a pop-up play shop?

How will you know your project is a success?

Who will support you, and help work through challenges that arise?

How will you share that success with the public, in your area and beyond?



City centres should provide a heart for our community, and focusing on children's play is an effective way to literally rejuvenate the spaces that we share.

Every town is different, every neighbourhood, and so every play shop must be different also.

That's why this toolkit is structured as a series of questions, as a workbook for you to use as you go through your own process of conceiving and creating your site.





*"It's like Art Attack in here!
I could stay here all day."*

(Girl, 8) ...

**SOURCING SITE,
STUFF AND STAFF**

SITE

In 2011, Morgan visited Queens Arcade, a shopping mall right in the middle of Cardiff's pedestrian precinct. There was a T-shirt printing place, a cookie shop, a pasty shop... but there were a lot of empty shops too. The mall itself had previously been in administration, but the new management had already welcome a pop-up gallery on the upper level and engaged a number of passers-by. When Morgan stopped to look, a child broke away from his Mum and tried to run up the down escalator. His Mum grabbed her back by the hand, and a security guard approached.

"You're really not supposed to play here," he said. "I know it looks fun, but it's not safe. You can loose a finger, I've seen it happen." The child looked up at him, bored already. Behind us, a little boy ran laughing out of a clothing store, looking back over his shoulder to see if he was being followed. He doubled back and leapt into the window display to peer up the skirts of a mannequin. A tired-looking man emerged into the antiseptic, fluorescent lit air and shouted "ALFIE", the sound overlapping that of Justin Bieber's latest hit, piped throughout the shopping centre. There, in the window next to the one where Alfie stood giggling, was a large To Let sign.

You're looking for a slot within the public landscape, a place that will appear on the mental maps that local residents already have of their neighbourhood or city centre. What's inside the shop counts too, but the key to consider here is still location, location, location.

A steady stream of passers-by will help bring new people into your site and raise the profile of your project (and play itself) in your neighbourhood. By making it clear that you're looking for a "meanwhile" tenancy and will happily vacate the property when a paying tenant can be found, you'll find that owners and managers are more likely to see the benefits in partnering.

Whether you have a plan to market your Play Shop, or are going for a "soft open" that builds clientele slowly over time, accessibility is key to its success. Ideally, you're looking for somewhere that children and families pass regularly as part of their day - to meet them where they are.

QUESTIONS ON LOCATION:

Is this site easily reached by bus, train or public transport?

If not, is there plenty of parking?

Are there people passing by here already?

Are there children in the area, looking for somewhere to go?

Are there shops and cafes nearby, and other attractions for adults?

Is this part of town busy at the times children would be around, for example afternoons, evenings and weekends?

Once you're inside the space, there's lots more to consider. A space doesn't need to be huge, but will need room for storage as well as play. It's very helpful to have a bathroom, or a sink to offer drinks. vPlaying is thirsty work!

You'll also want to have a frank discussion with the owners of the property about the terms of your 'meanwhile' lease, any applicable business rates, and the rules of the space itself.

QUESTIONS ON **SPACE**:

Is the space itself safe?

Are there exposed wires or loose floorboards that need to be addressed straightaway?

How do the owners feel about mess?

If you bring out paint, some will end up on the walls and floor. Is this acceptable?

How do the owners feel about tidiness?

Will the shop have to look pristine at the end of every day, or can you leave things out?

Are there convenient ways to load and dispose of materials, or will you be carrying everything by hand?

Are the neighbours likely to mind the extra noise?

STUFF

Keris, (a volunteer) arrived at the Pop-Up Play Shop one morning, carrying a large box under one arm.

"I've got this extra kettle," she said. "We don't need it at home, and thought it might be nice for teas and things. For the parents." She grinned. "And us, of course." "Sounds great," Morgan replied. "I'll get some cups from the charity shop. We can do it by donation." They'd started making a sign when the phone rang. It was the scrap store, offering a sofa for free. By the end of the week they were both installed, with the big squashy flowery sofa against the back wall and a little table with tea and biscuits tucked in the corner.

"Oh, this is lovely!" a young Mum said, as she pushed the pram over the threshold. Her little daughter was already scrabbling at the straps holding her in. Keris went over laughing to undo the girl's buckles, while Morgan made the mum a cup of tea and handed it to her on the sofa. "Thanks," she said. "I feel like I haven't had a moment to just sit with tea since she came along..." She sipped and watching while Keris and her daughter played, then slowly her eyes drifted shut. Within a few minutes, she'd fallen asleep. Morgan took her tea and draped a length of fabric over her.

We strongly recommend ordinary, recycled objects for children's play. There's an old cliché about children playing with the box their gift came in, rather than the gift itself – so we say, why not give them the box? And some tape, string, lengths of fabric, empty bottles and marker pens... These simple materials are fantastic because children are able to use them freely and create anything they can imagine, without worrying about 'wasting' or breaking them. They're better for us too, because we can give them wholeheartedly to play.

If you can, we suggest partnering with or becoming a member of your local scrap store (www.scrapstores.co.uk). They're great sources of weird, wonderful and very cheap stuff for play! Go through your own cupboards, and tell your friends what you're doing. This project is a great way to give a new life to any half-used balls of wool, or board games with pieces missing. Take a look at the "Non-Shopping List" in the Appendix, and feel free to distribute or post a list of the materials you're looking for.

"I can do my school project here, can't I? It's making a solar system, but Mum doesn't like it when I do paper mache in the living room."

(Girl, 10)

WHEN NEW MATERIAL DONATIONS ARRIVE, ASK YOURSELF:

Will this object shatter if broken?

Is it flexible and adaptable to children's imaginations?

Can it be used in many different ways, changed and used again?

Can I give it, wholeheartedly, for children to use, take and maybe break?

Does it fit my needs for the site?

The materials that you select and provide will likely change as you come to know the children, and as donations ebb and flow. If some children play aggressively, feel free to swap out hard PVC tubes for pool noodles – that way, they can still swing and hit, but without too much damage.

With basic materials such as these, children will be able to build forts and rocket ships, houses for their dolls and dinosaur masks. Given the chance, they will surprise you every single day with their powerful imaginations.

If you need to keep your site clean and tidy, consider whether these materials could get messy or be cleaned up quickly. If you need to preserve the floor's nice finish, don't put out paint (it won't stay on the tables, and you'll end up saying "no" all day long). If you only have 10 minutes between closing the door and going home, don't put out those tiny beads that roll and bounce everywhere.

Find ways to keep the shop stocked with rich and varied possibilities, but still keep things easy for yourself. That way, you can focus on supporting children's play rather than worrying about what happens after they've gone home!

STAFF

Before opening, the Cardiff pilot posted a job description on the Play Wales website. The first round of applicants and volunteers were all either currently studying playwork at University, or interested in entering the field. However, once open and bustling with activity the Shop attracted all sorts of people who were curious about getting involved.

One young woman was walking past with some friends and stopped outside the window. They all walked on, chatting amongst themselves while she stared in at the children putting painty handprints on the walls, at the parents drinking tea. Her mouth had fallen open.

"Please," she said, once she'd gathered the courage to come in. "Whatever this is, I want to help." Over the following months she talked about how she'd recently dropped out of training to become a teacher's assistant, feeling that it wasn't quite what she'd hoped.

She was nineteen, living in sheltered housing and seeking volunteer opportunities. Raised in a series of children's homes, she wanted to do something that felt important, that felt "true". After a couple of months of volunteering, she decided to re-enroll – this time in playwork.

Good staff make a site what it is – they welcome parents and children, create inviting environments and support visitors of all ages in moments that can be deeply vulnerable. We believe that quality playwork training is key to the success of pop-up play shops, especially if they are to remain devoted to children's play and not co-opted for another agenda.

If this is not your background then we recommend working with your local play association to build a team that is skilled, prepared and ready for action! We also recommend additional training in working with at-risk families, which is often not covered in traditional playwork programs.

A Play Shop can operate with one Senior Playworker, who in turn trains a team of volunteers. These volunteers may not necessarily have previous experience in playwork, but might bring other knowledge such as design, family support, etc.

A team that is diverse in age, gender, ethnicity and background helps to create a more vibrant, welcoming and prepared site staff. Volunteers can be found through a number of local and national organisations, some of which are listed in the Appendix.

Working with one of these groups can be a great way of finding people enthusiastic about joining in a project such as this.

When recruiting staff, note their enthusiasm for the project, and their willingness to set assumptions aside in favour of learning from the children and adults who come. Make sure that the Senior Playworker is joined by at least one volunteer for all sessions.

This way, attention can be shared out between the children and the adults (who often congregate in different areas) and there is back-up in case of any emergencies. Of course, there should always be one member of staff on site who has a certificate in first aid.

“There aren’t many places I can take my boy (who is autistic). He screams and shouts and carries on, and I feel like people are looking at me.

But if I can bring him here, it makes all the difference. I can say ‘if we can get round the shops, then I’ll take you to the Play Shop’ and because of that I don’t dread coming into town anymore.”

(Mum of 1)

QUESTIONS ON **STAFF**:

What are the essential qualities you are seeking in your volunteers, or staff?

What are the roles and responsibilities you want each person to perform?

How will you recruit, train and support them over time?

What professional development opportunities can you provide, or signpost for them?

What methods of reflective practice will allow the different members of your team to learn from one another, and to gain all they can from their interactions with the public?

However your team is structured, it is essential that there is supervisory support from above and a chain of command in place should something go wrong.

This should be reflected in your policies and procedures, which should be clearly posted on site, and covered in detail during your staff orientation.



FROM THE BEGINNING

One “meanwhile” project found some unexpected post on their mat a few weeks after their opening – a letter from their local business rates department informing them that they owed tens of thousands of pounds for 6 month’s use of the shop.

They called the council, who explained that relief from business rates was only offered to recognized charities and then on a discretionary basis of up to 80%.

Even if given the whole discretionary amount, they were now liable for a sum larger than their whole grant – a grant which had been provided by a different office of the same council! This also contradicted the information they had received from landlords, rental agency and even the council’s own website.

It took months of relentless letter-writing to various council departments and local representatives, plus a petition among visitors and local businesses before they were granted Exceptional Relief Status of 100%.

The time they spent correcting this situation made it much harder to work towards sustainability or new locations, and was incredibly stressful. One unanticipated benefit, however, was the outpouring of support they received from visitors and admirers.

However, they advise all new “meanwhile” projects to contact the business rates department at the start of their project, and to keep all agreements in writing.

QUESTIONS:

What jobs need to be done to make this project a success before it opens (such as raising start-up funds, moving materials, advertising volunteer posts, distributing flyers around town, etc)?

Who do you know that might be able to help with these?

What jobs need to be done once this project is up and running (such as monitoring visitor data, supporting volunteers once they’re found, updating blogs or other social media)?

Who do you know that might be able to help with these?

What organisations might be interested in partnering or assisting this project?

Make contact with your local play association, scrap store, volunteering group. Call your local city council and ask for their policies on waiving business rates for non-profit or community projects.

You’ll also need public liability insurance, and a range of policy documents that you’re best advised about by your local play association. Be creative about who might be able to help with each stage and aspect of this project.



BEFORE YOU OPEN THE DOORS...

Make sure you have the following:

- support from a supervisory group**
- public liability insurance**
- a strong understanding with the landlords or owner of the shop about the nature of your project**
- a signed ‘meanwhile’ lease**
- an agreement with the local council about business rates and charitable discounts**
- a clear budget, with room for emergencies**
- a plan for monitoring and evaluation as you go**
- background and reference checks for all staff, including volunteers**
- all necessary policies, including up-to-date safeguarding procedures from your local authority**

“The Pop Up Play Shop will.. provide children and parents with a welcome respite from what sometimes can be relentless shopping.

It will support children and parents to make the most of what is often readily available and it will go some way in demonstrating that given time, space and permission, children will play anywhere.”

(Marianne Mannello, Assistant Director of Play Wales)

PROMOTIONS

PROMOTIONS

There are many groups which might help get the word out about your project. After-school services and play rangers may be happy to pass your fliers out, if you make theirs available in the shop.

Make sure that everyone knows you're trying not to compete but to compliment existing services. By sharing their information with you, they have the chance to reach many families who might not know what's available in the area.

Ask if you can leave information at the local schools and paediatricians offices. You might find that a central location is all you need to get noticed by passers-by - but that doesn't mean they'll be coming in.

Think about your signage, and post information about the shop (its purpose and opening hours) clearly in the window.

After about a month, new families began seeking us out specifically. They said that the local children's librarian had sent them, so Morgan went down there with a little stack of flyers.

When she walked out of the elevator onto the children's floor, a librarian with electric blue hair and tattoos of Where the Wild Things Are stood up at her desk and pointed.

"You," she said. "I bet you're the Play Shop lady."
"That's right," Morgan said. "And you've been sending us people already."
The librarian grinned.

"Only once they get rowdy. I love this place, but there are some things we just can't allow in a library.

It's fantastic being able to send families to you, and know that it's free and fun. I've heard good things," she said. "Wouldn't have kept sending you new people otherwise."

QUESTIONS:

What is your play shop going to be called?

Will you be opening 'soft', or with a large and publicized event?

How many sessions a week can you commit to at the beginning? Note, it's better to add more sessions later than take them away.

Describe your shop's mission in three sentences, using plain language.

Now say it in ten words. This can go on your sign.



WORKING WITH FAMILIES

Playworkers meet children where they are and, increasingly, that is in their family groups. It is widely acknowledged that children today spend less time than ever outside of adult supervision, enjoying the kinds of roaming that previous generations took for granted. There are lots of reasons for this, including greater car traffic and fears for children's safety.

Many parents wish that their children had more time to run and climb and pretend, or more places to go that allowed those things. Other parents may be more focused on academic achievement or their children's behaviour, perhaps unaware of play's central role in one's intellectual, social and creative development.

Whatever the priorities of the adults, playworkers can make the case for play in terms that they can understand and respond to.

These huge shifts in children's lives over the past few decades also means that parents are less and less likely to have had free, ranging play when they were children.

These adults are likely to have their own needs around play, their own hesitations and anxieties to work through. They may be suspicious of the mess and noise of play, or may dominate their children's activities to get their own needs met.

Just like play-deprived children, adults may exhibit withdrawal from or aggression towards the very play opportunities that call to them. These behaviours can be difficult or frustrating for playworkers to deal with, but it's essential to apply the same principles of non-judgment, empathy and reflection that we use when working with children.

The good news is that those playwork skills will serve us well here! We never grow out of the need to play, though as we grow old our instincts to play may be harder to hear.

QUESTIONS:

How can we treat adults as children, in the most respectful sense?

How can we welcome all children and families, on their own terms?

What support systems do we need to work with families who may be at-risk or in crisis?

How can we reframe adults' behaviours as play cues, or signs of play deprivation?

How can we reflect, as a team, to ensure that we accept families on their own terms but stay focused on supporting the child?



**A MOTHER SAT IN THE SHOP, LOOKING AT A PILE
OF RAINBOW TULLE THAT HAD BEEN CUT INTO STRIPS...**

“What’s all this for?” she asked.

*“Some people have been making tutus,”
Claire (a volunteer) replied.*

**She showed the mum how to weave and knot the strips around an
elastic waistband.**

*“Oh,” the mum said. “I couldn’t possibly do that.”
But she stared and stared, her fingers twitching.*

**Claire glanced between the woman and the tutu, gently handing it over and
helping her get started.**

**Soon she was looping and pulling, alternating colours and keeping up a running
commentary that was half said to Claire, and half whispered to herself.**

“I’ll be that proud if I can do this... I have.

Oh, the kids must be shocked to see me!.

I’ve never made a thing before.”

"Just wanted to say how wonderful I think the Play Shop is... I often avoid going into town with both my children as they get so bored and I get very stressed!"

After William had played for a while with Morgan I decided to stay in town a bit longer and we got some lunch, something I usually avoid with a 2 year old!

Thank you so much and we will definitely be back again. You have made my visits into town so much more appealing, I even told a few mums on my way back to car park!"

(Mum of 1)

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT
IN ALL ITS FORMS**

COMMUNITY SUPPORT IN ALL ITS FORMS

Once established, the line between 'regulars' and 'volunteers' can begin to blur – at least, it can for some of the regulars who may jump up to explain or welcome first-time visitors to a place where they already feel at home.

People who attend and feel passionately about this form of provision want to help, but they may not be in a position to provide the skills or commitment you require from staff. Additionally, playwork is an approach that can sometimes look 'easy' and people do not necessarily know that there is a great deal of theory and training behind it.

When people ask to start volunteering, be very clear with them about what is required. Punctuality, availability, training and additional study – these are not commitments that everyone is able to make. It can be tempting to bring aboard some volunteers who have particular needs of their own, and this can be beneficial to both them and the project long-term, but be careful that supporting them does not detract from the standard of care you provide to your core audience of the children themselves.

There are many other ways you can encourage people to show their support. They can hand out fliers or help spread the word among their friends. They can help carry in boxes, or bring materials from home.

A donations tin allows people to drop in coins without the amount of their contribution being public. Often people will make small purchases of glue sticks or paper, and bring those in to show appreciation for the service you provide. However people show their support, it's important to recognize their efforts and thank them carefully.

INCLUSION AND CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

Sometimes it's easier to say that you're open to all than it is to mean it. Inevitably, people will come that you find challenging to work with because of their needs or backgrounds or behaviours. Triggers will vary for you and your staff, and sometimes challenges will come from the staff themselves. It is vital to have a reflective process through which everyone can air and discuss the issues that arise in sessions.

QUESTIONS:

What groups are you least experienced with?

What do you find challenging, when it comes to children?

What do you find challenging, when it comes to adults?

What do you find challenging, when it comes to team members?

What processes for reflection can you establish, both as an individual and for the team?

**"That's why I like it here,
it's my time.**

**I can be creative here
without my Mum
screaming 'Don't do that!
Don't make a mess!'**

**We do art at school, but
it's not good like this."**

(Boy, 11)



ONE AFTERNOON....

a dozen or so teenagers came tearing into the shop. One asked “what’s this place, then?” and a young volunteer named Charlie said “it’s a place where children can do what they like”. “Right then,” he said and grabbed a long cardboard tube. He swung and broke it against the wall.

There were some families with small children in at the time, eating biscuits and watching their little ones drive toy cars along the sofa arms. The teenagers asked for cups of tea “with six sugars, thanks” and started to play.

As they wrapped their friends in fabric, shoved each other and laughed, the volume rose steadily. The parents gathered their toddlers and quietly left and, with the babies gone, the teenagers’ games grew rougher.

A mug was thrown against the wall and smashed, brown tea pouring down. Tubes were broken, tubs of materials tipped over and their contents kicked across the floor. More teenagers were drawn by the racket and one asked Charlie “is this a riot?” Eventually the staff told the teenagers it was time to leave, and locked the door behind them. Surveying the wreckage together, they acknowledged that their hearts were racing.

Over reflection, they realized that the teenagers had done exactly what younger children did. They had built and smashed, dressed and shoved, laughed and tipped things over. The only differences were their strength and the volume of their excitement.

Over the next weeks, the teenagers came back in ones and twos, first apologizing for their behaviour and then gently exploring the possibilities of the shop. When one started swearing uncontrollably, his friends carried him out.

Another had just cut a door into a cardboard box when a toddler wandered through it, curious. He laughed, knelt down and passed the little girl a crayon to decorate the inside. “I’ll admit it now,” Claire said. “They terrified me at first. But I’m glad they’ve come now. They needed it so badly.”

**Try your best every
day, think and talk
about it, try again
the next day.**

“Being a mother of two young children, I know from personal experience the importance of these projects. Pop-Up Adventure Play Schemes play an important role because they enable children and families to have access to constructive play, which helps children to learn in a positive environment and gives parents the confidence to initiate play activities with their children.”

(Assembly Member Eluned Parrott, Cardiff, UK)

REFLECTION

REFLECTION

It is very important to reflect with your team and ensure you are working effectively, navigating the project's ever-changing dynamics together. Try to carve out some time at the end of every session when each person can share their experiences and thoughts from the day. Contribute your own, and try to make sure that the tone stays supportive – everyone is learning together, after all.

At landmark points on the project (for example, the halfway point), try some of the questions below to get a broader understanding of your progress so far.

- **What relationships have you been building with visitors?**
- **What relationships have you been building within the community (for example, local businesses)**
- **Are you still operating to your core values?**
- **What have been the highlights or key successes of the project so far?**
- **Where might there be room for improvement?**

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Different funders will have varying requirements about your monitoring practice. It is generally advised that you keep some track of the ages, gender and ethnicities of those who come, as well as information on any medical or developmental diagnoses. However, it is essential that these needs not impact upon the play opportunities, or their accessibility.

There is no need to register or sign-in as even the simplest of forms will leave some people feeling excluded – often, the people who need this provision the most. Instead, make estimates for your own records and do so subtly.

We also recommend that you evaluate the provision itself, looking at the play potential of the environment you create. Use the list of play types (Appendix 3) to see what opportunities might be missing.

Take note also of what is being used or ignored, and experiment with new ways of displaying or using the space. See what works, and build from there.

As you go through this process, be sure and note down your actions, the response from children and adults, and some stories that arise naturally from the play. These will help you paint a rich picture of the unique culture of your own pop-up play shop.

It is also worth opening your site to external evaluations, such as studies conducted by local community arts or child development students. Our Cardiff pilot hosted a number of these, and the findings were fascinating – and great to share with funders!

QUESTIONS:

Are you reaching a diverse audience, representative of the local demographics?

Who is missing from this picture, and why might that be?

What feedback are you getting from both regular and first-time visitors, and what are your responses?

What forms of play are you not seeing, and how could you make those more available?

What additional training or support might you need, to improve delivery or expand your reach?

BEING IN THE PUBLIC EYE

This project will, for many visitors, be their first introduction to the concept of playwork. It may be the first time they have thought consciously about free play as we define it. You will likely have conversations about risk, mess and children's self-direction repeatedly.

Think of this as invaluable outreach, as essential advocacy work. However, don't assume that it will all be uphill, we found that many people respond immediately and intuitively to the joyful creativity on display in a thriving Pop-Up Play Shop. One grandmother came in to look around, saying "oooh, this is a lovely place, isn't it? And a very good idea, somewhere that's all about fun."

SUSTAINABILITY

No matter what kind of funding your project might have, it's worth considering some ways it can become more financially sustainable. Be creative, but make sure that these efforts don't negatively impact the site, or let anyone feel excluded or uncomfortable.

- Can you offer tea, coffee and orange squash for a suggested donation?
- Are you willing to open on additional days, for private events such as birthday parties?
- Can you offer your space as a venue for workshops or trainings?
- Can you offer 'grab bags' of scrap for sale or donation? How about T-shirts?
- How about an exhibition of art or jewellery made by children or local artists?
- Would local businesses be willing to provide donations of cash, materials or services?

Make sure to check in regularly with the local council and play association, to see if they have any suggestions about small grant schemes you could tap into.

WHAT WE FOUND



Our pilots demonstrated a huge amount of public enthusiasm and support for this project. We saw more than two thousand people, many of them returning every week. We also found that many people often called "hard to reach" came

walking right in - they drank tea, put their handprints on the walls, told us about their lives and made new friends with other local residents

We also found that unexpected communities developed, as art students dropped in to ransack our bins of junk for their end-of-term projects, dropping a pound in the tin on their way out and calling "thanks!" Strong relationships developed with the staff of the T-shirt shop opposite, who enjoyed the busier trade.

A security guard dropped in to ask whether he could take some of the "little, shiny things" for his weekend hobby of tying fly fishing lures, mentioning that since we'd opened rates of teen shoplifting had gone down. We certainly made more work for the cleaners, but one stopped by while buffing the floors to say "I love what you're doing here, for the children".

Even for the people we expected to be serving, we found that connections were not always as anticipated. We helped suddenly-single fathers pick out birthday presents for daughters, and held babies for fourteen year-old mums who "wanted a go" at the big soft play equipment we'd had donated. The potential of city-centre play provision to positively impact children's lives is extraordinary. Safia, aged 8, came alone every day and made elaborate constructions of paper and glue. She asked us to keep these, because "they're not safe at home".

Before we opened, she said, she'd simply wandered around town each day until her mother finished work. Jesse, aged 10, was shocked to find how much he enjoyed building things from cardboard. "I'll make this for the babies that come in tomorrow," he said. "I think they'd like a rocket ship."

SO, WOULD WE DO IT AGAIN?

In a heartbeat! Our time delivering these pilots was among the most exciting and educational of our playwork careers. Every day offered new stories and challenges to improve our practice.

The pilots demonstrated clearly that communities built around children's right to play are strong and vibrant, with changes that can last far beyond a project's popping up, or down. It is easy to forget that these cities are ours, that we build them together. Projects such as these help weave play throughout public space, to the benefit of children and adults.

By meeting people where they are, rather than asking them to come to us, we found that natural connections formed easily between extremely diverse groups. By inviting everyone and removing barriers to access wherever we found them, the shop welcomed those children and adults who are most at risk of social exclusion.

Together, we began to re-learn the relief of free play, the sense of freedom it offers and the trust it helps to build in ourselves and each other. Together, we saw anew the potential of everyday life to astonish us with its beauty.

Now that we've 'popped-down' the shop, we want to keep in touch with other pop-up play projects as they arise and hear about what is happening in other cities. If we can help you make your idea a reality, let us know!



Play on,
Team Pop-Up Adventure Play

CONTACT US



Leave us a message on our website -
www.popupadventureplay.org

Drop us a message on our facebook page -
www.facebook.com/popupplay

Or contact us directly on
suzanna@popupadventureplay.org

FURTHER LINKS

Our work and projects

Pop-Up Adventure Play - www.popupadventureplay.org

Pop-Up Play Shop (2011-2, blog archive) -
www.popupplayshop.org

National/International Play Associations

Play England - www.playengland.org.uk

Play Scotland - <http://www.playscotland.org/>

Playboard Northern Ireland - <http://www.playboard.org/>

Play Wales - <http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/>

International Play Association - www.ipaworld.org

Resources for "meanwhile" tenancies

Meanwhile Space -

<http://www.meanwhilespace.com/>


3Space - <http://3space.org/>

Dan Thompson. Pop-Up People Report. 2012 -
<http://www.artistsandmakers.com/images/PopUpPeopleReport.pdf>

Looking After Our Town Centres -
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/planningandbuilding/towncentres>

Scrapstores UK (Directory of Local Groups) -
www.scrapstores.org.uk

For Contacting Politicians - www.writetothem.org



***“What a lovely place
(the Pop-Up Play Shop) is!
It is great for children to be able to “be”
instead of being dragged around. Our
children are polar opposites but both found
things to make them very happy.***

***We are on holiday in Cardiff – having a
great time and this will be a special memory
for us forever.”***

(Mum of 2)

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1

THE PLAYWORK PRINCIPLES

Pop-Up Adventure Play endorses and aims to always abide by the principles that underpin professional and vocational playwork. They serve as guiding principles in all our work with children, their families and the wider community.

The Principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork and, as such, must be regarded as a whole. They describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people. They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

1. All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well being of individuals and communities.
2. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
3. The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
4. For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.
5. The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
6. The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
7. Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
8. Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.

APPENDIX 2

BOB HUGHES'S PLAY TYPES

These were developed by Bob Hughes for the purposes of adults who study and facilitate play, and are examined in far more detail in his 1996 book "A Playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types".

Children's play is rich, varied, organic and constantly evolving. It can explore different types at the same time, flow from one to another and back again. As such, these definitions are by adults, for adults. They're useful in helping us be more specific when we're talking about play and play provision but will only ever capture a narrow aspect of the wealth of children's play. This list is also evolving and should not be assumed to ever be complete.

Symbolic Play - play which allows control, gradual exploration and increased understanding without the risk of being out of one's depth.

Rough and Tumble Play - close encounter play which is less to do with fighting and more to do with touching, tickling, gauging relative strength. Discovering physical flexibility and the exhilaration of display.

Socio-dramatic Play - the enactment of real and potential experiences of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature.

Social Play - play during which the rules and criteria for social engagement and interaction can be revealed, explored and amended.

Creative Play - play which allows a new response, the transformation of information, awareness of new connections, with an element of surprise.

Communication Play - play using words, nuances or gestures for example, mime, jokes, play acting, mickey taking, singing, debate, poetry.

Dramatic Play - play which dramatizes events in which the child is not a direct participator.

Deep Play - play which allows the child to encounter risky or even potentially life threatening experiences, to develop survival skills and conquer fear.

Exploratory Play - play to access factual information consisting of manipulative behaviours such as handling, throwing, banging or mouthing objects.

Fantasy Play - play which rearranges the world in the child's way, a way which is unlikely to occur.

Imaginative Play - play where the conventional rules, which govern the physical world, do not apply.

Locomotor Play - movement in any or every direction for its own sake.

Mastery Play - control of the physical and affective ingredients of the environments.

Object Play - play which uses infinite and interesting sequences of hand-eye manipulations and movements.

Role Play - play exploring ways of being, although not normally of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature.

Recapitulative Play - play that allows the child to explore ancestry, history, rituals, stories, rhymes, fire and darkness. Enables children to access play of earlier human evolutionary stages.



**WITH THANKS TO THE VOLUNTEERS,
PROJECT PARTNERS AND COMMUNITIES
WHO MADE THIS TOOLKIT NOT ONLY
POSSIBLE, BUT FUN.**



**Designed by
Erica Larsen-Dockray
erica@eekart.com**