

# Hackney Playbus



# ANNUAL REPORT

2021 / 2022



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Hackney Playbus believes that all children under five living in East London should share the same opportunities to grow, thrive, and reach their potential.

Our mission is to provide play, learning, and support to socially excluded families in East London, to encourage children's early years development, and to strengthen families and communities.

# CHAIR'S REPORT

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Children and families are at the heart of everything we do at Hackney Playbus and this year we have enjoyed playing, building, painting, planning and sharing together in new and creative ways.

The past year has again had many challenges but the Playbus team have continued to show resilience, care and commitment to their work, as well as a large dose of fun and enthusiasm!

Our year had a hopeful start with our Crowdfunder campaign enabling us to begin converting and decorating a more environmentally friendly Playbus. The campaign also reminded us that we are part of a generous and supportive community. As well as donating much needed funds, many supporters also shared

examples of the long-lasting and positive impact that the Playbus has made on their lives - we are most grateful for these gifts and stories which have been a real encouragement.

Due to the pandemic, much of our family support and groups have continued online, enabling us to stay connected and support one another throughout the year's ups and downs. We have learnt to sing, dance and have meetings on Zoom, and have made the most of technology - sharing play ideas, videos and links and having fun in new digital ways.

However, nothing beats face to face play and it was a pleasure to welcome families back 'in real life' as we re-started pop up play sessions, full of toys, and re-opened the doors on our stay and

play sessions.

The Hackney Half was a real high point -our team of runners not only raised money but also gave us the chance to gather and support them, raise the profile of Hackney Playbus and reconnect to each other and the local community.

Throughout the year we have loved including children and families in the planning, designing and even painting of our new bus. We are grateful for the many volunteers who have supported the effort to get our new vehicle ready for the road, as well as staff and trustees who have gone above and beyond to make it happen.

We love our drive-able play space which will soon be getting out into all corners of

East London again, but the last few years have emphasised that Hackney Playbus is much more than just a bus. We've been working closely with Playbus families and friends to co-create our strategy for the next 5 years, ensuring that our plans and direction as a charity reflect what is important to those we work most closely alongside. With a new bus, a strong staff team and a vision and direction written and owned by the whole Playbus community we are proud to be entering a new year together. 2022 is Hackney Playbus's 50th birthday and we are looking forward to celebrating our legacy and to many more play-filled years to come.

Annabelle Burns  
Chair of Trustees

# OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

OUR AIMS  
WHAT WE DO  
OUTCOMES  
INDICATORS

## NEEDS

Families experiencing multiple disadvantages need time, space, resources and support to play with their children  
Parenting is difficult and every parent needs help to know how to best provide for their children in their early years  
Some families need specialist support but do not know what services are available and how to access them  
Families who are isolated need the on going support of friends and their local community for their children to thrive

To improve access to play and learning experiences for children in their early years

We bring play and learning experiences into community spaces using a double-decker bus that has been converted into an early years play and learning resource

We use "play at home" ideas that are affordable and easy for parents to do at home or out and about as part of an everyday routine

We work with partners to identify children who would especially benefit from greater opportunities to play, learn and socialise

We do local outreach to support local families to take part in Hackney Playbus activities

Children progress in their learning and development

Children are confident to play and explore

Children engage in activities they have never experienced before

Children engage in active learning, showing high levels of energy and fascination

To support parents to develop their parenting knowledge, confidence and skills

We model ways to interact with children and babies

We encourage parents and carers to share their experiences of parenthood with one another

We help parents and carers to understand that they are not alone in their struggles

We use a non-judgmental approach that focuses on the strengths of parents and carers

We talk about child development, from a position of experience and knowledge

Parents and carers are better equipped to manage the challenges of parenthood

Parents and carers have an improved understanding of child development

Parents and carers understand the importance of play for children's learning and development

Parents and carers feel more confident and able to manage

To connect families to support services

We listen to families' needs and let them know about options that are relevant to their circumstances

We display information leaflets and posters about support services on the Playbus

We encourage families to share their experiences of services with one another

We invite professionals to visit our play sessions to raise awareness of their services

We work in partnership with other organisations who support families

Families are empowered to access support services

Parents and carers know where to get support that is relevant to the needs of their family

Parents and carers make greater use of support services

Parents and carers share their experiences and knowledge of support services with others

To enable the development of peer-support networks amongst local families

We help parents and carers feel comfortable, relaxed, and open to friendship

We create a welcoming, informal space in the community for families to meet and socialise

We are kind, compassionate, accommodating, sensitive, non-judgemental and supportive

We create moments for interaction and connection through cooking, singing, and play

The Playbus is a novel environment that inspires conversation

Families are better supported in their community

Families know more people from their local community to say hello to

Families experience reduced social isolation

Families feel more connected to their local area

Parents and carers have more people to turn to for help

# HACKNEY PLAYBUS SERVICES

5

This year we continued to provide a flexible service to support families with children aged 0-4 years old in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our programme includes activities to encourage families to play at home and out in the community, including play-at-home videos, online Zoom singing sessions, and outdoor pop-up play sessions, as well as weekly indoor stay & play sessions for toddlers and babies.

We provided more intensive support to families over the phone and in our groups, including assistance with accessing other support services to deal with issues such as housing and debt, as well as support to complete welfare grant applications. We also highlighted specific initiatives and support services through our information text messaging service and e-newsletters,

and continued to distribute BookStart packs to families with care and support needs through our referrals and outreach programme.

Our baby and toddler groups take place at St Peter's Crypt, De Beauvoir. Our morning session caters to toddlers who are active, curious and ready to explore, while our afternoon session focuses on providing a caring and nurturing environment for families with babies under the age of one years old.

We provide a range of play experiences for babies and children to explore freely at both groups, and create a welcoming, inclusive space for parents and carers to share their experiences of parenthood with one another, with the support of our team.

For some children this has been their first opportunity



62

baby & toddler groups

130

Zoom sessions

to play alongside others since the pandemic. Babies born during lockdown have met other children for the first time at our groups and enjoyed many first experiences, such as exploring treasure baskets and singing songs together. Children who have been confined indoors, many in temporary or cramped accommodation, have enjoyed the opportunity to move, play and explore. It's been incredible to see children flourish in this environment!



# OUR IMPACT: PLAY & LEARNING

## 100%

of parents surveyed feel their children's social skills have improved since joining Hackney Playbus



"Coming to the group really helped my daughter learn to walk. It was the brink of winter, there was limited room in the hostel and nowhere else to go... but having the safe, wide open space in the room has really boosted her walking skills."

"My child practice or repeat what she learned at Hackney Playbus and interested to do more activities at home since she started participating."

## 94%

of parents surveyed feel their child has more opportunities for physical activity since taking part in Hackney Playbus projects



# OUR IMPACT: COMMUNITY & FRIENDSHIP

## 82%

of parents surveyed feel they have made new friendships through coming to Hackney Playbus sessions

The baby and toddler groups at St Peter's Crypt provide a welcoming space where families feel safe and supported. The groups have been an important opportunity for parents to open up and connect with one another, sharing their experiences of parenting and lockdown in a comfortable and relaxed setting.

During the groups parents share their experiences, give each other advice and confidence, swap numbers and arrange to meet each other outside of our sessions.

"Within 6 months you can see that some of the parents that were quite shy at the beginning and didn't really interact with one another are starting to open up and speak more freely in the groups, are making friends, and offering each other support. Some have even started to have play dates outside of the group. These interactions really help with their self confidence and with the community spirit at the group." Volunteer, Toddler & Baby Group

"I don't want to miss the session. It gives us somewhere to go instead of being stuck in the hostel room. We have very few family and friends and are not allowed any visitors [at the hostel], so the group is like a family to us."

## 94%

of parents surveyed feel they have met other parents or carers who they could go to if they needed help joining Hackney Playbus

Some parents were reunited after a year apart due to the pandemic and were excited and happy to see each other again when we resumed our groups programme. Other parents joined us for the first time, having experienced significant social isolation during the pandemic, especially single parents living in hostel accommodation.

"We are all available to help each other. It's our little village. And besides, you get the best tips from these experienced mums!"

We are incredibly grateful to St Peter's Crypt for being such a welcoming and supportive host for our groups, and in particular for arranging a free lunch every week for our families - an important and lovely opportunity for families to spend more time together and deepen the bonds between them.

# OUR IMPACT: PARENTING CONFIDENCE

## 92%

of parents surveyed say that coming to Hackney Playbus sessions helps them bond with their children

## 89%

of parents surveyed feel they have more ideas about ways to play their children at home since taking part in Hackney Playbus projects

Our programme supports parents and carers in their knowledge and understanding of children's early learning and development, and strengthens their skills and confidence in parenting. Playing, singing and reading together at our sessions - both in person and online - gives parents and carers inspiration and confidence to play with their children at home. Parents and carers learn strategies to support their children's healthy development, as well as ways to manage the challenges of parenthood and look after themselves. They learn from each other, from our staff team and from visiting health professionals such as health visitors and speech and language therapists.



"What we have learned in Playbus we practice at home. How to make our child keep safe. How to make our child happy. How to care for our child."

"As a first time mom I can say Hackney Playbus helps me be a better mom to my only child."

"We ourselves learned from Playbus how to make children happy and make strong relationship with them."

# OUR IMPACT: LINKING FAMILIES TO SUPPORT SERVICES

Our approach to supporting families is flexible and proactive. We research choices for families based on their circumstances and needs, while also being proactive in sharing information about opportunities that we know could benefit families.

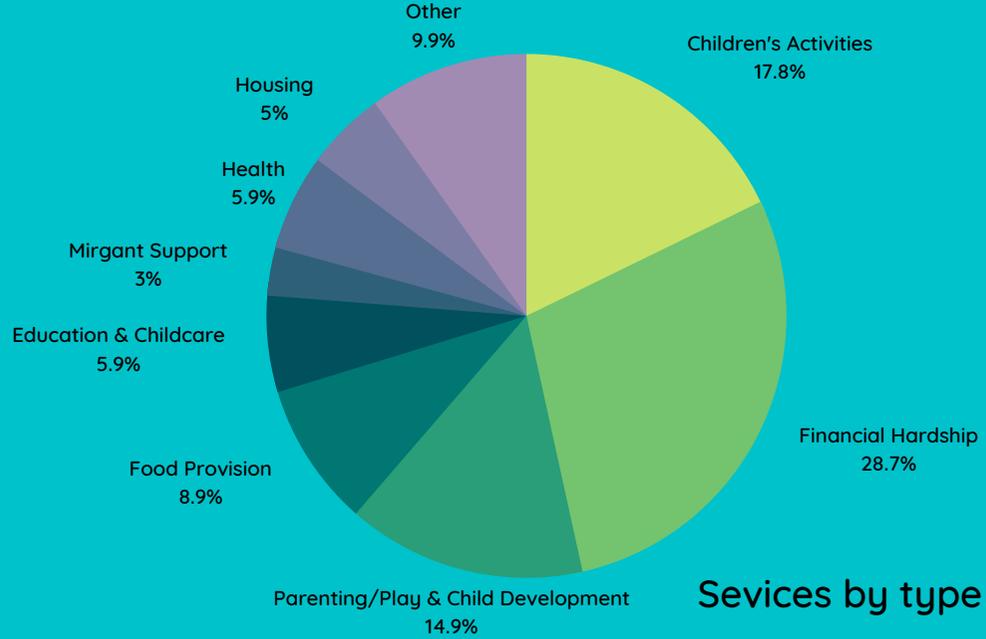
We highlight helpful support services for families both in person at groups and over the phone, as well as through our e-newsletter and text messaging service. Families

also share information with each other about services they have found to be helpful.

Where needed we refer families to Little Village, Growbaby and E5 Baby Bank for help with clothing and baby equipment, and to foodbanks for families struggling to afford food for their family. We support families on a one-to-one basis to access services such as Citizen's Advice and Shelter, doing all that we can to ensure families can access the services they need.

**97%**  
of parents surveyed have found out about other activities or support services through Hackney Playbus

**105**  
services signposted to



"The Playbus team have been a great source of finding extra support. And they just suggest stuff you didn't even know to look for, so that's really great."

"Since we joined the Hackney Playbus, they helped us finding suitable accommodation, get free food bank, get voucher to buy food, get clothes and nappies for our child, connect us with the charity and organisation when we struggle financially and are looking after our emotional well being as well."

# OUTREACH & REFERRALS PROGRAMME

After spending the first year of the pandemic focusing on working with other groups and services to develop pathways for families to be referred to Hackney Playbus, this year has been characterised by a wholehearted return to community outreach. Over the course of the year, we used cargo bike play sessions, vaccination pop-up events and hostels outreach to reach out directly to new families.

Cargo bike play sessions provided effective platforms for connecting with local families in advance of our return to regular Playbus sessions. We also participated in six vaccination pop-up events - organised by the council in collaboration with

community partners including Coffee Afrik, the Hackney Somali Community Centre, the Traveller Movement and the Community African Network. At these cargo bike sessions and pop-up events, we spoke to countless families about our service, and at least 140 signed up for email/text updates about our service/their local Playbus session.

We worked closely with the Temporary Accommodation (TA) team at Hackney and voluntary sector partners to develop a program of activities to engage and support families in TA and have built a presence in forums for organisations operating in the housing and homelessness sector in Hackney.

As a result of hostels outreach - including postering and door-knocking, several

homeless families attended cargo bike or baby and toddler sessions, and many more have signed up for updates about local Playbus sessions.

Over the course of the year, we have been approached by several organisations for advice and support around reaching families in TA, which speaks to a growing recognition of our ability to engage with this group of families.



12

Cargo bike  
play sessions

27

Community  
outreach  
events



Whilst scaling up direct community outreach, we have also maintained a strong presence at forum and neighbourhood meetings, helping us to develop relationships with partners across the voluntary, community and statutory sector as well as furthering our understanding of the changing landscape within health and social care.

We continue to work in close collaboration with other organisations supporting

marginalised Hackney families and over the course of the year received 20 referrals from partners within social prescribing, domestic violence services, migrant support groups, services for vulnerable pregnant women and new mums, the health visiting team and Hackney's Temporary Accommodation team. The most common care and support needs for these families were social isolation, insecure housing or homelessness, financial hardship and single

**45%**  
have insecure housing or are homeless

**50%**  
experience social isolation

parenthood, and our ethnicity monitoring tells us that 80% were from minoritised parts of the community.

**20**  
families referred by other services

**80%**  
are from minoritised communities

# VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME

We're grateful to an amazing team of volunteers who have supported Hackney Playbus in so many ways this year. Volunteers have been busy painting the new Playbus, helping on outreach sessions, delivering Bookstart packs, supporting our baby and toddler groups - and mucking in with whatever needs to get done! Long standing volunteers have thrown themselves into new roles with energy and enthusiasm, and with 12 brand new volunteers joining us this year we had a strong volunteering team of 29 wonderful people

to help Hackney Playbus through another year of changes and fresh challenges.

The support of our volunteers at the St Peter's Crypt toddler and baby groups has been invaluable. A dedicated team of eager volunteers join the staff team in creating a stimulating, safe and friendly play environment every week, providing support and encouragement for the children as they play and explore together. The expert help of volunteers allows the staff team to focus on

"The highlight for me is seeing the development of the children. Seeing the improvement in their self confidence, their movements, the different ways they play and communicate with each other. Who knew that putting things into things could capture their attention and imaginations!" Volunteer, Toddler & Baby Groups

## 29 Volunteers



supporting parents during the groups, including completing referrals with families to other services such as Little Village and Hackney Foodbank, or applications for the free two year old childcare and education funding entitlement.

With the support of volunteers, we have been able to make huge progress

with the painting of the new Playbus. A team of volunteers have been working come rain, sun or cold, and have really enjoyed collaborating as a team on this creative community project.

We're incredibly grateful for the enthusiasm, dedication and hard work of all our Hackney Playbus volunteers!

# HACKNEY LIBRARIES & THE BOOKTRUST

We worked in even closer collaboration with Hackney Libraries and the BookTrust this year as the national charity launched its new strategy to prioritise support for disadvantaged children and families from vulnerable backgrounds. While the BookTrust retains its commitment to all children through their universal activities, the charity recognises the need to work in a more targeted way to reach families who could especially benefit from the offer of free books and resources to encourage reading from an early age.

We were approached by Hackney Libraries to support the roll out of BookTrust Storytimes under this new

strategy. We worked with Hackney Libraries to think through an effective approach, sharing our experience of how to minimise barriers to engagement as well as strategies that work well to enable and encourage families to take part. We supported several families to participate in the BookTrust Storytime pilot project at Dalston Library by having a member of our team attend the first session together with our Playbus families - a first ever visit to the library for all the families!

We also welcomed the BookTrust to our baby and toddler groups to talk to families about new resources that the BookTrust were

# 329

BookStart packs distributed



developing for their early years offer. Every family received free books and the BookTrust went away with screeds of feedback from our families about how to develop the resources to make them relevant and useful.

We're glad of this positive relationship with the BookTrust, and are pleased to be recognised for our ability to reach and engage with families who are not accessing mainstream provision. Our partnership

with the BookTrust has in fact helped in this regard too - we now use BookStart packs as an engagement tool during community outreach to help initiate conversations with families who could especially benefit from our service. Over the course of the year, 149 families signed up for email or text updates about our service in connection with receiving a BookStart pack.

We're looking forward to continuing this relationship with both Hackney Libraries and the BookTrust in 2022.

# OUR NEW PLAYBUS

Work on the new Playbus continued this year. With the interior conversion well under way, we got to thinking about the outside of the Playbus. Working together with long-time Playbus mum and artist Aya Haidar, we set about on a collaborative project to create the artwork for the outside of the bus, focusing on themes of community and identity through self portraiture and mark-making.

Families were invited to submit artwork remotely for the project, or to attend one of our in-person workshops to create artwork together to inspire the final design for the outside of the Playbus. One of our young friends told us after the workshop, "I know I am an artist now!"

Simona from the Hackney Playbus team worked together with Aya to synthesize the children's artworks into a design for the outside of the Playbus, staying very faithful to the original artworks of our young friends.

It's been a hugely collaborative community effort to paint the Playbus, with a wonderful team of volunteers, staff, friends and visitors all contributing to the painting project. Work is still underway, but everyone is getting the chance to make their mark on the new Playbus, including the Major of Hackney!

Aya working with her children on their self portraits, inspiring other families to do the same!



## Workshops





"Painting local children's artwork onto the new Hackney Playbus has been such a unique and meaningful experience for us all. It's been an amazing collective effort! This project has created so many opportunities for so many, from building new skills in art and design to learning more about each other's languages and culture. We've had such fun painting the Playbus together and have made lasting friendships in the process!"

Simona, Hackney Playbus





Running for the Playbus

# HACKNEY HALF MARATHON

The twice postponed Hackney Half Marathon finally took place at the end of September 2021. We were honoured to have an amazing 15 runners 'running for the Playbus' to raise funds on behalf of our charity.

It was a beautiful, sunny day on Hackney Marshes where our runners were cheered on by their supporters, as well as trustees. We celebrated reaching the finish line with a

lovely picnic for everyone - a fabulous day all round!

To top it off the combined fund raising total came to an incredible **£5004.86**. Our huge thanks to all our amazing runners!



- Chris Agnoli
- Jessica Butler
- Matt Churchill
- Kal Chottai
- Alastair Da Costa
- Aysegul Dirik
- Kibri Dei
- Hanh Gurr
- Tim Hawes
- Annie Macnee
- Penny Madsen
- Benjamin Moyon
- Rebecca Smith
- Daryl Sullivan
- Geoff Whitman

# FUNDERS & DONORS 2021-22

## DONATIONS INCOME

The accounts presented in this annual report are from the previous financial year 2020-21 at the tail end of which we ran a highly successful crowdfunding campaign to raise the money we needed to buy and convert a new Playbus. We ran this campaign throughout the month of March 2021 and were able to bank £34,567 in donations increasing our recorded income for last year to an usual high of £232,638.

This financial year 2021-22 saw the donation of a further £22,000 - making a total of over £56,000 in donations covering the full costs of the new Playbus. We are deeply grateful for the generosity of both individuals and community

organisations, a powerful demonstration of local support for the Hackney Playbus model of mobile provision for Hackney families.

## EVENTS INCOME

Post pandemic bookings were just starting up again towards the end of this financial year increasing bookings income from £100 in the presented accounts (2020-21) to £1,080 in 2021-22. A long way below the £12,500 we were bringing in annually in 2019, but hopefully on the rise!

## GRANT FUNDING

We are grateful to all our funders who continued to understand the need for flexibility in service delivery as Covid transmission levels remained high in Hackney.

We would also like to thank those funders who allowed us to defer spending on their grants, so that late in the year, when we finally deemed it safe to invite families to join us for face to face activities, we had the funds in hand to do so.

### Grants this year came from:

London Borough of Hackney Community Grants Programme  
BBC Children in Need  
Sunbabies Nursery Trust  
South Hackney Parochial Charities  
Hackney Giving  
Garfield Weston Foundation  
Hackney Parochial Charities  
The Little Butterfly Foundation  
The Masonic Charitable Foundation  
West Hackney Parochial Charities  
Innholders Charitable Foundation  
Charles S French Charitable Trust  
The Basketmakers Association  
Worshipful Company of Insurers  
Charity of Sir Richard Whittington

# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

# BALANCE SHEET

## Incoming Resources

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
Donations	34567	0	34567
Capacity Building	0	4976	4976
Charitable Activities	100	192965	193065
Bank Interest	30	0	30
	<u>34697</u>	<u>197941</u>	<u>232638</u>

## Resources Expended

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
Charitable Activities	29918	148835	178753
Capacity Building	0	4976	4976
	<u>29918</u>	<u>153811</u>	<u>183729</u>

## As at 31st March 2021

Fixed Assets:		
Tangible Fixed Assets		64248
Current Assets:		
Debtors	5232	
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>95563</u>	
Total Current Assets		100795
Liabilities:		
Creditors amounts falling due within 1 year	27601	
Net Current Assets		73194
Total Net Assets		137442
Funds		
Restricted Funds:		43462
Unrestricted Funds:		93980
Total Funds:		137442

# HACKNEY PLAYBUS TEAM 2021-2022

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Annabelle Burns  
Anntoinette Bramble Cllr  
Emma Bridge  
Jamie Tang  
Julie Le Bon  
Mal Pieczonka  
Mine Serttaş  
Stuart Hunt  
Tim Wooldridge  
Vanessa Kirkpatrick

## STAFF

Alex Drăgan  
Anja Nyberg  
Claire Kelly  
Claire Lindsay  
Georgina I. Robertson  
Ian Hastings  
Jaime Dowling  
Jayne Garner  
Jessica Murray  
Misba Patel  
Sabana Siddique  
Sara Blakemore  
Simona Attardi

## VOLUNTEERS

Aitan Gardoni  
Alex Deery  
Barney Grace  
Ben Andreyev  
Cornelia Harrison  
Elias Amanuel  
Emily Agbaso  
Faizah Khan  
Isabella Steele  
Jack Willis  
John Grace  
Kelly Robinson  
Kizzy Ives  
Lauren Cromarty  
Lewis Kay-Thatcher  
Liz Cox  
Marcie Scope-Cook  
Natalie Hyde  
Natasha Shah  
Richard Cooper  
Robert Jones  
Zoe Woodham



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