

'PLAYGROUND' AT TURNER CONTEMPORARY - LEARNING PAPER

FEBRUARY 2023

Overview of Playground

With support from Save the Children UK, Turner Contemporary hosted six [Playground](#) (creative play) sessions for 0-18 month olds and their parents/carers from October to November 2022. The long-term goals of the project were:

- Upskilling local artist practitioners in their work with early years children and their families.
- Ensuring trusted relationships are developed between families and a range of local settings and services.
- Improved early learning outcomes for children growing up in poverty in Margate.

Playground was first piloted by Kent County Council in 2019 and, at the outset of this project, sessions were already running in two locations in Margate at with support from Arts Council and Kent County Council Reconnect funding. There was space for 10 babies and their families to attend each session (meaning a maximum of 60 families could attend across the sessions). A total of 27 families attended, many of whom attended more than one session.

How we've heard from families

This learning paper mainly reflects on the second and third goals listed in the overview based on feedback from **10 families** that completed an anonymous survey online, 6 of whom indicated that they attended at least 2 Playground sessions. These survey respondents represent over a third of the total number of families that attended Playground. **Unless otherwise stated, all statistics/figures presented in this paper are drawn from these 10 survey responses.**

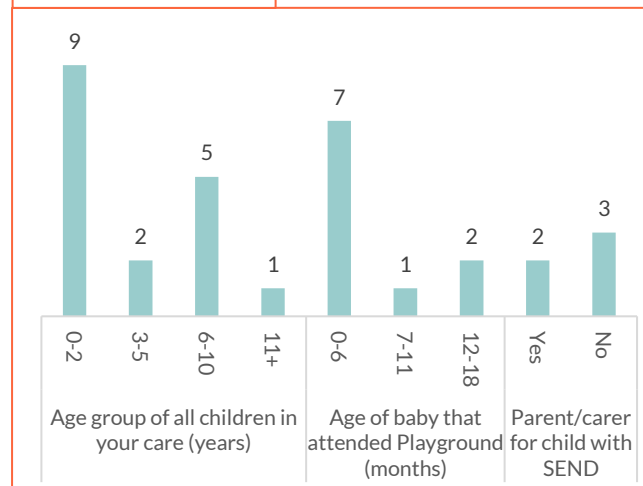
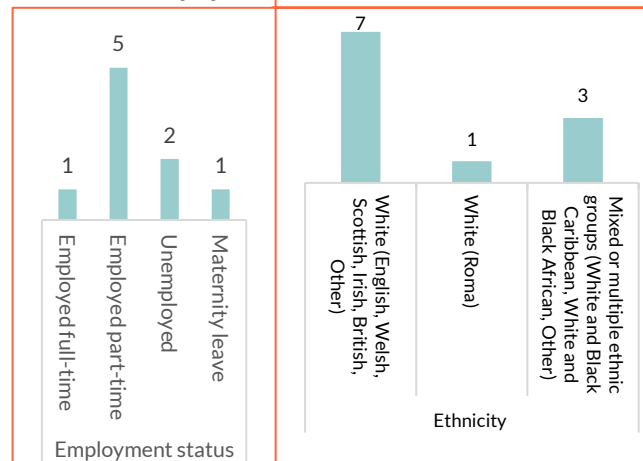
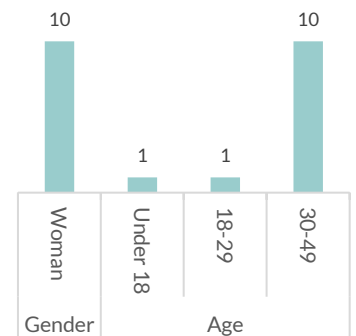
A full profile of the families that completed the survey can be found to the right (note: not all families provided all requested data, as each question was optional). Other points worth noting on these families are listed below:

- Residential postcodes given reflect that at all families live in either Margate or Ramsgate
- For all but 1 family, English is their first language, though this 1 family consider themselves 'very confident speaking English' (this was the only family who registered to attend Playground for whom English is not a first language)
- All are from two-parent/carer households

Some interesting patterns can also be determined from the wider profile of all 41 families that registered to attend the sessions (several of whom ultimately didn't attend):

- Just 1 registration was completed by a male parent/carer
- The vast majority of families recorded their ethnicity as 'White (English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller)', with just 3 families recording their ethnicity as 'White (Roma)' and another 3 recording their ethnicity as 'Mixed or multiple ethnic groups'

PROFILE OF 10 FAMILIES SURVEYED



What we've heard from families

Families gave Playground sessions an average score of 4.7 out of 5.0

1. Impact on families

Feedback from families that completed the online survey largely shows that families found Playground sessions beneficial and engaging for parents and their babies. Some limitations or potential areas of improvement around making the booking process simpler for families to avoid missing the sessions were also raised by families.

Playground had varied level of impact on families as reflected in the feedback provided by 10 families that anonymously completed the online follow-up survey. **9 out of 10** of families indicated that their baby or the baby they cared for either 'enjoyed' or 'enjoyed a great deal' the sessions they attended. It is noteworthy that all **10** of families with babies that 'enjoyed' or 'enjoyed a great deal' the sessions also rated Playground 'excellent' (5/5) overall.

On the other hand, **1** family indicated that their baby or the baby they cared for did 'not at all' enjoy the session they attended. It's worth noting this family only attended 1 session.

Of the families that indicated their babies enjoyed the sessions 'a lot' or 'a great deal':

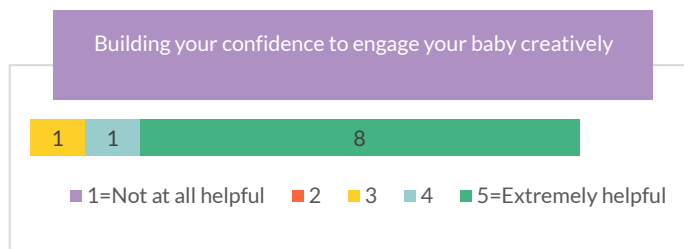
All parents/carers tried re-creating objects/materials from Playground sessions at home

Looking at the long-term goals and intended impact on families, Playground sessions sought to primarily contribute to:

- Building trusted relationships between families and a range of local settings and services.
- Improved early learning outcomes for children growing up in poverty in Margate.

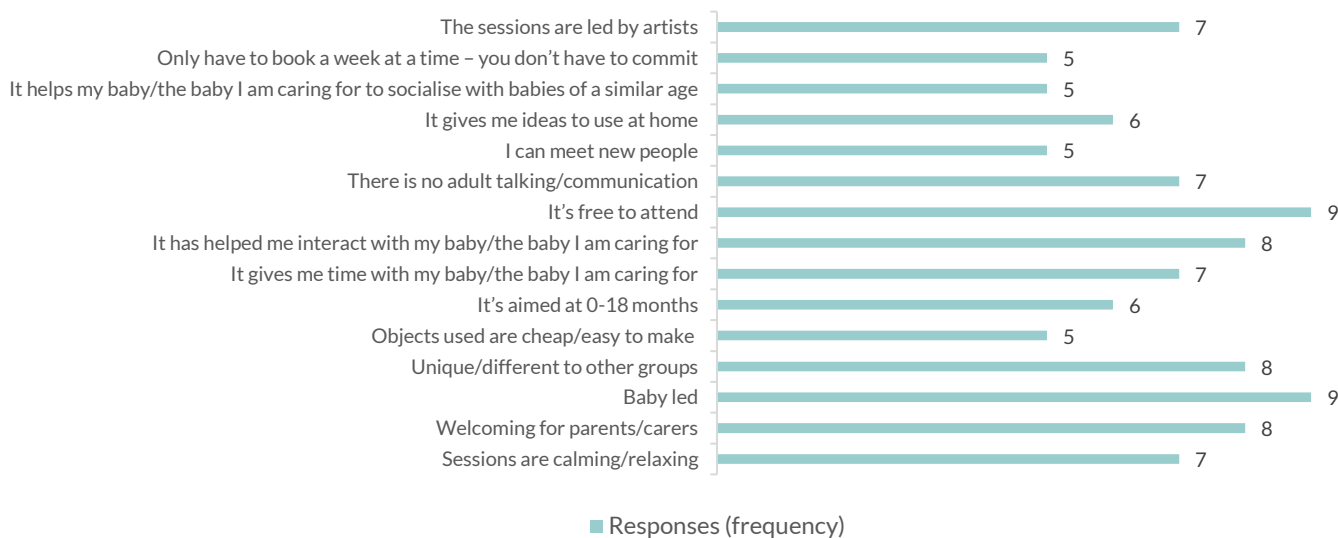
Families had this to say about impact of the sessions:

- **9 out of 10** found the sessions either 'helpful' or 'extremely helpful' in building their confidence to engage their baby creatively.
- **8 out of 10** found the sessions either 'helpful' or 'extremely helpful' in encouraging/helping with baby development.
- **8 out of 10** found the sessions either 'helpful' or 'extremely helpful' in helping them connect more with local services and spaces/activities



2. Variety and appropriateness of activities

What families liked about Playground



At least half of families pointed out that they liked each of the aspects about Playground that were listed. Aspects of Playground that ranked high from the list are:

- Baby led and It's free to attend (liked by 9 out of 10 families).
- Welcoming for parents/carers, unique/different to other groups and it has helped me interact with my baby/the baby I am caring for (liked by 8 out of 10 families).
- It gives me time with my baby/the baby I am caring for, there is no adult talking/communication, and the sessions are led by artists (liked by 7 out of 10 families).

There were also aspects of Playground which some families felt could be improved. One of the families mentioned that the booking system could be made easier for them to book on time without having to miss upcoming sessions, while another family did not feel the sessions were well suited for babies aged over 12 months:

Most families did not make any new connections or friends or contacts at the Playground sessions. Only 1 of the families responded 'yes' to this question.

"The booking system I appreciate it is so popular so books up so fast but surely there's a better way for us to access classes rather than having to remember and be available to book each week on a certain day and within 30mins after tickets are released otherwise you've missed your chance which can be very hard to juggle when looking after a newborn"

"I didn't feel it was really for children aged over 12 months, mine didn't want to engage as she didn't understand what was happening. I can see the benefit for babies younger though."

3. Families interest and experience with creative play

9 out of 10 families said they...

- Tried recreating some of the objects/materials from the Playground sessions at home
- Tried recreating some of the elements of the Playground sessions at home (e.g. music, copying baby sounds, mirroring baby, hand clapping etc).

A third of families (3 out of 10) answered 'no' when asked **whether they would have considered art or creativity for babies as something they would go to/attend prior to attending Playground.** Responses given by the same families (that said 'no') show that:

- All of them tried recreating some of the objects/materials from the Playground sessions at home
- All of them tried recreating some of the elements of the Playground sessions at home (e.g. music, copying baby sounds, mirroring baby, hand clapping etc).

9 out of 10 families answered 'no' when asked **whether they had ever attended an arts event for babies prior to attending Playground sessions.** Responses given by the same families (that said 'no') show that:

- All but 1 of them (8 out of 10) tried recreating some of the objects/materials from the Playground sessions at home.
- All but 1 of them (8 out of 10) tried recreating some of the elements of the Playground sessions at home (e.g. music, copying baby sounds, mirroring baby, hand clapping etc).

Since attending Playground at Turner Contemporary Gallery, more than half of the families indicated that they had revisited the gallery and/or taken part in other activities at the gallery.

Before attending Playground, approximately how often families engaged in creative play at home with their baby?



Overall, before attending Playground, all 10 families engaged in creative play at home with their baby/the baby they are caring for at least once a week.

Since attending Playground, approximately how often families engaged in creative play at home with their baby



Feedback from families shows that how often they engaged with their babies since attending Playground either remained the same or increased.

There was a marked increase (from 2 to 5) in families that engaged in creative play 'several times a day' at home with their baby since attending Playground and a significant drop (from 3 to 0) in families that engaged in creative play 'once a week' at home since attending Playground. This reflects a positive change from engaging in creative play 'once a week' to 'a few times a week' at the least. Whereas the number of families that engaged in creative play 'once a day' since attending Playground remained the same.

Immediate feedback was also gathered via surveys completed with families at the end of each Playground session. Highlights from this feedback included the following quotes:

"Wonderful for young babies. Calming and excellent for carers to 'be in the moment' and quality time with the baby. Thank you!"

"It has really inspired me to play with my baby differently and use materials around the house rather than just toys. A huge thank you!"

"As a granny, it was great to be welcomed into the group and included. It was a joy to see the children so chilled and exploring sound and movement with no pressure or expectation"

What we've learnt

"My little girl really enjoyed it she liked dancing to the music, and it kept her attention for longer"

- **Playground sessions are highly valued by families**, with 9 out of 10 families indicating that they would recommend Playground to other families.
- **Families have different perceptions about which age groups benefit the most from Playground sessions** or how the sessions should be structured for the different age groups. This is based on feedback from one of the families that said *"Maybe a group for older children aged over 12 months with more communication skills to encourage this development more"*
- **Finding ways of encouraging families to attend more than 1 session as Playground sessions may have more positive benefits for families in the longer term**, families that attended 2 or more sessions have reported having a better experience when it came to creatively engaging with their babies more often.
- **Families had different experiences with the booking process for sessions.** One of the families mentioned that perhaps the booking system could be made easier for them to book on time without having to miss upcoming sessions.
- **Attending Playground encourages families to visit and attend activities at the gallery.** Most families indicated had revisited and/or taken part in other activities at the gallery since attending Playground.
- **Turner Contemporary staff have increased their understanding and confidence in engaging babies and young children.** Engagement Assistants employed by the gallery observed and supported each Playground session and have since applied their learning from this to their design and leadership of other activities for early years children at the gallery.