

City Bridge Trust – Monitoring Visit Report

Organisation: Oasis Children's Venture	Grant ref: 10490 (TW)	Programme area: Accessible London\Accessible Arts
Amount, date and purpose of grant: 17/03/2011: £118,000 over three years (£40,500; £39,500; and £38,000) for the salaries and associated costs of a Lead Inclusive Play and Youth Worker (20 hours per week) and an Inclusive Play and Youth Worker (15 hours per week) who will work to facilitate the accessibility of Oasis recreation sites to disabled children and young people.		
Visiting Grants Officer: John Merivale	Date of meeting: 23 rd May 2013	
Met with: Joanne Brown, Director; Jessica Thom, Project Co-ordinator; Matthew Pountney, Inclusion Project Manager.		
1. Introduction to the organisation: Oasis Children’s Venture has been going 40 years, and now operates three recreation sites in Lambeth for school-aged children. A karting track, an adventure playground, and a nature garden provide safe, well-supervised space in a high-density area of London with high levels of deprivation. Over 500 children and young people enjoy the Oasis sites each year. Oasis activities take place after school, on Saturdays and during school holidays. School groups use the sites during the days in term time. Local children and families can join Oasis projects directly, but the organisation also receives referrals from local statutory agencies. Oasis’s programme includes play, arts, and sporting activities, giving children an opportunity to learn and develop whilst building friendships.		
2. The project funded: This is an inclusion project to enable disabled children to join in arts and sports. Many parents and carers in the locality are fearful of crime and antisocial behaviour. Such concerns limit their willingness to allow children independent, outdoor play. Not surprisingly, disabled children are even less likely to be able to play outside unsupervised, and are often doubly disadvantaged by lacking private outdoor space. Oasis has recruited three part-time Inclusive Play and Youth workers to develop challenging and enjoyable activities for disabled young people. The work targets those who do not currently use the Oasis sites, and is promoted through Lambeth Borough Council’s Children with Disabilities team, as well as a number of local schools and charities. The overall aim is to improve the attainment and wellbeing of disabled children, in an atmosphere of easy interaction with people of all abilities. The specific objectives include adventurous play sessions, curriculum-linked outdoor education, and volunteering opportunities.		
3. Work delivered to date: Since Feb 2012, the project has run two after-school sessions per week, and a full Saturday club weekly during term-time. The work is based at the adventure playground, but also uses the karting track and the nature garden. The new team has trained other Oasis staff and volunteers in the skills to work with disabled youngsters.		

At the start, the aim was to benefit 160 young people a year directly. This number has already been exceeded, while events have so far hosted 1,500 visitors. Twelve disabled young people over the age of 15 have engaged in supported volunteering, while 11 others have helped facilitate one-off events.

4. Difference made:

For the Inclusion Manager, the most satisfying change has been to be able to build up practice in an area where there has been very little – and only informal – support for families. Most of the children who come would have nowhere else to play and socialise, so this becomes a crucial part of the scene of their childhood. Some case studies illustrate the difference:

- One 12-year old had no social life outside his SEN school. He would spend every Saturday with his mother, visiting only a McDonald's restaurant. When he first joined Oasis, his behaviour was challenging and unpredictable, and he needed 1:1 support. With the help of the educational psychologist from his school, and with Oasis staff working with his mother, his challenging behaviour has ceased and he is growing new relationships with other children and staff.
- Another mother, herself physically disabled, reports how her 6-year old son with autism has flourished as his new routine involves time to play.
- A young volunteer at the karting track tells how he has 'learnt not to be afraid of disabled people'.
- A 17-year old with severe learning difficulties had been out of school for several years. Previous carers responded to his interest in cars by taking him to car showrooms, but the karting track has given him the chance to drive and look after the karts – "the whole family is proud of me for doing it".

Alongside these individual stories, Oasis members have worked together to complete youth led funding applications; and children across the Oasis sites spent a summer play scheme in 2012 devising activities for 'themed Fridays'.

5. Grants Administration:

Oasis has maintained fairly sound financial health. It derives £80k annually from the local authority, but 3 x this sum from Trusts and donations. Membership fees then top up its income – but all its services (except the karting) are free. The CBT grant has complemented an award from another funder which covered the capital costs of making their sites fully accessible.

The first year's monitoring report was very good. The funds are being properly accounted for, with the majority going to salary costs. The payroll was examined and seen to be orderly, with the relevant salaries linked to the funder.

6. Concluding comments:

This is an excellent project where, in the same day, a young person may stretch themselves by climbing a rock, and visit the nature garden and learn about natural life cycles. Although Oasis has been operating in an inclusive way for many years, the creation of the Inclusion project as a formal strand was new. It serves as a useful model of how professional knowledge of the pitfalls and careful planning can bring inclusive play to enrich mainstream settings. The greater diversity has strengthened local relationships, and this in turn has led to increased funding.