



Memorandum of Understanding

“We know one in five adults currently do less than 30 minutes exercise per week and only six in ten are reaching the recommended levels of 150 minutes of physical activity or sport per week. Two in ten children of reception age and three in ten children in Year 6 are overweight or obese in Essex and less than two in ten 15 year-olds are active for an hour each day.”

Active Essex Strategic Plan 2018-2021

Active Essex is working with **Little Wild Tribe** as a key delivery partner to be able to offer opportunities and resources to support the vision, aims and outcomes that underpin Active Essex' Strategic Plan, *'Changing One Million Lives'*. We know that by working within our ecosystem, we can increase our effectiveness and achieve more impact against our outcomes to reduce inactivity and develop positive attitudes to health and wellbeing in communities across Greater Essex.

Within the Castlepoint area, we have agreed to work with a new daycare nursery and pre-school provider Little Wild Tribe to help support the delivery of our targeted outcomes around physical activity in this region. Our strategic priorities have been developed with extensive local and national insight so they align with the priorities of Sport England, Public Health England and NHS England.

As outlined in our Strategic Plan 2018-2021, the first priority centres on getting children and adults active or more active, by driving and sustaining participation in regular physical activity and sport. By driving and sustaining participation, we aim to:

- Reduce inactivity levels;
- Increase the number of people being active;
- Improve young people's attitudes towards physical activity and sport;
- Provide a sustainable network of the right, high quality and accessible facilities in the right places;
- Get more people using open spaces for exercise and health reasons;
- Increase the numbers of mass participation and elite sports events hosted;
- Maintain and increase the economic value of physical activity and sport.



Little Wild Tribe is an outdoor ‘forest school’ nursery based on the Scandinavian model, in which children spend a significant amount of their day outside playing in the green space of Hadleigh Park. The vision of Little Wild Tribe meets the corporate aims and outcomes of Active Essex since this nursery’s vision is to:

1. to provide opportunities to promote, improve and increase the physical activity and wellbeing of young children by offering frequent and regular outdoor play opportunities, throughout the year, in almost all weathers;
2. to enthuse and engage young children, their families and the wider community into adopting a healthy, nutritious and active lifestyle;
3. to provide pedagogically sound and developmentally appropriate education for all ages.

There is much documented research about the benefits of young children learning and playing outside in natural green space. There is now a substantial body of evidence to demonstrate positive associations and correlations between learning in the natural environment and a diverse range of social, psychological and academic outcomes as well as of course a huge amount of physical health benefits.

Research has shown that those who are involved in forest school are more physically active, have more physical stamina, and are less likely to be obese. Not only does it improve physical activity but it also improves the quality of physical development. Gross and fine motor skills are improved; the ability to balance on a log, walking and running on uneven natural ground, using tools such as rolling pins, spatulas, cutters, scissors, whittling willow, sawing. All of these motor skills help to improve hand-eye coordination, strength and control and builds core strength. There’s even surprising research that tree climbing supports a child’s pencil grip ability! Hours of daily outdoor play enables children to use their bodies’ vestibular systems, which determine balance and feed into their limbic systems which regulate emotions. “When you restrict movement, things get stuck. There are problems with balance and coordination. If you aren’t moving enough, your vestibular system will atrophy too and you are more prone to falls.” (A Hanscom, 2016)

Playing outside also supports physiological development in terms of our respiratory system, bone health and immunology. Research has shown that playing in dirt benefits the immune system, helps to support the balance of bacteria in the gut, lowers our heart and blood pressure as well as providing vitamin D. Even trees emit oils called phytoncides, as



protection from germs and insects which further support our immune system. Research also demonstrates that myopia, otherwise known as short sightedness, appears to be affected by the amount of time spent outside. The development of myopia is halved if a child gets three hours per day of natural light outside (Rose et al, 2008).

The estimated cost of inactivity is enormous. Increased risks of Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, cancers and other life-limiting conditions are associated with inactivity, as are the mounting costs to our NHS – in Essex inactivity is costing our county over £58 million each year. Little Wild Tribe therefore supports the vision and ethos of Active Essex by ensuring that regular physical activity becomes part of the everyday lives of children and thus the adults and wider community.

Key features of the partnership:

- Delivery of high quality services by all stakeholders;
- All partners have key focus around the physical health and wellbeing of children and the wider community;
- Partners to maximise the use of the buildings and open space across the day and the calendar year;
- Share learning and good practice to the benefit of the partnership as a whole;
- Potential in the future to use a pool of locally available DBS and appropriately qualified staff to ensure efficient delivery;
- Partners will adhere to an agreed safeguarding standard focused on raising the standards in this industry;
- Partners will be committed to monitoring and evaluation in a bid to generate insightful data and cases studies, of outcomes as well as methods of good practice.

Together, we can support the change in lifestyle behaviours needed to meet the goals and outcomes of Active Essex.