



# PLAYWISE LEARNING CIC

FOR UNIQUE  
CHILDREN

## IMPACT REPORT

October 2023



# Welcome from the Directors



We are now a team of 14 staff, we are working with over 300 families at any one time, we have merchandise for sale and we have an App! This year has seen an overhaul of our website and our social media profile-yes, we even have a TikTok profile and the team are lovingly coerced into making videos on a regular basis to raise the profile of all that we do in the PlayWise Hub.

Our community groups are thriving and this is without a shadow of doubt due to the incredible support we receive from our wonderful volunteers who welcome families with a hot drink and a smile which goes a long way these days.

Our families continue to inspire us to do more every day. We hear on a daily basis some of the challenges that families face. The economic crisis is biting hard and the impact is significant and taking its toll in so many different ways.

The pressures on families in general appear to be increasing. Raising a child with additional needs or disability is already an emotional journey but factoring in educational, financial and healthcare challenges adds to the demands placed on parents.

The manifestation of these hardships is that parents and carers need our support more than ever - to provide educational, practical and emotional support - at the right time and adapted to meet their families specific needs and not as a 'one

size fits all' model.

These are exciting times for PlayWise and we have big plans for the future. With so many new opportunities ahead of us we are confident we will continue to grow and provide essential services to those that need it most.

We'd like to thank every member of the PlayWise family – parents, children, staff, volunteers, supporters and partners – for the part you've played in making PlayWise exactly what it is today. You are all truly at the heart of this exceptional organisation and the positive impact you make every day is immensely important to our continued success.

With kindest wishes,

Pam Fry, MBE  
Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pam Fry".

Yvonne Charalambous,  
Director of Business &  
Operations,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Y. D. Charalambous".

PlayWise Learning CIC  
October 2023

Well, what a year it's been!! It's so lovely looking back over the last year and seeing everything that has happened. Our events, the fundraisers, the trips and activities that have taken place in the PlayWise Hub in 2022-23. As we head towards the PlayWise 5th Anniversary next year we are again taking stock of where we have come from and where we need to get to... and everything in between.

This year feels like the first year since Covid that things are getting back to some sense of normality, despite the longer term effect of Covid that is still very much impacting on children's well-being. As we write this report, 4 members of staff have just come back to work after a week off with Covid. so we know we still have to work carefully to protect children.

We are delighted to report that PlayWise is growing from strength to strength in all its areas.





# PlayWise Learning CIC

## ***'Reducing the impact of disability on family life, living and learning'.***

PlayWise is a small not-for-profit organisation based in the London Borough of Sutton, working with and supporting children and their families on their journey into the world of SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability).

We know that life with a disabled child is very rewarding but at times, also challenging and for some even overwhelming and that life's pressures can at times seem insurmountable.

We provide a highly experienced and knowledgeable team of professionals who have expertise in child development and SEND. They work holistically with children and their families on all areas of development and well-being. We work in partnership with parents/ carers to improve children's independence and build family resilience whilst enhancing social integration through the provision of groups and safe spaces where everyone is welcome.

We offer a variety of services delivered in a range of different ways, including groups, hands on teaching in the home, support in the community or in the PlayWise hub or through education services in nurseries and schools. By providing quality holistic services we help families to improve levels of parental confidence, increase levels of independence, reduce isolation, maximise learning potential and ultimately improve outcomes for children and families.

96% Parents report that PlayWise has a positive impact on family life and parenting

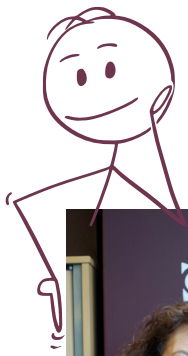
99% Parents report that PlayWise makes a significant difference to improve outcomes for children and families with additional needs and difficulties

97% Parents report that PlayWise improves parental confidence and helps families to understand their child's needs

99% of parents would recommend PlayWise to other parents/ families







# The Dream Team



**Teresa- ATM**



**Jess**



**Zoe**



**Maddie**



**Jemma**



**Sean**

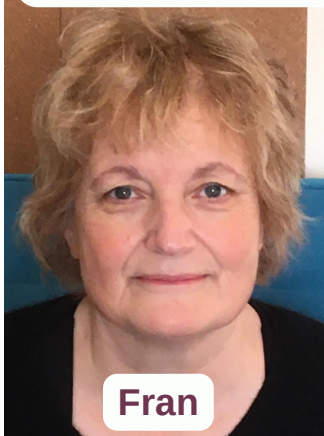


**Sally**



**Stacey**

## Our Incredible Team of Staff and Volunteers



**Fran**



**Andrea**



**Jane**



**Dure**



**Yvonne**



**Pam**



**Volunteers:  
Bernice & Karen**



**Volunteers:  
Jean & Bernadette**



# What we offer:

## Home Based Interventions:

Hands on Teaching services  
Portage Home visits (0-3)  
PIP (Portage Intervention Plus) (0-8)  
*(Including EOTAS - Education Other Than At School)*

## Hub Based Interventions:

PlayWise Memberships  
Family Yoga  
Training/ Workshops  
Groups  
Peer Networks  
EarlyBird  
Santa's Grotto  
After School sessions

## Community Based Interventions:

Community groups  
Post Diagnosis Support  
Community Outings

## Education Based Interventions:

Subscription Services  
Training



# PlayWise Home Based Interventions

Our home interventions are based on the principles of Portage and work in partnership with families.

We work hands-on with children and parents/ carers to support their children in all areas of learning and development and to help reduce the impact of their child's disability on family life.



## **We support families with the following:**

- Managing Behaviours
- Sensory needs
- Language and communication difficulties
- Managing routines and family life
- Community outings
- Finding a nursery
- Supporting referrals to other services
- Access to groups and activities
- Meeting other parents on a similar journey
- Emotional and practical support

We evaluate every individual intervention using tested outcome tools. We know from these that we are making positive differences to outcomes for Sutton children with SEND. We are currently developing an outcomes framework to collate, summarise and report on these evaluations as we continually strive to enhance our understanding of what works and what difference we can make in the lives of SEND children living in the borough. We recently undertook an additional, more generic, survey of parent/ carers to gain a snapshot view of their thoughts on the difference Playwise has made in key areas of family life. Whilst we know many factors can affect the reporting in such surveys we felt it important to include here



86% of respondents report progress in their child's language and communication development.



65% of respondents report that they have a better understanding of their child's needs and developmental profile.



62% of respondents report that they feel more confident in their parenting of their child with SEND.



## Malaya And Ellie's Portage Experience

“



Malaya has come a long way with the help of PlayWise services. When first visited for her initial assessment Malaya couldn't even say one word, she also would not engage with any professionals which was extremely difficult for me to show the aspects of her I am concerned

However since working with Jemma her use of language has come on and she now has an amazing bond with Jemma. Malaya looks forward to her portage sessions both in the hub and at home as she adores the sensory aspects of play although her attention span is extremely short she plays at her best with Jemma.



Jemma has given me a lot of strategies to help with mine and Malaya's communication as well as strategies that help me deal with the challenges I have with Malaya's behaviour. I struggle a lot as she hardly sleeps as well as being extremely hyperactive, the portage team have helped me massively with referrals to both occupational therapy and the specialist dentist.

Whenever I have questions or I feel I have nobody to speak to regarding Malaya, Jemma and the rest of the team are always on hand to help, and I have attended toilet training courses, as well as sleep training set up by portage to help us parents and then I use the knowledge gained at these to try with Malaya. I am so proud of the progress Malaya has made during her time with Jemma, and I am extremely grateful for the time and effort she has put into her.



”

## Loo, Max & Freddie's Membership Experience

“PlayWise has been a tremendous help to me and my family. I feel so lucky to have PlayWise in our lives. During the school holidays we frequent the hub a few times a week. I can sit happily knowing my children are in a safe fun environment with lots of activities to do this has been an absolute life line for me. Having two children on the Autistic Spectrum with a massive age gap PlayWise is the only place that would accommodate my two.

It's great at the hub as the staff are fantastic and very helpful. You also get to meet a range of different parents with similar children to your own. You can grab a brew sit and chat.

During the summer school holidays PlayWise organise a trip to the seaside this has been a godsend as with out this my children wouldn't get to experience the sun, sea and sand.

Without my membership I would be lost. I can't recommend PlayWise enough. Any family would be lucky to have them. From advice/ help or a listening ear. PlayWise are fantastic and support you through your journey”.



*Loo, Max & Freddie*



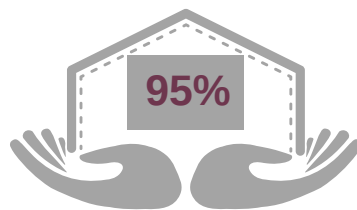
## PlayWise Hub Based Interventions

### Membership:



### The PlayWise Community Hub

The PlayWise Membership was designed to bring families together to develop a peer support network of families on a similar journey into the world of SEND.



95% of parents report that they have developed a wider peer support network as a direct result of joining PlayWise.



94% of parents said that joining the PlayWise membership has improved their health and wellbeing

### What does the PlayWise Membership offer families?

7 free play sessions per week  
**10 free play sessions per week during school holidays**  
Free yoga class each week  
**Discounted access to home interventions and training/ workshops**  
Quiet Santa's grotto at Christmas  
**Community Trips and Outings**

**Advice, guidance, emotional & practical support**  
Form filling and signposting  
**Workshops and guest speakers**  
Toilet Training workshops  
**Monthly family zone Saturday session**  
Annual trip to Littlehampton  
**Peer network & WhatsApp Group**

Whilst the PlayWise Membership prioritises bringing families together and providing advice and guidance, the added value is demonstrated below as our members have reported the following:

PlayWise families report that with the support of PlayWise, they have an improved financial/ economic well being.

PlayWise families report that since joining the membership they feel better able to manage stress.

PlayWise families report they have a greater understanding of benefits, entitlements and services

PlayWise families report a reduced sense of isolation since joining the membership



# PlayWise Education Based Interventions



## PlayWise Subscription Services:

PlayWise is providing subscription services to 18 nurseries, pre-schools and primary schools in Sutton, providing over 330 hours of support in 2022/23 and reaching numerous children - but 110 children with direct support in the setting or in the family home through the service and support for over 101 staff.

## Subscription interventions include:

Bespoke staff training, parenting workshops in the setting, modelling good practice, advice, guidance & strategies, report writing for ECHNA or CAMHS referrals, behaviour support, implementing visual strategies, modelling circle time, supporting with settling new children, generalised support, referrals to OT & SLT, meetings with parents, observations of children & reports and support with DLA and short break referrals.

## Here's what our setting's say....

### Rainbows ASD Base/ Green Wrythe Primary school -

*Having a PlayWise subscription has supported our school in many ways, it has supported us in building stronger links with families. Playwise working in both settings has enhanced the trust between school and home as parent's have an independent view of school life for their child and strategies between both settings can be shared to benefit the child. In reverse PlayWise has enabled school to have an insight into strategies that work in the home so that we can reflect this in school.*

*Having a PlayWise subscription is good value for money and can be used in a variety of ways, we have used it for staff training, parent workshops and in home and school support. In addition, we are able to use supporting statements/reports to gain further advice and support for children, including CAMHS referrals.*

*Nicki*

Deputy Head & Rainbow Lead

### First Little Steps Pre-School.-

*At First Little Steps Nursery we can't thank PlayWise enough for the support we have received. The training given to our staff, SENCO and parents has made such a difference in our nurseries. Having someone come to the setting and show you how to improve your interaction with the children has made a big difference to the way staff now interact and our children engage together.*

*The face to face support, the training for our team and our parents and drop-in coffee mornings with Pam help to answer all our questions around SEN. We receive help with EHCP's and DLA forms and the sessions allow parents to meet other parents and know they are not alone in their journey, with Pam present to answer all our questions*

*We can't thank you enough PlayWise  
You are an amazing team.  
You have made such a difference to our settings.  
Thank you.*

*Michelle*

Nursery Manager



## JellyBeans Pre-School Subscription experience

*"We think PlayWise is the best and you'd be mad not to subscribe. They provide such a versatile service. Anything from training parents, staff and visiting us to providing invaluable support to the setting, the staff and our SENCO and our parents. Over the last few years we had brilliant parent training which we couldn't have provided by ourselves. Training to our 1-1's, regular updates on children's targets and relevant training that might be beneficial to us.*

*The whole team are available if any questions need answers or if we need a bit of support or guidance.*

*You cannot get a better service. It comes with a smile, a familiar face and a warmth of care.*

*Playwise is a life line not just for us professionals, but it's wonderful for families too."*

*Svenja & Clare*  
Nursery Manager & SENCO



## Community Based Interventions - PlayWise Groups



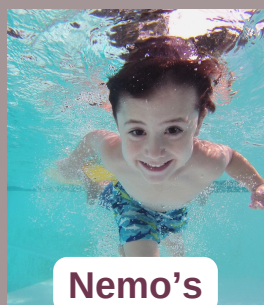
Tactile Tales



WiggleWise



PASC



Nemo's



PlayDate

PlayWise offers a range of community groups in a variety of settings, providing social spaces for families to come together and to increase opportunities for play and learning.

PlayWise delivers groups every day of the week during term time.

Delivering community groups provides for a reduced sense of isolation, increased sense of belonging, increased peer support networks and improved mental health & well being.



# Playwise Education Based Interventions - Training

This year PlayWise has developed a comprehensive training suite to deliver to a range of professionals and agencies across children's services. It includes full/ part day courses, shorter workshops developed in partnership with the receiving agency/ team and courses for parents and carers. The impact of PlayWise training means that parents and professionals gain knowledge, skills and understanding and report feeling more confident in their practice and/ or caring role. This, in turn, leads to enhanced team work and practice and improved standards of learning for SEND children.



Training suite current offer:

Let Us Play Too!

Supporting a child with language and communication delays

Identifying, Unpicking and Supporting Difficult Behaviours

Understanding SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disability)

Understanding Our Sensory World

Intensive Interaction - A Wonderful Tool

SignALong

Supporting Families with a SEND child in the Community

Supporting Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders

We have delivered training to 30 childminders, 120 Paediatric nursing staff and play therapists, delivered workshops at the National Down Syndrome Conference at Epsom General Hospital and delivered mini workshops to local churches, groups of parents and carers and staff in a local supermarket. We have also delivered 28 workshops to staff in Early Years settings.

*"You spoke last week on one of our training days about support for parents with disabled children. I am a parent of a child with Autism and I just wanted to say a huge thank you. It was a pleasure to hear you talking last week and so great that you are sharing the stories of parents to hospital staff so they understand how challenging being a parent of a child with additional needs is. Everything you said described my family life, I found it quite emotional listening to it. It's wonderful to know that we can access your support and guidance when we need it"*

Paediatric nurse at St Helier Children's Hospital

*"I've learned so much today. The training was fun and so insightful. I love the way it was designed around our setting and the children we are working with. It makes such a difference. It made it so meaningful and the most enjoyable training I have attended on a Saturday in years!"*

Early Years Practitioner, Nursery, Cheam

*"Brilliant Training!. This was the best training day I have attended in a long time. I have taken a lot of really useful and practical strategies from this course that I can use every day at nursery that will support my staff, the children we work with and will help me to develop my practice in the long term. I feel more confident in supporting children with communication difficulties and challenging behaviours now"*

Nursery Manager, Surrey



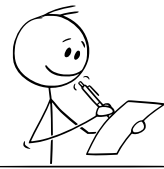
# Our Reach/ Outputs 2022-2023



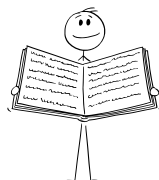
**We reached 225 children directly through our hands-on teaching services (PIP & Portage)**



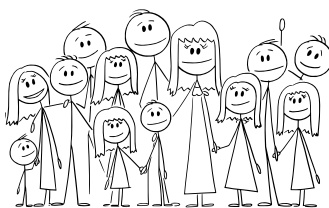
**We reached 445 children through community groups**



**We provided a key worker who supported 117 families with completing DLA forms and Blue Badge Applications**



**We delivered 28 training courses to professionals, hospital staff, conferences, childminders, schools and nurseries.**



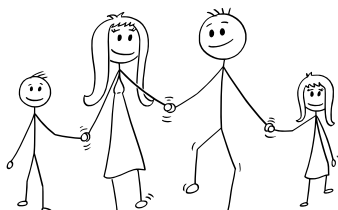
**We reached 139 families through our PlayWise membership**



**We are working with 18 schools and nurseries/ preschools in Sutton and have delivered over 330 support hours in settings.**



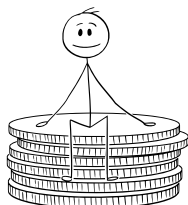
**We have supported 68 children to access nursery/ preschool provision**



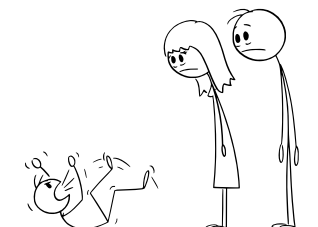
**We delivered Parenting Support in the form of EarlyBird Programmes and Post Diagnosis Support to 47 parents in Sutton.**



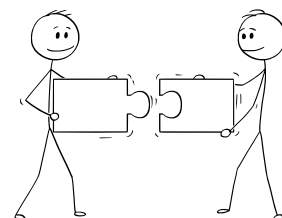
**We have made 67 referrals for children to therapy services, short breaks, charity and other services.**



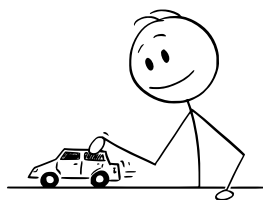
**25 families have used the PlayWise Family Support Fund to access PlayWise services for free.**



**We have delivered 15 workshops and training sessions for parents and carers (including guest speaker sessions)**



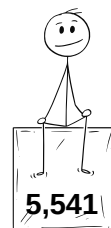
**573 families have accessed advice, guidance & support this year**



**1470 children have visited the hub over the last year**



**We have provided over 1215 hours of free play sessions in the community hub for Playwise members**



**Total number of support hours delivered across all PlayWise services over 2022/23: 5,541**



# Our Impact 2022 - 2023



**We provide hands on teaching interventions such as Portage and Portage Intervention Plus** - maximising children's learning potential, improving family resilience, improving parent confidence and emotional health & well being.

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**We provide a wide range of groups in a variety of settings within the community** - reducing social isolation, improving family resilience, increasing confidence, improving peer networks and building community capacity.

\*\*\*\*



**We provide a key worker role to support families** - increasing emotional & practical support, reducing the impact of poverty and increasing financial resilience, (particularly related to disability) improving social integration and increasing independence.

\*\*\*\*



**We deliver training courses for Early Years & Health Professionals** - increased understanding of needs of SEND children, improving the quality of interventions in the community, increasing confidence of working with disabled children in the settings and improving relationships between parents and the settings.

\*\*\*\*



**We offer a PlayWise membership service** - Improves family resilience, reduces social isolation, reduces stress, improves mental health and well being and reduces dependency on statutory services.

\*\*\*\*



**We provide training to Early Years settings** - building capacity to provide inclusive practice for SEND children, providing integrated strategies into everyday practice, developing appropriate activities and responses so that children achieve the best they can.

\*\*\*\*



**Key transitions** - increasing parental confidence, improving knowledge & understanding, providing links and removing barriers

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**We deliver EarlyBird & Post Diagnosis Support Programmes** - increasing understanding of their child's needs, improving peer support networks, improving family resilience, improving parental mental health and well being, reducing reliance on statutory services and embedding long term practical skills.

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**Referrals to short breaks/ paediatric therapy services/ charities and other support** - ensures that children and their families receive the right support at the right time. Children access early intervention, families receive support to prevent problems escalating and develop long term strategies.

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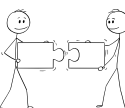
**Family support fund** - enabling families to access support due to financial disadvantage, reducing barriers to support, ensuring inclusion and equity of access to support, and reducing bureaucracy and waiting time to access a service.

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**Parent Workshops & Training** - increased understanding/knowledge, improved social integration, reduced sense of isolation,

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**Advice, Guidance & Support** - reducing isolation, reducing poverty, improved mental health & well being, improved social integration

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**PlayWise Hub Visits** - improved social communication, improved social integration, improved play skills, improved sense of belonging, improved health & well being, reduced parental stress levels

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**PlayWise Free Play Sessions** - reduced sense of isolation, improving peer networks, improved mental health and well being, improving social interaction and contact, reducing parental stress levels, increased opportunities for play and learning

\*\*\*\*



**PlayWise hours of support** - Increased sense of belonging within a SEND community, better access to services and support, reduced stress levels and isolation, increased social connection and peer support





A Snapshot of our year



# Hala & Adam's PlayWise Members Experience

*"The PlayWise membership has given me the comfort and confidence knowing that I can access several amazing services and resources all year round.*

*Adam and I can access the hub 3 days a week during term time and 4 days a week during school holidays. It's a fun place where Adam enjoys a lot of playing with various types of educational toys and where I can relax with a cup of coffee and being confident that Adam is exploring and learning while having fun in a safe environment. Going to the hub gave me the opportunity to meet other parents and learn about their journeys. Both Adam and I have made a few friends there.*

*Everyone in the hub goes the extra mile to help and support. The PlayWise membership has given me the opportunity to access many very useful workshops such as Early Bird and toilet training which have made a positive impact on our lives.*

*PlayWise membership has made me more confident and happier to know where to go and who to speak to when needed. So, I don't feel left out or missing out on any opportunity. I receive professional advice and help with forms filling whenever needed such as DLA. As a member, I am part of the members WhatsApp group where parents share many useful information about matters related to their journeys such as places to visit during summer holidays, nurseries/schools, swimming classes, etc.*

*I would definitely recommend to other families to sign up for the membership because you can receive all the support you need with your unique journey and it is definitely worth it.*

*It will make a positive difference in your life if you know how to make use of the vast resources they offer here. Make sure to ask the lovely and friendly team members.*

*I would like to take this opportunity to thank Pam Fry MBE and PlayWise CEO, and her golden team for all their support throughout the year".*

*Hala & Adam*

## Our Parents tell us.....

*"I am one of the lucky ones. I know too many parents that do not have a PlayWise angel in their lives. When I met the team I was in a dark place. I felt alone- nobody was listening to me. When they confirmed that my child wasn't where they should be for their age - I felt like I wasn't going mad. My GP had made me feel like I was being ridiculous but finally someone saw my child struggling and helped me. They also made me laugh and introduced me to other parents - now I laugh a lot and life feels a lot lighter. Don't get me wrong - I'm still very anxious but I have more confidence in myself to trust my instinct more and know that I have the support I need. I will be forever grateful for that"*

*"PlayWise has made a huge difference in making this journey a journey that's not so scary, and knowing it's okay to have a wobble but knowing you're only a message away to offer support. Not looking forward to when our youngest turns 8. Already making me nervous thinking about it. It's that unconditional support knowing it's there if we need it. Like an emotional safety net, if that makes sense"*

*"Portage is the best thing that has happened for me and my daughter as before I really feel I was struggling to cope as some of her more challenging behaviours really used to upset me however now I feel I can communicate more with her and understand her better"*

*"I have met some other parents who understand what it's like to have a child with suspected autism. I'm not on my own and for the first time ever I feel I belong in a group. My family make me feel like I'm going mad always worrying but at PlayDate I feel like this is my SEN family"*

*"Playwise helps you to find other people in the same boat - so you know you are not alone"*

*"PlayWise is absolutely invaluable. You came to us in our darkest hours like true guardian angels. We will forever be grateful for all of the wonderful Playwise and Portage staff ❤️"*



# PlayWise Plans.....

## FUTURE LOADING

2024

### Our Plans for the Future...

In the next few years we have big ideas and plans and they include....

Developing the PlayWise Training Suite both in and out of Sutton.

Obtaining a bigger building &/or satellite centres so that we can substantially increase our offer.

Developing a wider range of services across a wider timetable.

Increasing reach - more families at the right time.

Providing more group support to parents, carers and children.

Developing our sensory specialism.

Developing our Health & Well being programme.

Increasing our merchandise offer.



Based on our most recent survey, our families have told us that they would like us to provide more groups, more training and improve access to the hub. Therefore, over the next few months we are planning to set up the following as a direct result of this feedback:

- A 'Supporting Parents in a world of Autism' coffee morning - Drop in coffee morning starts Monday 30th October 9.30-11.30am and runs weekly during term time. A peer support meeting for parents to meet other parents, find out about Autism, develop tips and strategies and listen to guest speakers in the PlayWise Hub.
- Monthly training workshops on Autism, Behaviour management, Play, Language and communication, Intensive Interaction, Understanding the Sensory world etc for parents and carers - 2 hour workshops available during the day time as well as evening courses (low cost and accessible times for working parents too)
- Plans to remove the Hub booking system during term time and use only for holiday bookings to ensure ease of access for families to make last minute bookings to the hub.
- To deliver behaviour advice clinics in the PlayWise hub on a monthly basis for parents and carers for parents and carers to seek advice and guidance between 4-7pm in person.
- More staff available during hub opening times to support families to complete paperwork and forms such as DLA/ Short breaks etc.



# Thank you

**We couldn't possibly finish this impact report without a saying a special 'thank you' to the incredible people and community we work with.**

Firstly - A huge thank you to those of you that have donated or raised money for PlayWise - every donation gets reinvested back into PlayWise to help us provide more community projects and support for our children and families



Team Bytes



Michael Burch



Keith Cartwright

These incredible people have raised nearly £6000 between them for the PlayWise Family Support Fund in 2023



Stuart Ruff & Steven Ash

Thank you also to our commissioners for continuing to fund our services and to the businesses that continue to support us so well and to our community that are constantly raising our profile and sharing our social media posts to make sure that no family misses out on support when they need it the most. We really couldn't do it without you. We look forward to working with you again over the next year and developing new partnerships as we continue to expand our community.



An even bigger thanks and a lot of love goes to our PlayWise families (new and existing). We are privileged to work with some pretty incredible parents, carers and children. We learn from families every single day and become better professionals for listening to, working in partnership with and being a part of a child's educational and learning journey - no matter their starting point.

Thank you for allowing us to be a part of that journey.





## CONTACT US



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**PlayWise Hub.** Floor 1A, Sutton Central  
Library, St. Nicholas Way, Sutton, SM1 1EA

**PlayWise Learning CIC (Community Interest Company) provides support to parents and carers of young disabled children, and the professionals that support them, with a wide range of services. This will help reduce the impact of disability and SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) and support families on their journey. PlayWise offers new, innovative and bespoke interventions for families either at home, in our wonderful community hub in central Sutton or in the child's own learning setting. PlayWise supports children aged 0-8 years.**