

Play & Shine Initial Impact Report 2026

Building friendships, confidence and community through inclusive weekly social activities

Our Impact At A Glance

100%

Agree "my child feels safe and comfortable in the group"

100%

Agree "the environment feels welcoming and inclusive"

100%

Agree "Staff understand my child's needs"

100%

Say session time, venue and session length work well

"Really lovely and welcoming and so many activities and toys on offer."

- Parents

"Very open welcoming group, no pressure and really accommodating. Lots of lovely toys and activities."

"It is nice to attend a setting where you're not going to be judged for your child's behaviours/with people in similar situations."

How Play & Shine Makes a Difference

Child Engagement & Enjoyment

100% say their child enjoys attending Play & Shine. 100% agree activities are appropriate for their child's developmental level. 100% say their child is engaged.

Positive Development

Children are becoming more confident explorers. Parents report: "She's more open to explore new places when we visit them" and one child "asks for the group when we're not there."

Parent Support & Connection

100% strongly agree or agree they feel supported as parents/carers. 100% strongly agree they've had opportunities to talk to staff. Many parents feel more connected and less isolated.

Settling In & Inclusion

Children settled quickly thanks to patient, welcoming staff. Parents highlight: "You gave him the space to settle in and didn't crowd him! You listened to his needs."

"Just thank you very much for being so welcoming and lovely to us! Freya really enjoys her time at group and it's been great to meet new people."

"Me and Jaxon are really enjoying stay and play! It's been a massive help for us both! Everyone is great with Jax and it's lovely to watch him interact with others."

- Parents

What Parents Value Most

First Impressions & Settling In

- **"Welcoming and lovely"** – all parents describe a warm, accepting atmosphere
- **"Lovely people and good sized space"** with many activities and toys on offer
- **Patient volunteers** who are "really engaging" and give children space to settle at their own pace
- **No challenges reported** – children settled easily with no overwhelming experiences
- **Staff who stand out:** Jethro praised for being welcoming, happy to chat, and great with children; Cat noted for chasing children on scuttle bugs; volunteer parents valued for their understanding

Parent Support Needs

What Parents Want

- **Drop-ins from SENDIAS and similar organisations** – valued when they attended, want more
- **Support for managing behaviour** – practical strategies and advice
- **Parent workshops and coffee mornings** – 3 out of 4 parents very interested ("Yes definitely", "Yes 10000%")
- **Opportunities to meet other SEN parents** – described as "really important"
- **Judgement-free space** – somewhere they feel understood and supported

Activities & Future Ideas

What Children Love

- **Ball pit!!!** and scuttle bugs – huge hit
- **Anything with wheels**, balls and things to climb
- **Having a free space** to explore different toys
- **"Everything!"** – variety of activities appreciated

Parents Would Love to See

- **Healthier Outdoor play** as weather improves
- **Home corner activities** – toy kitchen
- **Water play** (weather appropriate)
- **Messy/sensory/safe taste activities** (with advance warning for spare clothes)
- **Singing/nursery rhymes** if appropriate
- **Current range already good!**

"I really enjoy having an inclusive, less chaotic group to go to and think it's a lovely touch that members of the mencap community are able to be volunteers also, really appreciate all your effort."

- Parent

Play & Shine is achieving its mission from the very start: creating a welcoming, judgement-free space where children with additional needs can play, explore & develop at their own pace – while parents connect, feel supported & know they're not alone on their journey.