



New 'volunteer force' to give play a boost in Nottingham

Nottingham charity Playworks, the city's leading resource centre for play, is launching an innovative new project to train Nottingham residents as volunteer play workers - to create an 'army' of trained and experienced volunteer play workers who can run play activities in their communities or help out at play organisations around the city.

Playworks has been awarded £25,000 by One Nottingham to run the project, which will give local people the chance to gain the skills, qualifications and experience they need to become play workers, whilst creating more play opportunities for children in the city.

Plus, the project will help to support play organisations in Nottingham, by giving them access to a trained and experienced 'volunteer force'.

The project is called 'The Playworks Community Play Programme' and it'll run from January until September 2012.

Volunteers will be able to complete a nationally recognised 4-day training course in play work free of charge called 'Take 5 for Play' which is endorsed by Skills Active, the Sector Skills Council for the play sector.

Volunteers will then be given a volunteer placement at one of Playworks' many partner organisations which include Huntingdon Primary and Nursery School; St Augustine's Catholic Primary and Nursery School; Elohim Development Academy St Ann's Well Primary School; Tennyson Street Playcentre; Green Lane Play/Youth Centre and Nottingham City Council.

On average, volunteers will be asked to spend around 3 days a week on their placements, which will be flexible to fit around volunteers' other commitments such as children.

Placements will give volunteers the chance to gain real hands-on work experience in the play sector. For example, volunteers will get the chance to run play activities with children and young people around Nottingham such as outdoor play activities in local parks and playgrounds and play sessions in a range of venues including after-school clubs, holiday play schemes and faith organisations.



In addition, volunteers will be able to access a wide range of free training via Playworks, including First Aid, Safeguarding Children and Creative Play.

Volunteers will also be able to use Playworks' Volunteer Hub to search and apply for jobs for example or to produce a CV.

Volunteers will be supervised by Playworks' Volunteer Co-ordinator, Wendy Russell.

Wendy will also work with volunteers to develop personal career plans to help them progress into work or further training or volunteering after the project.

Wendy says:

"The project is great news for Nottingham's play sector - but also for the city as a whole.

For individuals, the project is a good way to gain training, expertise and experience for a career in the play sector, whilst really benefiting local children and communities.

For the play sector, volunteers are vital to everyone from schools and nurseries to play organisations like Playworks. Volunteers also help to run the city's many community-based playgroups and activities such as after-school clubs and holiday play schemes.

Much of the play sector is struggling with funding cuts at present, so being able to access volunteer help is becoming more important than ever.

Most importantly, the project will benefit children by creating more play opportunities across the city. Play has a huge effect on children's physical and mental health; emotional resilience; and social skills and is vital for their development."

Playworks volunteer 32-year-old Jaya Agarwal from Carlton explains what she's gained from volunteering with the charity:

"When I first joined Playworks I only had a vague idea of what it would be like to volunteer in the play sector. Now, I know the worth in being part of an organisation which works especially for children and their play activities. I've attended lots of training workshops including the 'Take 5 for Play' course and have learnt about graffiti painting, face painting, story telling and arts and crafts for instance.

I've learnt a great deal about the different games I can play with children and how I can make story reading more interactive and interesting. I've also acquired new skills in painting and crafting. Plus I've met so many people! I use the knowledge gained from volunteering at Playworks in the different schools I work with, as well as at home with my daughter. Ever since I've joined Playworks I have got excellent support from the staff and Volunteer Co-ordinator Wendy."



Playworks is currently recruiting people who would like to join the project. There are 60 places available but demand is likely to be high. Anyone over 18 with an interest in play work can apply and applicants will be asked to attend an informal interview to determine their suitability. You don't need any particular qualifications or previous experience and volunteers will be fully CRB (police) checked.

To find out more please call Wendy Russell, Playworks Volunteer Co-ordinator on 0115 958 9199.

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