

Kids in the Kitchen



Prepared by: Jane Bain, Senior Playleader
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Background

Cambusbarron Playgroup is a community playgroup which runs 5 mornings per week during term times. The playgroup has 3 permanent members of staff, 2 qualified staff members who are registered with the SSSC, and an administration assistant. The group is registered with and inspected by the Care Inspectorate. The playgroup operates in partnership with Stirling Council to provide children with 600 funded hours of early learning and childcare in line with the Young People and Children (Scotland) Act 2014. The group is registered to take a maximum of 16 children per session and the total number of children attending is 21 (10 part time, 11 full time as at April 2018). The group has been in existence for over 50 years, is managed by a parent led committee and is funded through fees and fund raising activities. Parents in Cambusbarron Playgroup recognise the value of a community based and led service and remain very motivated. The group operates successfully and provides a much needed and play focussed early years service in the village as well as social and peer support network for parents. Fundraising activities provide much anticipated social events for the village community. It is widely recognised that the group contributes to the social capital within the village, Cambusbarron Playgroup is more than the sum of its component parts - it fosters community service, builds relationships and creates a sense of belonging and community spirit. The enthusiasm of staff and parents is key to this service determining shared goals and vision to continue provision of this vital service.

As a traditional playgroup reliant on significant parental support, Cambusbarron Playgroup is challenged by changes in family, life and work patterns. The Government's Early Years Expansion project to deliver 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare also impacts heavily on such a service. Having seen most of its sister playgroups in the area being forced into closure over recent years, Cambusbarron Playgroup has developed a multi faceted project, Fit in the Future, to allow the service to develop to meet the changing needs of children, society and policy but also to retain its ethos of play and parental support and its vital position at the centre of the community. The project recognises Playgroup's responsibility to children's and families' health and wellbeing and simultaneously aims to encourage children, families and communities to develop healthy eating habits, to enjoy physical exercise and to appreciate the natural environment. Playgroup's plans to encourage healthy eating patterns, to develop a love of food and an understanding of the benefits of eating well in conjunction with the changes initiated by the Early Years Expansion are the main drivers of the Kids in the Kitchen part of the overall Fit in the Future project.

Project Rationale

Healthy eating and physical activity are essential for proper growth and development in childhood. To help children develop patterns of healthy eating from an early age, it is important that the food and eating patterns to which children are exposed – both at home and outside the home – are those which promote positive attitudes and enjoyment of food that promotes good health. Children's early experiences of food play an important part in shaping later eating habits, and good eating habits support healthy growth and development, including achieving and maintaining a healthy weight and the foundations for good oral health. Preparing, serving and eating food provide cross curricular opportunities for children's development. Language skills are enhanced through conversation with peers and adults when sitting around the snack table or making decisions on what to cook. Respect and understanding of other people's preferences, taking turns and sharing foods, trying and tasting, using cutlery and developing table manners are just some of positive outcomes associated with preparing, serving and eating food.

Playgroup has a duty¹ to provide appropriate healthy, nutritionally balanced food and drink for the children in their care. This promotes good health and helps children develop patterns of healthy eating, positive attitudes to food and enjoyment of preparing and eating food. Food is considered to improve social and mental health and is a tool to build relationships and memories². Several Governmental policies such as "Improving Maternal and Infant Nutrition: A Framework for Action", "Obesity Route Map - Action Plan" and "The Early Years Framework" support the importance of nutrition in early years.

¹ SSSC (2011). Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011, Scottish Government (2005). National Care Standards (2005), Scottish Government (2017). Getting it Right for Every Child. Scottish Government (). Pre-birth to Three. Scottish Government (). Curriculum for Excellence

² NHS Health Scotland (2014). Setting the Table. Available at <http://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/177298/nhs-setting-the-table.pdf>

Cambusbarron Playgroup

The current expansion of early years services will have an impact on Cambusbarron Playgroup. Instead of operating a morning only service the year playgroup will be open all day. The exact pattern and times of the service are not yet determined however a known side effect of the expansion will be that some children will be at Playgroup all day. This increases the services responsibility to their health and nutrition. The current kitchen are with its limited food preparation and storage facilities is not able to meet that responsibility. Playgroup has plans to introduce a lunch club from August 2018 in order to transition from morning only to all day sessions. Sessions will be extended to 4 hours and children will be able to stay and eat lunch at Playgroup.



Playgroup operates from a communal room within the local Community Centre. Facilities within the playroom include a sink for washing dishes and playgroup equipment, a low sink for washing children's hands and small surface area for food preparation. Wider cooking facilities including fridge and cooker are available in the adjacent main community centre kitchen. Food items purchased for snack are kept in a small cabinet on top of a counter. Chilled items are kept in the communal fridge in the adjacent kitchen. Cooking is done on the cooker also in the adjacent kitchen. There is no access to a dishwasher. The communal fridge and lack of dishwasher have been raised as a concern by the local Environmental Health Officer. More generally space within the playroom is at a premium and the food preparation area has multiple uses. The lack of

facilities severely restrict opportunities to prepare, serve and eat food.

The Playgroup has plans to revise the current facilities for food preparation area within the playroom and create a more defined kitchen area. The planned kitchen area will improve the use of the area and will include a fridge, rapid action dishwasher, portable hob, oven and, by utilising wall space more efficiently, will increase the current storage provision. The food preparation and storage facility as well as the provision of a fridge and rapid action dishwasher will improve food hygiene and reduce the risks of food related illness.

The improved kitchen will allow staff to do more cooking and food preparation with the children. Staff will be better able to highlight the importance of food and will have increased opportunities to use food as a tool for social development and learning. Funding is also sought for kitchen equipment such as pot, pans, baking trays, storage tubs, hand mixer and blender. This will greatly extend the types of cooking that children can be engaged in, from making soups and smoothies to baking cakes, scones and bread. In terms of the early years expansion, as children will spend longer in the setting there are opportunities to make foods such as bread that take longer times to prepare. The kitchen facilities will allow for lunchtime foods to be stored and heated. Kids in the Kitchen aims to do more than improve facilities for making food. It also recognises the impact of the actual dining experience which has a positive impact on children's attitudes to food and eating. Funding to purchase new tables and chairs will be sought which will be more practical in terms of cleaning and storage. They will improve the dining experience and contribute towards a more welcoming and organised environment for children, staff and parent helpers.

The planned refurbishment of the kitchen area will not only benefit the playgroup. As the playroom is also available for hire the new kitchen will benefit the community more widely. Groups such as Rainbows and Toddlers will also be able to access to the improved facilities.

While the kitchen refurbishment is a priority, the scope of the Kids in the Kitchen project is much wider. There are further plans to develop a garden area as a vegetable plot and for the children to be able to grow some of the ingredients for their cooking. This will allow children to appreciate the seasonality of foods as well as understand and appreciate the lifecycle of plants. Playgroup intends to develop a recipe book of favourite recipes which the children have prepared in the setting. It is hoped that this will encourage parents to involve children more in food preparation and cooking at home and will allow children to share their learning with their parents.

Cambusbarron Playgroup

As part of a Christmas Kindness project in 2017 the playgroup children and staff prepared and served a soup and bread lunch for parents and other centre users. This was very successful and playgroup would like to make this a more regular event. This allows playgroup to share their knowledge of healthy eating more widely while also creating a social event which reinforces the playgroup role of fostering relationships and creating friendship and support networks.



Budget

Funding estimates are as follows :

Kitchen refit	4000
Rapid action dishwasher	2000
Portable hob	100
Microwave	100
Single oven	300
Fridge	300
Hand blender	80
Pots and pans	50
Storage Tubs	50
Hand mixer	50
Baking trays	50
Bread maker	150
General kitchen accessories	50
Rectangular tables x4	800
Circular table	200
5 chairs x4	800
Plates and cutlery	30
Total	9110