

CASE STUDY: AUGUST 2020

## It's good to be back!



*Archie enjoys the DIY waterslide Pearson Street Adventure Playground's Play Haven session*

**The weather is scorching at Pearson Street Adventure Playground this week, but the water slide is in full force cooling things down, and the playground is echoing with delighted shrieks and splashes.**

Funding from London Play's Neighbourhood Play Havens project has enabled the playground to restart sessions for disabled children and their families for the first time since funding for their much-loved inclusive Saturday sessions ended.

Adil is one of the children who has been delighted to get back to Pearson Street. "Adil was devastated when the sessions stopped" his mum Nabeela explains. "Today has been fantastic for his anxiety, especially after the past few months of lockdown."

Like many of the young people who attended the Saturday sessions, Adil is autistic and the uncertainty of lockdown has been a particularly challenging time, with routines being severely interrupted and social restrictions being especially hard to navigate. But getting back to the playground has been the boost families have needed, and several parents talk about how great the

sessions are for providing a space their kids could play safely but adventurously, with staff and other families who understand their children's needs: "His development has come on leaps and bounds during his time here. The staff are amazing, they make him feel at ease and support his needs so brilliantly."

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As another parent highlights, the sessions give disabled kids living in Hackney a chance to play locally: "My son spends an hour each way getting to school – which he loves – but it's so great to get back to the playground."

Not everyone at the session is an old face – Nyla aged 9 and her dad Bradley were passing last week and the shouts of pleasure drew them to book in for the first time today "I was desperate to come and play myself!" says Bradley, sitting in the sand pit with Nyla as she lets sand trickle through her fingers, trying to work out just how much water is needed to make the perfect sandcastle. Like several of the other children on the session today, Nyla also travels a long distance to go to a specialist school, in her case a school for young people with visual impairment. This is their very first experience of a play setting in Hackney – it's a big hit!

The children and families at the Pearson Street's Play Haven have desperately missed these inclusive sessions. It's good to be back.

#### NOTE

London Play's [Neighbourhood Play Havens](#) project aims to ensure that adventurous play is within reach of those children and families who may otherwise be excluded – due to clinical vulnerabilities or capacity limits. Those who are most in need can experience a free weekly hour-long play session in their local safe space to play. Play workers are also receiving specialised training to help adapt their practice and enable them to support quality play experiences in the context of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The project is funded by the government's Coronavirus Community Support Fund, distributed by the National Lottery Community Fund.