

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Play hard, work hard – it's win-win for Hackney adventure playground



A Hackney adventure playground has ‘outplayed’ others from across the capital to win the title of London Adventure Playground of the Year 2023. [Shakespeare Walk Adventure Playground](#) was one of 16 shortlisted in the London Adventure Play Awards last week to join the hotly-anticipated annual event run by the charity [London Play](#).

Entries to the awards are in the form of two-minute films, made by children. The group from Shakespeare Walk (affectionately known as SWAPA) were among around 250 excited kids and supporters who converged on the Prince Charles Cinema in London’s West End on Thursday, to see the short films they had made about the places they love to play up on the big screen, enjoy a bit of pandemonium – and find out if they had won prizes.



SWAPA's winning film featured an original soundtrack, made by children in their on-site sound studio. It played over footage of kids building with tools, lighting fires, climbing, swinging, sliding, putting on impromptu shows, playing in the snow, dressing up and joyfully messing about. Molly Mae aged 12 summed up what she likes about SWAPA: *"I like the staff. I like the adventures!"* Her friend said: *"The best thing about SWAPA is making friends, getting to know other people and taking a break from what's happening at home."*

In true adventure playground style, there was plenty of fun, games and messing about during the awards event with compere Charlie keeping the atmosphere just the right side of chaos.

Nitasha, chair of trustees at Shakespeare Walk said:

"It was such a joy, so much great energy, I've never seen a cinema transformed the way it was, truly a wonderful adventure playground event. I can't believe we've won; the team has worked really hard this year and I really feel like they deserve it. I am so pleased for them."

Awards were also made in three categories: Best Flick (best film); Weird and Wonderful; and Playworker Dream Team.



A group of budding documentary makers (left) from [Triangle Adventure Playground](#) in Lambeth won 'Best Flick'. Their film showed children playing on the giant rope swings and zipline; roasting marshmallows over a fire; and even enjoying an overnight camp – all in the inner-city neighbourhood where the playground is based. Asked what she

enjoyed about Triangle, one young adventurer in play said: *"Well, I see all my friends, I get to play, and I get to play for how long I want."*

Gabriel Green, deputy senior playworker, Triangle Adventure Playground said:

"Triangle Adventure Playground was absolutely delighted to win the Best Flick Award at London Play's Adventure Playground of the Year awards 2023. It is a special and unique occasion each year that really makes a difference to promoting the vital importance of the work that adventure playgrounds do."

Children at [The Markfield Project](#) in Haringey won the 'Weird and Wonderful' category with their film epic featuring the death – and resurrection – of Spongebob Squarepants. Weird you say? Yep. Finally, the team at Islington's [Barnard Adventure Playground](#) took the 'Playworker Dream Team' award. All those shortlisted in that category had their 'dream team' credentials tested during the event, with one game requiring playworkers to submit to children dressing them up for a very out-there fashion show: catwalk compulsory!

London is known as the adventure playground capital of the world; these unique child-led places began on bombsites in the aftermath of WWII and tend to be located in the least affluent areas of the city. In the 1980s London had over 100 staffed adventure playgrounds; today only 70 remain, with 12 having closed in the last decade alone.

Fiona Sutherland, director of London Play said:

“These annual awards are a joyous occasion that we look forward to hosting every year. The children’s creativity and enthusiasm is fantastic to see. But there is a very serious side to this! London’s staffed adventure playgrounds are a lifeline for communities. They allow children space, time and freedom to have fun, explore, challenge and express themselves – building skills, resilience and improving mental and physical health along the way. But despite the amazing work that SWAPA, Triangle and others do, they tend to fly under the radar. Funding is scarce, and most are in a constant fight for survival. Yes, these awards are about celebrating adventure playgrounds and the children who play there – but they are also about raising awareness of their value and building support to secure their future.”

Notes to the editor

1. London Play promotes children’s right to play, campaigns for more and improved out-of-school play services for children and young people across London, and supports play work in the capital.
2. There are around 70 adventure playgrounds across London providing school-aged children with opportunities to play that are difficult to find elsewhere in our busy, urban environment. Fenced and secure, with skilled staff, adventure playgrounds are oases of nature, many located in deprived neighbourhoods. Visit www.londonadventureplaygrounds.org.uk for more information.
3. Full list of winners for 2023:

Adventure Playground of the Year

WINNER: Shakespeare Walk Adventure Playground (Hackney)

Weird and Wonderful Award

WINNER: The Markfield Project (Haringey)

RUNNER UP: Pearson Street Adventure Playground (Hackney)

Best Flick

WINNER: Triangle Adventure Playground (Lambeth)

RUNNER UP: Somerford Grove Adventure Playground (Haringey)

Playworker Dream Team

WINNER: Barnard Adventure Playground (Islington)

RUNNER UP: LCC at Max Roach (Lambeth)

Also shortlisted: Cape, Three Corners and Waterside Adventure Playgrounds (Islington); ELHAP (Redbridge); Hackney Marsh and Homerton Grove Adventure Playgrounds (Hackney); Make-Do Play (Haringey). Marble Hill Playcentres Adventure Playground (Richmond); Roman Road Adventure Playground (Tower Hamlets);

4. We are grateful to the National Lottery Communities Fund for supporting these awards and adventure playground communities; and all our other funders for their support.
5. For media enquiries and high-resolution pictures of the event or the winning playgrounds please contact Fiona Sutherland via info@londonplay.org.uk.

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