

## 20181218 Briefing on VP building

### The Victoria Park building

As outlined in the briefing for Councillor Hassell (November 2018), IEYS awaits final decisions from Assets and Parks. It appears that a stay and play offer commissioned from the VCS is not possible for the Victoria Park building at this time due to its condition. Refurbishment to the standards required by early years legislation is beyond the budget allocated by members.

In order to meet parent requests for services in parks, the IEYS has offered opportunities via RFQ to organisations wishing to offer:

- Stay and play through the V&A building in Victoria Park;
- Active “soft” play at Mile End Park/Lockley Park.

To date there has been limited interest in the V&A building. We have received enquiries from individuals. They do not appear to be keen on proceeding. This is for the following reasons:

- There are multiple users across the week for the V&A building. Sole use cannot be guaranteed;
- There is no clear line of responsibility for clearing up after the building is used for parties;
- Very limited storage would require a daily delivery, “set up” and collection of resources by the organisation providing the service;
- There is no changing area;
- The V&A building is adjacent to the Hackney Gate and difficult for LBTH parents to access (a 30 minute walk across the park with a buggy). It is likely that use of any service offered will be mainly by Hackney parents.

Assets and Parks are in discussion over the future use of the building. Their proposal is to use it to house the new gardening team and horticultural apprentices, training facilities for the public plus additional infrastructure for storage and possibly a green house. We await further information. Our contribution is as proposed below.

### IEYS service offer in Victoria Park

Regular “pop-up” stay and play has been offered in Victoria Park by Overland Children’s Centre until recently. Occasional stay and play will be offered during the winter months – parents are notified by text and through the notice board. Stay and play will be offered again in Victoria Park in the Spring and Summer 2019. These sessions will be in the relevant timetable.

The use of the Victoria Park building for horticultural purposes offers excellent early years opportunities. For example, the following early years gardening projects are possible:

- Under-fives gardening club organised with Overland Children’s Centre and the horticultural apprentices;
- Offer the Born Well Growing Well “Growing Well” pilot (as run at Ocean Children’s Centre, funded by THT EY Transformation monies) in Victoria Park. This is to encourage families to engage in growing activities and healthier life styles;
- Early childhood education and care settings (including schools) could also work in partnership with each other and the horticultural apprentices to provide visits and gardening activities.

This offer could progress into an “urban gardening” approach involving small pockets of urban space to be converted into small community allotments. This approach lends itself also to creative activities, for example, involving a potter and artists in found materials.