

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Hotfoot Review



Sports, Play and Youth Development Team

10 December 2009

Review of the Council's provision of Hotfoot Summer and Easter play scheme for 2010 and beyond.

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Aims of the report

This report reviews the Council's provision of play schemes. The main objectives of the report are to:

1. Clarify a clear purpose for the Hotfoot play scheme linked to priorities in the Council's Strategic Plan.
2. Consider if the schemes meet current need and represent value for money.
3. Review best practice and identify alternative funding streams.
4. Consider options for the future of the Hotfoot play scheme.

Background

Hotfoot is a longstanding well established integrated play scheme for children aged 5 – 11 years with an option to take older children with disabilities according to need. Recently there has been a growing focus on the integration of disadvantaged groups into the scheme including children with learning difficulties and disabilities, children supported by KCC Children's Social Services and children referred to the scheme through Family Liaison Officers (FLO). The scheme currently runs during the summer and Easter holidays. The Easter 2009 Hotfoot programme ran for one week at Bower Grove Primary School, Eastborough Primary School and Oaktrees Community School. The summer programme for 2009 ran for three weeks at Eastborough and Sandling Primary Schools and for four weeks at Bower Grove Primary School and Oaktrees Community School. The scheme ran for four hours each day between 10am-2pm.

School facilities within the borough are used to deliver the schemes, with the locations being reviewed on an annual basis to ensure coverage across the urban area and to take in to account availability of the school buildings for the period in question. Schools sites are an ideal place to hold Hotfoot as they provide ample space including a main school hall, purpose built classrooms, dedicated outside play space and appropriate security for children.

The scheme is extensively marketed through a brochure which is distributed to all schools in Maidstone, libraries, doctors, dentists, KCC Children's Social Services and Family Liaison Officers. Young people who access Hotfoot may have previously attended the scheme, heard from word of mouth, be referred

or may be new to the scheme. The brochure is also uploaded onto the Digital council's website. It is further advertised via the giant poster sites around town. Currently bookings are received by post or directly through Maidstone Gateway though an on-line booking facility is being considered.

The total expenditure of providing the scheme in 2009 excluding officer time and recharges is £40,642 and income is £28,942 as at 09/12/09. The actual cost to the council for this scheme was therefore £11,700. The budgeted expenditure for 2009 excluding officer time and recharges was £47,350 and the income target was £32,740. This compares to 2008 figures where actual expenditure was £49,358 and income £32,656 against a budget of £50,290 and targeted income of £32,790. In 2008 the actual cost to the council for this scheme was therefore £16,702. Comparable figures for 2007 are actual expenditure £48,260 and income £30,123 against a budget expenditure of £48,390 and target income of £29,190. In 2007 the actual cost to the council for this scheme was therefore £18,137.

This shows for 2009 a reduction in expenditure set against an increase in income.

Objectives and purposes of the scheme

Why do we run the scheme?

1. The Power of Promoting Wellbeing

The Hotfoot Play Scheme is run under the Council's power of promoting wellbeing. It is designed to promote the personal and social development of children with a particular focus on the child's role in respect of the wider community of Maidstone. It is open to all children and special support is available to enable a wide range of children to attend. By integrating children from a wide variety of backgrounds the scheme actively promotes social cohesion within the borough.

The scheme provides a varied programme delivered largely through three key child centred activities; arts and crafts, sports and games, and dance and drama. These are enhanced by activities promoting personal and social development organised by partner agencies such as Mid Kent Police, The Kent Fire and Rescue Service, The Guide Dogs for the Blind Charity, The Kent Wildlife Trust, The Dental Hygienist Service, Maidstone United Football Club, Kixx Martial Arts, the KCC Discovery Bus service and the Schools Sports Partnership. The council's own waste recycling teams regularly visit the scheme to explain and promote recycling to the children. The Mayor visits the scheme each year and his role within the borough is explained to children as part of his visit.

These activities also give children access to activities and services they might not otherwise be able to access as well as increasing their understanding of the wider community they live in and their role within it.

2. Council priorities

The Council has a power to promote wellbeing and a core corporate value is to promote equality.

Hotfoot contributes to the Council's Strategic Plan in the following way.			
Maidstone Councils Strategic Plan Themes	Hotfoot Programme	Sample Hotfoot Outcomes	National Indicators
1. A place to achieve, prosper and thrive	<p>Opportunities for young people to become junior volunteers.</p> <p>Focus on creative, cooperative activities which promote children's personal and social development in a local context.</p>	<p>These staff could have option of being paid staff at the age of 17.</p> <p>The Ofsted inspection in 2009 revealed that staff have good expertise which they use to observe and assess children's developmental needs and put in place strategies to ensure all children achieve and make good progress.</p>	NI3 NI6
2. A place that is clean and green	The recycling team regularly visit the scheme to explain and promote recycling.	A range of finished products to show learning, and to take home to promote recycling in the family.	NI191
3. A place that has strong, healthy and safe communities	<p>Healthy eating is actively promoted at Hotfoot and backed up by a visit from a health specialist.</p> <p>Police visit the children to talk about social and anti-social</p>	<p>Children develop a healthy lifestyle recipe and produce a product from it.</p> <p>A greater awareness of socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and how to</p>	NI50 NI55 NI56 NI110

	behaviour in the context of local communities.	deal with it as a child.	
4. A place to live and enjoy	The scheme is designed to provide a positive, stimulating and rewarding experience for children within their local community	Social cohesion with a greater understanding of people from different backgrounds living within Maidstone. Activities that increase understanding of other cultures within the borough are actively promoted.	NI54
5. A place with efficient and effective public services	Value for money	See breakdown chart of comparable schemes	

List of National Indicators

NI3 Civic participation in the local area
 NI6 Participation in regular Volunteering
 NI 50 Emotional health of children
 NI54 Services for Disabled children
 NI55 Obesity in Primary school age children in reception
 NI56 Obesity in Primary school age children in Year 6
 NI110 Young People's Participation in Positive Activities
 NI191 Residual Household waste per household

What does it achieve?

Hotfoot's major achievements are high quality activity programmes with high satisfaction ratings for a large number of children from a wide variety of backgrounds. The programme has a strong positive element of personal and social development which meets the council's own priorities as well as those of key partners.

In this context the scheme is well thought of by partner agencies. The following sample comments illustrate high levels of satisfaction from service users.

"Hotfoot is an ideal stage for promoting health and addressing the Government's obesity agenda."

(Health Promotions West Kent PCT)

"This type of event contributes to giving young people something constructive to do during the long summer holidays; also it contributes to Kent Police Safer Summer Campaigns."

(Mid Kent Police)

"By having clubs and coaching staff attending the scheme it provides lifelong participation opportunities and pathways for the young people which will also tackle the health agenda".

(Maidstone School Sports Partnership)

Hotfoot play schemes provide an excellent opportunity to inspire children to reduce waste and recycle more at home and at school, through lessons linked to fun and 'hands on' activities such as games and workshops. The important messages are also relayed via the children to the parents. Waste education is an important factor in achieving our LA NI 191

(Maidstone Borough Council's recycling team)

3. Assessment of need and value for money

Need

Children's Social Services and Family Liaison Officer referrals

Since 2008 the council has been working with Maidstone Area Children's Social Services (SS) and Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) in the Borough's schools to allocate funded places for those who otherwise would not be able to attend the scheme. In 2009 through working with these partners the scheme was able to allocate 110 spaces sponsored by Children's Social Services and, as a result of additional funding from KCC's and MBC's Members' delegated budgets, a further 66 funded spaces for vulnerable children have been made available for allocation, using the FLO system for referrals. This brought in £5710 for the 2009 programme; the equivalent figure for 2008 was £4000.

Number of children sponsored through SS and funding from members' delegated budgets (FLO) that used the Hotfoot Playscheme in 2008 and 2009.

Year	Easter		Summer		Total No. children referred and taken up (No. of weeks attended)
	SS No of children. (No. of weeks attended)	FLO No of children. (No. of weeks attended)	SS No of children. (No. of weeks attended)	FLO No of children. (No. of weeks attended)	
2009	0	30 (30)	48 (95)	67 (94)	145 (189)
2008	0	0	50 (89)	43 (56)	93 (145)

The Local Children's Services Partnership (LCSP) also helped fund the cost of the venues in 2009 of £3,150 which released funding for more play leaders to support vulnerable children attending the scheme. In addition to this Hotfoot linked with the out of school club at Eastborough Primary School so that full day care provision was provided for children attending through the school. Further discussions with schools who are interested in providing full day care alongside Hotfoot in 2010 is intended.

Number of daily places offered and taken up per year				
Year	No. of daily places offered	No. of daily places taken up (Pre-registered)	No. of daily places taken up (on the day bookings)	Total daily places taken up
06/07 Easter	500	450	50	6467
06/07 Summer	7060	5400	567	
07/08 Easter	610	545	44	6494
07/08 Summer	6520	5475	430	
08/09 Easter	680	675	0	5327
08/09 Summer	4975	4225	427	
09/10 Easter	720	540	52	4689
09/10 Summer	5235	3615	482	

Percentage Uptake (Revised figures)			
Year	Easter Uptake	Summer Uptake	Total Uptake
2006	100%	77.6%	86%
2007	96.6%	90.5%	91%
2008	99.3%	93.5%	94%
2009	82.2%	78.3%	80%

In 09/10 numbers of places offered were increased as a result of the high level of demand for 08/09. However the uptake for 09/10 was significantly lower than expected, though the reasons for this are unclear.

Value for money assessment

In order to carry out an assessment of the value for money of Hotfoot a survey of a sample of play schemes within the borough and further afield within Kent was carried out. Not all of those contacted responded but the results of those who did are set out in the tables below:

Schemes within the Borough of Maidstone							
Borough	Scheme	Age	Activities	Times	Daily Cost to the participant	Hourly Equivalent Cost to the participant	Holidays
Maidstone	Hotfoot	5-11	Arts and crafts, dance and drama and sports and games.	10-2pm	£6 per day	£1.50	Easter and Summer
Council run scheme		Up to 19 years for disabled children			£25 per week	£1.25	
					Discount £4 per day £15	£1 £0.75	
Maidstone Community Playschemes							
Maidstone	Bearsted	4-11 years	Variety of crafts, sports and entertainments.	9am-1pm	£6 per day £25 per week Discounted week £15	£1.50 £1.25 £0.75	Summer
Maidstone	Harrietsham	4-15 years	Crafts, outdoor	9am-1pm	£3 per day	£0.75	

			activities and outside suppliers.		£15 a week Family discount for third sibling and onwards £2.50. Staff children £2	£0.75 £0.63 £0.50	Summer
Maidstone	Headcorn	4-11 years	Children learn new skills in a fun and secure environment	9:30am-12:30pm	£3 on the day £2.50 in advance £11.50 weekly rate	£1 £0.83 £0.77	Summer
Maidstone	Marden	5-11 years	Socialise with friends, make new friends and learn new skills.	9:30am-12:30pm	£3.50 on the day £2.50 in advance Family rate 2 children £4.50 3 children £6.50 4 children £8	£1.17 £0.83	Summer
Maidstone	Staplehurst	3-11 years	Social interaction and exploring new surroundings. Preparing children	9:30am-12:30pm	£3.50 per day £17.50 weekly rate	£1.16 £1.16	Summer

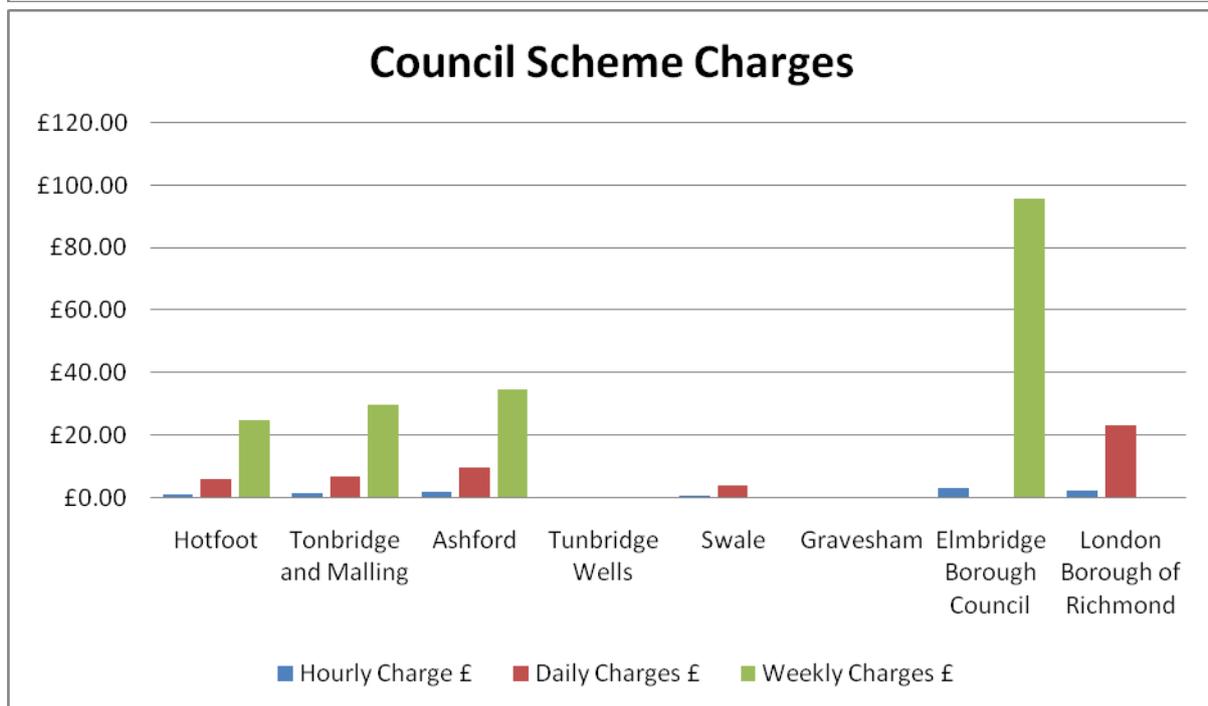
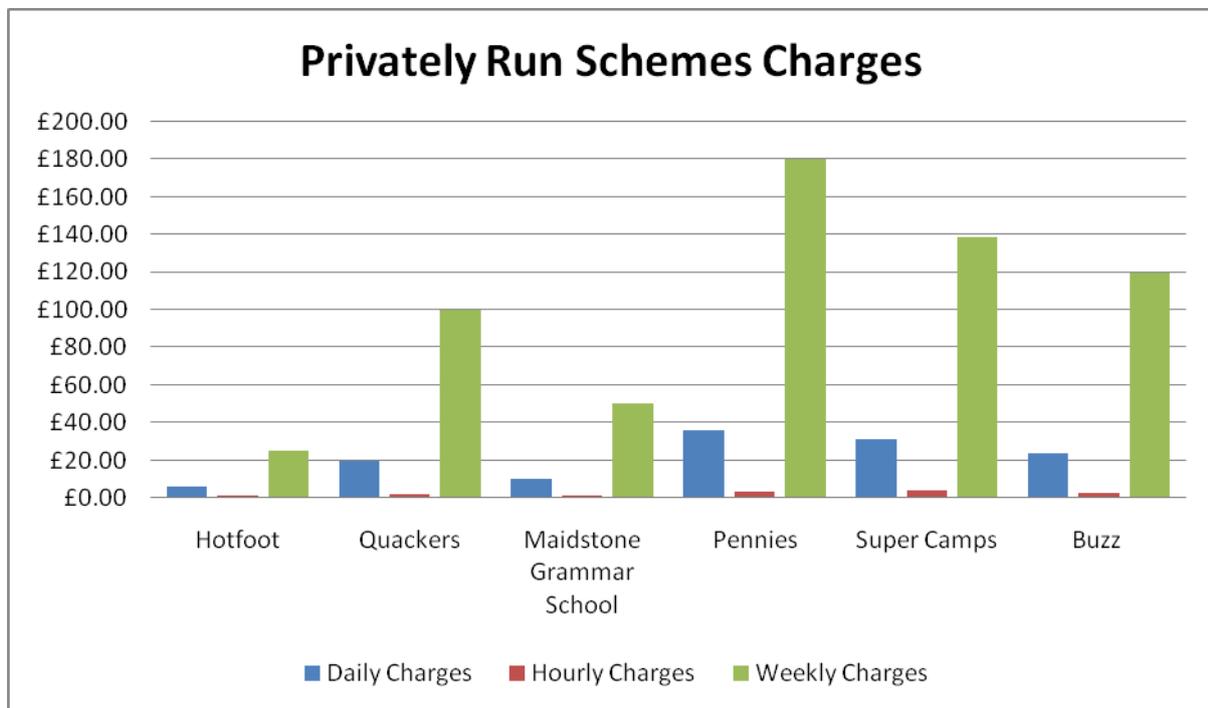
			between playgroup and school.				
Maidstone Schemes (Commercial)							
Maidstone	Quackers (North- borough)	4-14 years	Mixed	8:30am- 6pm	£20	£2.11	Summer
Maidstone	MGS (Maidstone Grammar School for Boys)	8-14 Years	Sport	10am-4pm	£50 a week	£1.67	Summer
Maidstone	Pennies	4-11 years	Arts and Crafts, Cooking, Outside activities, Wii, playstation and Computer sessions.	7:30am- 6:30pm	Pre reg £30 On the day £36 ½ day rate £23 (am) £21(pm)	£2.72 £3.27 £4.18 £3.81	All half terms and main holidays including Christmas

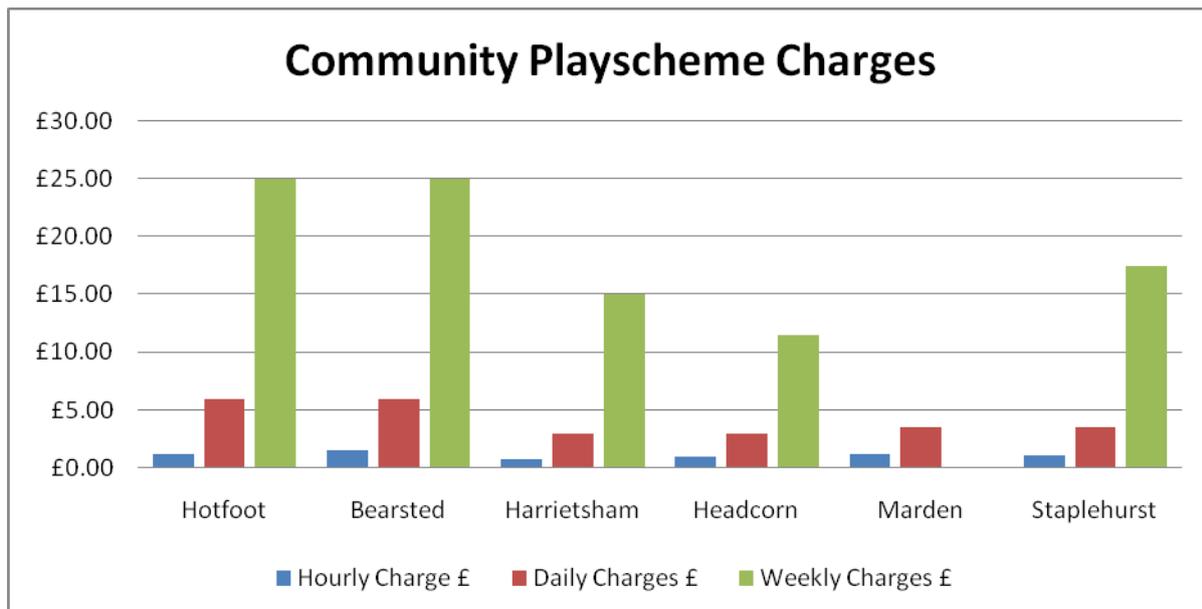
Out of Borough Schemes							
Authority	Scheme	Age	Activities	Times	Daily Cost to the participant	Hourly Cost to the participant	Which holidays
Tonbridge and Malling Council run Scheme	Summer Playscheme	4-11 years	Arts and crafts and Sports	9am-1pm	£7 a day Weekly rate £30	£1.75 £1.50	Summer
Ashford Council Run scheme	Ashford Playscheme	4-11 years	Mixed	10am-3pm	£10 a day £35 Weekly (Monday to Thursday)	£2 £1.75	All half term and main holiday periods except Christmas
Tunbridge Wells	No Scheme						
Swale Council Run scheme	Multi sports days (selective days throughout holiday)	8-14 years	Multisport i.e. Halloween Arts	10am-2:30pm	£4 per day	£0.89	All

Gravesham Council Run scheme	Play in the Park	5-11 years	Play and activities in the park. Parents don't leave	1 hour session 10:30am-11:30am 1:30pm-2:30pm 3:30pm-4:30pm	Free	Free	First 2 weeks of the summer holiday
Bromley Mytime Private company working in partnership with Bromley Council.	Buzz	5-11 years	Arts and Crafts, swimming and soft play. (Held at Leisure Centre)	8:30am-5:30pm	£23 Member £24 Non-member	£2.56 members £2.67 non-members	All half terms and main holiday periods including Christmas
Croydon Private Company (Super camps)	Super Camps at Russell School	4-14 years	Sports and Arts and crafts	9:30am-4:30pm Poss to extend to 8am-6pm (Free)	£31 a day £139 a week	£4.43 £3.97	Summer 13th July-28 th August (including Sutton Valence Prep)
Elmbridge Borough Council	Shout	5-12 years	Dance, drama, arts and crafts,	10am-4pm 8:30am-	Weekly £96	£3.20	All holidays including Christmas

(Surrey) Council Scheme			sports and music.	5:30pm in available	£108 Only do daily if spaces available	£2.40	8 venues
LBRUT-London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames Council run scheme.	Mini Camps at Shene Sports and Fitness Centre	5-7 years	Arts and crafts, free play (bouncy castle, books, board games)	8.30am-5.30pm full day Half day 8.30am-12.30pm 1.30pm-5.30pm	Daily £23.50 No Leisure card £22.30 Leisure Card £13.50NLC £12.50 LC Leisure card £6 for year under 18's	£2.61 £2.48 £3.37 £3.13	All half terms and holiday except Christmas

These charts present the charges in visual format by category of provider. The Hotfoot charges are presented in each chart for comparison.





These figures demonstrate that the Hotfoot price to the public is highly competitive in comparison to private and other Council run schemes. Bromley Council have a private company called Bromley Mytime running the scheme called "Buzz" for them.

Bearsted and Harrietsham and Hotfoot run for four hours a day and the rest of the community playschemes run for 3 hours per day, and this is reflected in the lower daily and weekly charges in the chart.

4. Attendance and Accessibility

The following charts illustrate take up on the individual Hotfoot schemes in 2009 in a variety of formats and categories.

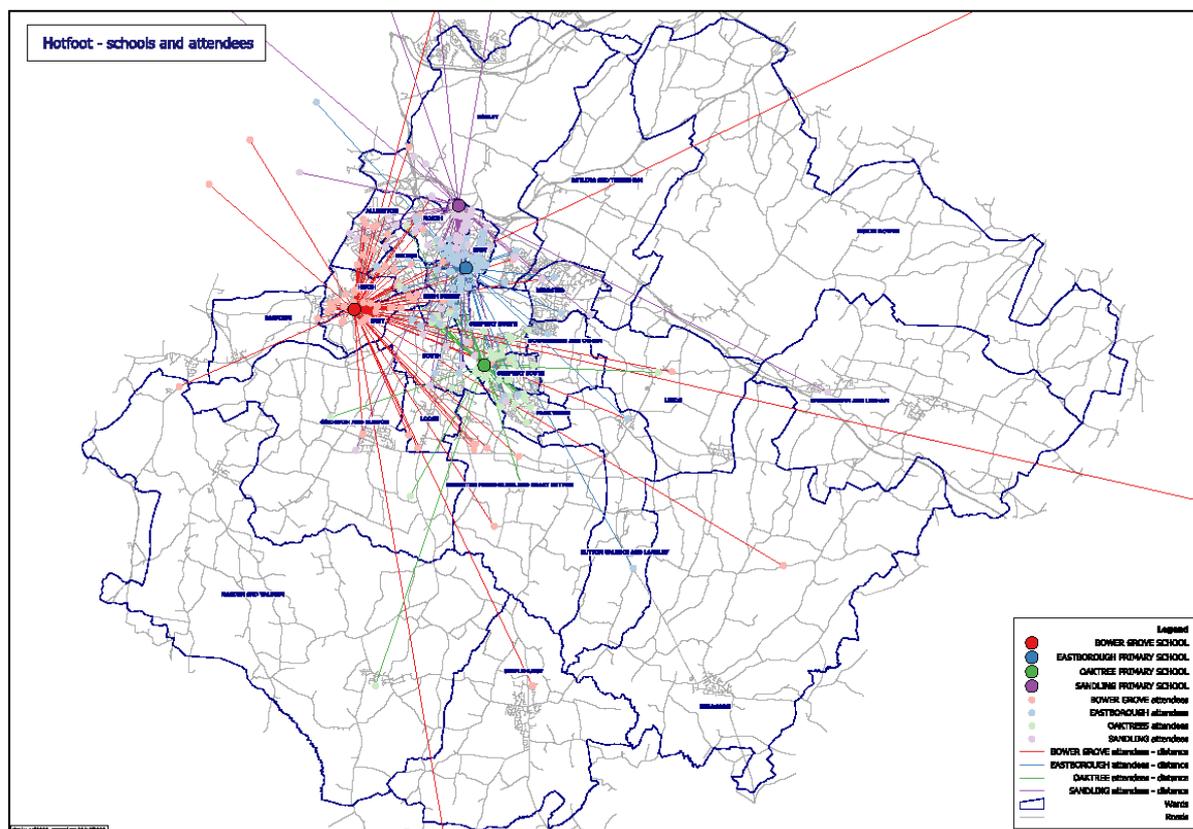
Uptake on the individual Hotfoot Sites 2009/10						
Scheme	Dates	Number of places offered	No. Pre-Registered	No. Daily registered	total attendance	% uptake
Hotfoot Bower Grove	27th July - 21st Aug	1215	955	85	1040	86%
Hotfoot Oaktrees	27th July - 21st Aug	1440	765	193	958	67%
Hotfoot Eastborough	27th July - 14th Aug	1500	1175	66	1241	83%
Hotfoot Sanding	27th July - 14th Aug	1080	720	138	858	79%

2008/09 uptake by week pre registered and Referral Numbers				
Scheme	Week 1 28 th July-1 st August 2008	Week 2 4 th -8 th August 2008	Week 3 11 th -18 th August 2008	Week 4 18 th -22 nd August 2008
Hotfoot Brunswick	95/100 2 SS/FLO referrals	98/100 4 SS/FLO referrals	76/81 4 SS/FLO referrals	58/72 2 SS/FLO referrals
Hotfoot Shepway and Oaktrees	56/60 46 SS/FLO referrals	44/44 24 SS/FLO referrals	44/44 23 SS/FLO referrals	44/44 20 SS/FLO referrals
Hotfoot Eastborough	63/72 4 SS/FLO referrals	55/72 6 SS/FLO referrals	71/72 2 SS/FLO referrals	Did not run
Hotfoot Sanding	32/45 0 SS/FLO referrals	47/63 4 SS/FLO referrals	43/63 4 SS/FLO referrals	22/63 0 SS/FLO referrals

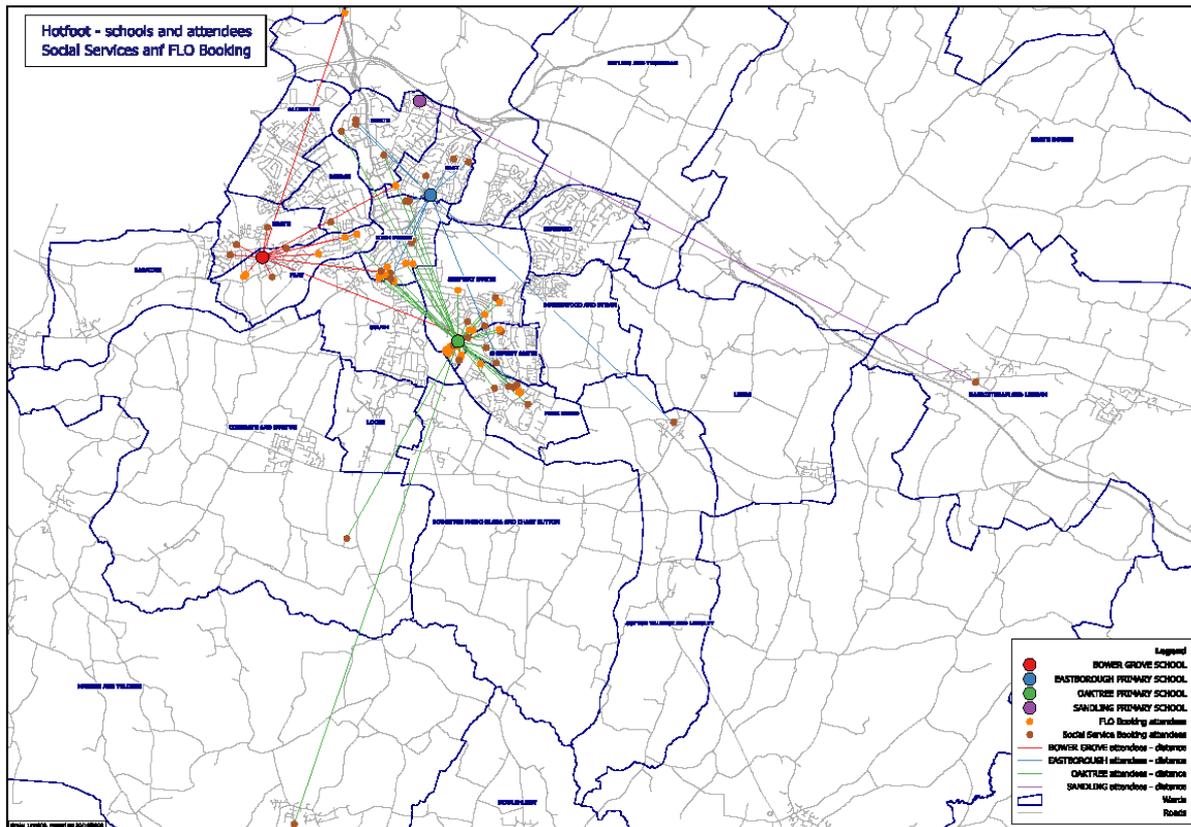
2009/10 uptake by week pre registered and Referral Numbers

Scheme	Week 1 27 th -31 st July 2009	Week 2 3 rd -7 th August 2008	Week 3 10 th -14 th August 2008	Week 4 17 th -21 st August 2008
Hotfoot Bower Grove	49/54 3 SS/FLO referrals	56/63 9 SS/FLO referrals	36/63 4 SS/FLO referrals	50/63 2 SS/FLO referrals
Hotfoot Oaktrees	45/72 15 SS/FLO referrals	40/72 28 SS/FLO referrals	36/72 24 SS/FLO referrals	32/72 8 SS/FLO referrals
Hotfoot Eastborough	75/100 9 SS/FLO referrals	93/100 13 SS/FLO referrals	67/100 9 SS/FLO referrals	Did not run
Hotfoot Sanding	57/72 1 SS/FLO referrals	48/72 5 SS/FLO referrals	39/72 1 SS/FLO referrals	Did not run

GIS maps showing where attendees came from to attend Hotfoot.

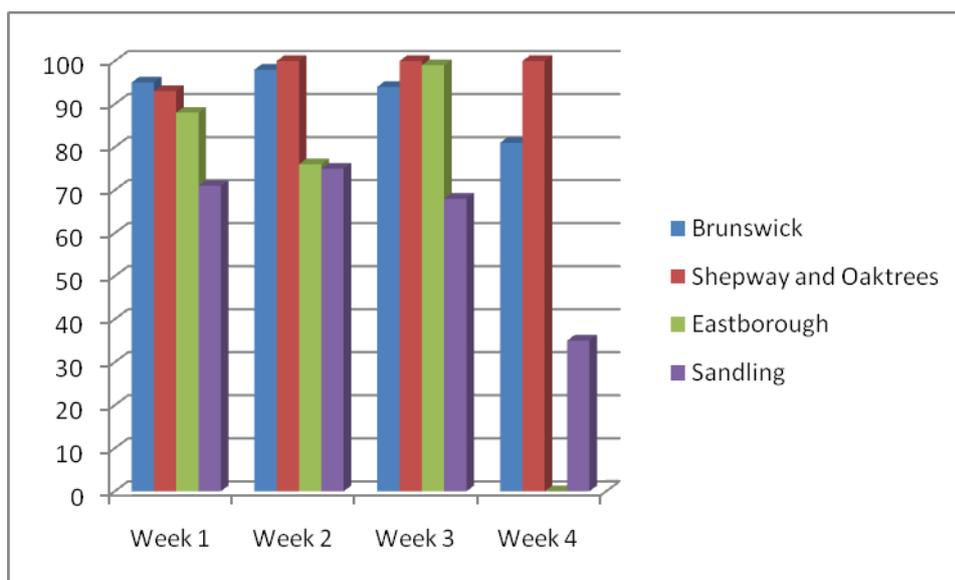


Tonbridge and Malling and Maidstone playschemes both accept young people from outside of the borough.



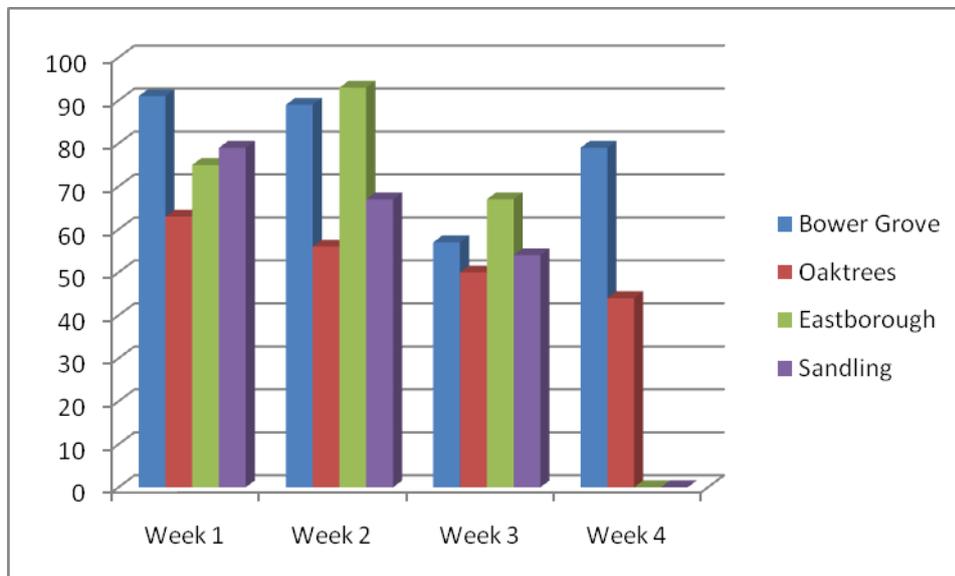
Percentage uptake for 2008 and 2009

Percentage uptake at each site by week in 2008



Please note that Eastborough only ran for three weeks and all other sites ran for four weeks.

Percentage uptake at each site by week in 2009



Eastborough and Sandling did not run in week 4.

These figures show that the Eastborough scheme was the most popular and that there was an excess supply in respect of demand. Eastborough offered full day care “wrap around” alongside Hotfoot. Referrals increased in number from 2008-2009, showing increased demand for this service which was able to be met due to increased supplementary funding from other sources. The GIS maps show that the sites attract people from a wide geographical area; most of the referred children came from recognized areas of deprivation.

Community Playschemes

The Council currently has allocated funding to provide support for community playschemes.

The Council currently has allocated £7065.95 to support community playschemes 2009. The number of play schemes awarded funding this year was 9.

The support funding for community playschemes is designed to help facilitate playschemes in areas which the Hotfoot Scheme would have difficulty reaching or in areas where alternative sources of funding are more readily available, but require an element of matched funding to access these funds.

Currently community playscheme providers (not for profit organizations operating within the borough) may apply to receive support funding from the council, the allocation for which is dependent on location and track record where appropriate; the amount given also takes into account how many children are expected to attend, and the duration of the programme. Where support funding is given it is issued in two instalments, one prior to the scheme and one on satisfactory completion.

As part of Maidstone Borough Council's commitment to the community play schemes the council provides a community play scheme workshop in February each year for organizations who have applied for support under the scheme. This offers guidance on Ofsted and the new EYFS guidelines. The workshop is attended by a representative from ASK (Advisory Service for Kent) who covers Ofsted and the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage).

The workshop also offers an opportunity to access two further existing training sessions for Council employees. These two courses cover Child protection and first aid at a reduced cost of £10 each.

5. Review of best practice and alternative funding streams

Are there any recognised beacons of best practice?

As part of this review other schemes have been examined in order to identify best practice.

The IDeA website has been searched for examples of best local government practice in respect of playschemes but none has as yet been identified. The IDeA help support improvements and innovation in local government. They work with local authorities and their partners to develop and share good practice.

Ofsted evaluation

Hotfoot is an Ofsted registered scheme. In 2008 the Department for Children, Schools and Families introduced new standards called the "Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)". From September 2008 this became mandatory for all early years' providers and schools registered by Ofsted. As the inspection regime is new there are a limited number of programmes that have been inspected under it. Research through the Ofsted website of inspections which took place during July and August 2009 in Kent for playschemes revealed no

schemes with a Grade 1: Outstanding for Childcare on Non –Domestic Premises. Ofsted reports cannot be searched by grade, but only by region and year. The table below shows that the Hotfoot scheme is performing well, and better than three of the four local community playschemes assessed by Ofsted.

Ofsted grading for inspections after September 2008

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality.

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong.

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound.

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough.

Ofsted Inspection Summer 2009		
Name of Scheme (Location)	Date of Inspection	Overall Ofsted Grading
Hotfoot Oaktrees (Maidstone)	12 August 2009	Grade 2: Good
Bellwood Playscheme (Maidstone) CP	19 August 2009	Grade 3: Satisfactory
Marden Playscheme (Maidstone) CP	13 August 2009	Did not meet all the requirements of the childcare register.
Yalding Play scheme (Maidstone) CP	10 August 2009	Grade 2: Good
Staplehurst Summer Playscheme (Maidstone) CP	10 August 2009	Grade 3: Satisfactory
Barracudas Activity Camp (Sevenoaks)	19 August 2009	Grade 2: Good
Friendzone Holiday Playscheme (Canterbury)	13 August 2009	Grade 2: Good
East Peckham Village Hall (Tonbridge)	11 August 2009	Grade 2: Good
Leybourne Play scheme (West Malling)	10 August 2009	Grade 2: Good
Borough Green Primary School Summer Playscheme (Sevenoaks)	31 July 2009	Grade 2: Good

Super Camps at Combe Bank School (Sevenoaks)	5 August 2009	Grade 2: Good
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(CP) A community playscheme that currently receives funding from Maidstone Borough Council.

Parents'/Carers' evaluations 2009

Evaluations are handed out to all parents on site on a weekly basis. This year 50 were completed and returned to the Council.

100% agreed that the venue was suitable. 100% agreed the activities were suitable. 100% agreed that they were happy with how staff organised the scheme

All feedback from questionnaires in 2009 have been positive, a sample of responses from the parent evaluations are below:

Parent	Comment
1	Staff are friendly, Hotfoot is the best idea someone came up with it gives the kids something to do in the holidays and gives the parents and carers a rest as well
2	My child has enjoyed Hotfoot immensely and has done for 4 years now
3	My children have really enjoyed their week, especially the sports and games. My daughter said that the leaders were all friendly and caring. I am very impressed with this scheme and have nothing but praise for it. Thank you to everyone involved-please pass on my appreciation to all.
4	Thank you for providing a safe and enjoyable holiday club. Please extend the hours and number of weeks available and provide for 11 plus age group.
5	My son has thoroughly enjoyed himself at Hotfoot. If it was up to him he would be happy to come every day. It's a great opportunity for them to catch up and have a good time with friends.
6	Had a better signing in/ signing out system this time
7	My children have both really enjoyed this year's Hotfoot scheme. Staff and activities have been great. My children can't wait to get there each day.
8	My kids have loved Hotfoot. Brilliant scheme lovely people running

	it. Four hours is enough they're completely exhausted by the time they come home.
9	Its great- keep it up. Really enjoyed the Art and Dance in Africa week.
10	Really enjoyed Hotfoot and wants to do it again next year.

Alternative funding streams

Additional funding is provided by Kent County Council (KCC) Children's Social Services and donations from KCC and MBC Members' delegated budgets. For the 2009 programme, officers sought funding from the Maidstone Local Children's Services Partnership Board to pay for the cost of the venues and were successful in receiving £3150 to cover all the venue costs, also £6838 was given by the Hotfoot Plus Trust in summer 2009 to provide 1:1 support for children with special needs. It is intended to apply for this funding again in 2010. The Hotfoot Plus Trust is made up of a group of parents with disabled children, the group as they are a charity have access to funding the council cant apply for. Their aim is to allow children who live in the borough or who attend a school in the borough access to Hotfoot.

The possibility of gaining funding from the Children in Need Charity is currently being investigated for 2010. The deadline for any application would be 15 January 2010. The money for this could be put towards helping pay for staff providing one-to-one help for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. While the chances of gaining an award are uncertain it is worth noting that in 2008/09 Canterbury was awarded £52,084 to an organisation to provide structured activities during the holidays. In Margate £11,134 was awarded to a holiday club for children and young people with learning and physical disabilities. Officers are working closely with the funding officer to investigate alternative and supplementary sources of funding.

6. Conclusions

- The Hotfoot scheme is designed for children from all backgrounds and is inclusive. It has developed an increasing emphasis on promoting social cohesion through a range of child centred activities and support for children to access the scheme.
- There are high levels of partner input into the scheme to promote children's personal and social development in the context of the priorities of the council and of the partners.

- Satisfaction levels for the scheme are high
- Though percentage uptake has remained reasonably consistent between 2006-2009, numbers of children taking up a place on the Hotfoot scheme have declined. The reasons for this are uncertain but contributory factors may be the enforced move of one site from a popular location to a less popular one, and the effects of the recession on parental decisions.
- Actual expenditure on the scheme has decreased in 2009; while income has risen slightly. The expenditure has decreased as a result of efficiency measures while income has risen slightly as a result both of increased funding obtained from alternative sources and higher fee levels for those who pay the full rate. Alternative sources of funding are actively sought however they are generally given on a single year basis and as such often cannot be guaranteed from year to year. Fee levels appear to remain competitive and there are increased levels of targeted financial support to help many of those who need it to access the scheme.
- Supporting community playschemes provides a useful way to help extend them beyond the urban area and a cost effective way for the council to support schemes that are able to access the majority of their funding from other sources but need an element of working matched funding (e.g. in Park Wood).

7. Recommendations

As a consequence of the review it is recommended that:-

- i. The Cabinet Member formally endorses the objectives and purpose of the scheme as set out in the report i.e. 'to promote the personal and social development of children with a particular focus on the child's role in respect of the wider community of Maidstone'.
- ii. Further work be undertaken as part of the parental evaluations of the 2010 scheme in order to provide empirical evidence on the reasons for the apparent decline in children taking up places on the Hotfoot programme.
- iii. The Cabinet Member consider the appropriate level of subsidy and the options in respect of the future provision of the Hotfoot play scheme outlined below:-

- To continue with existing provision with increased marketing in order to increase numbers. This option contains considerable risks, as there will be increased marketing costs with no guarantee of significantly increased numbers on the scheme.
- To offer Hotfoot on a reduced level, to more closely match supply of places with current demand. If the total number of places were reduced by 1000 (approximately 20%) to meet current demand, then this would be likely to save approximately £3500. Alternatively, if the Hotfoot summer programme were to be reduced to 3 weeks at all sites this would save the council £3000 net per annum and staggered starts for different sites to cover more of the summer period could be considered. There is a risk that the current level of demand for 2009 is anomalous and that the level of demand in 2010 will be closer to the demand for 2008.
- To offer a series of one-off activities instead of the Hotfoot programme. While such a programme could be tailored to meet the funding available, the numbers benefiting from this option up are likely to be limited due the specialised nature of each activity, possible associated transport issues and the need for a parental presence in some circumstances.
- To increase support for the development of new community play schemes as an alternative (or partial alternative) to Hotfoot. This would in theory improve capacity to take up places that otherwise would have been offered by the Hotfoot scheme (see above). Such a course of action would need to take into account associated quality and quality assurance issues as community play schemes can be of variable quality. Therefore it is recommended that a more detailed evaluation of community play schemes funded by the council is undertaken in 2010. Play schemes have to be registered with, and inspected by Ofsted, which has increasingly robust requirements and professional expectations. There is a risk that sufficient suitable community groups would not be found to develop and sustain good quality community play schemes in the areas currently covered by Hotfoot.
- To cease to offer the Hotfoot play scheme from 2010. This would save the council £9,531 on 2009 figures excluding officer time and recharges. Were the council to take this course of action without putting anything in place as an alternative there is a risk that there would be insufficient provision locally to enable all the children affected to access an alternative scheme. It is likely to prove unpopular with the public and will further disadvantage children who have been recently targeted for support to access the scheme.