

# The West Partnership presents:

## St Rochs Primary, Glasgow City Council

### Supporting families during lockdown



*The storyboard details how the team at St Rochs in Glasgow supported vulnerable families during lockdown. We hear how the school provided support to those living in high rise residential areas in the North of the city.*

## What was the problem?

St Rochs primary is situated in the Royston area in the north of Glasgow. Many of the school's families reside in the area's high rise residential buildings. Families living in such accommodation often have English as an additional language and may need enhanced support in communicating key information. The unprecedented nature of the pandemic meant that uncertainty was widespread - especially amongst those with English as an additional language. The experience on the ground was that many of these families were anxious of leaving the buildings.



## Why is this important?

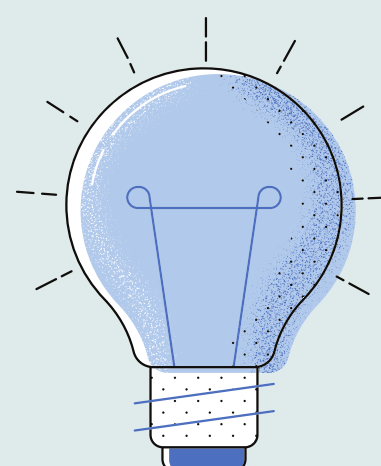
Fears around the virus, and in particular its impact on ethnic minority groups, meant that anxieties around going outdoors had grown. This meant that families were becoming increasingly isolated within the flats. Getting outside was important for the children to have safe outdoor play. Being outdoors was also important for the mental health of all in the family.



## Aims of the change to practice

The project had a number of aims:

- 1) To support families to feel safe in playing outside
- 2) To provide a space to understand the needs of families and to signpost appropriate support



## What did you do?

Prior to the pandemic, the team at St Rochs had built positive relationships with families living in high rise accommodation. These existing relationships were important links that brought to the fore these families needs. During the early stages of the pandemic, these channels of communication allowed the team to identify a growing fear of going outside amongst their families. Using Whatsapp and mobile phones the team gathered feedback from their families and decided to design opportunities for socially distanced play in the school playground. In order to comply with the wide public health regulations present at the time, the team decided to create distanced play stations in the school playground. The large space was offered to a single family at any one time, and the sessions were to last 45 minutes. The purpose of the sessions were to give the children an opportunity to engage in playful learning whilst parents could talk to staff about any concerns/needs they had. The team made up individual play bags that were to be used during the sessions.

## What happened?

Although the sessions were initially popular, a few families needed extra encouragement to leave their flats and join in. They were run every Tuesday and Thursday. The team quickly realised that to many families, the time at the school was the only chance they had to put into practice their developing English skills. Feedback from families was positive, with one noting that it was 'comforting to know that someone was there'. During the first lockdown, 12 families engaged repeatedly in the play sessions. In the summer, when regulations had been reduced, the team provided play sessions where 4 families could attend at once. In these summer sessions 37 families attended. The team benefitted from a number of partner organisations, who helped with resources and activities (Glasgow Life, Royston Youth Action, Outside the Box). The team were pleased to find that their sessions supported parents to access external support, such as fuel grants, food vouchers and welfare advice.



## What are the key points you have learnt?

The team have identified a number of key points from their change to practice. Firstly, it became quickly apparent that issues around poverty and deprivation caused further complexity in the response to the pandemic. Secondly, the team realised that the effectiveness of their intervention was in part a product of positive relationships that had been developed prior to COVID19. Had these positive links between school and community been absent, the task of communicating with families would have been harder. Thirdly, the team recognised the importance of collaborative working. The partnerships involved meant that a relatively simple intervention could have a big impact on the families involved.



## What next for the project?

The team intends on continuing their efforts to provide safe spaces for play and signposting. The team have also considered how the impact of the play station events could be used elsewhere in the school. The team are considering using the same set up as a transitions activity for their P1 families. Irrespective of the participants, the team aims to continue building positive school-home links with their families.

