



Subject:	ParkLife Education Programme - Evaluation
Date:	3 December 2019
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services Department
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of the report is to update Members on the ParkLife Education Programme and in particular, present for their consideration and agreement, an evaluation undertaken of the Programme in 2018/19 by Queen's University Belfast (QUB).
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ note the contents of the report and the continued success of the ParkLife Education Programme;▪ consider and endorse the ParkLife Evaluation report including key findings and recommendations; and▪ support the related publicity and the sharing of the learning from the Programme.

3.0	Main report
	<p data-bbox="272 226 421 255"><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p data-bbox="165 327 1445 658">3.1 The ParkLife Education Programme uses and promotes the Council’s parks and open spaces as a resource for outdoor learning. The Programme has been in operation since 2007 and is delivered under contract, by Ulster Wildlife, along with Council staff. The Programme has three main elements: schools, Saturday Clubs and community groups. In 2016, QUB was commissioned as external evaluators to examine the effectiveness of the school element of the Programme, establish an evidence base for the benefits of outdoor learning as well as help guide the future delivery of the Programme.</p> <p data-bbox="165 730 1465 1010">3.2 The findings from the 2016/17 evaluation indicated that the ParkLife Education Programme was a positive experience for the children who attended it, should be regarded as an example of good practice and the findings should be widely publicised. The report recommended that the evaluation should be repeated at a later date to increase the sample size, build a larger evidence base and include a qualitative study with focus groups, to enable a deeper analysis of their understanding of the Programme and its impact on them.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1081 1422 1211">3.3 The findings from the report were subsequently publicised and a launch took place in February 2018 and copies of the evaluation report were circulated widely including to all schools involved with the Programme.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1283 1461 1615">3.4 A second evaluation of the Programme was therefore undertaken by QUB in 2018/19 and many of the same measures were used, to enable comparability between both evaluations. The Primary outcomes were that as a result of taking part in the Programme, the children will:</p> <ul data-bbox="272 1485 1078 1615" style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ spend more time engaging with nature in their local parks; ▪ have learned more about their local park; and ▪ be more connected to nature. <p data-bbox="165 1686 1422 1921">3.5 The Secondary outcomes were that, as a result of taking part in the Programme, the children will:</p> <ul data-bbox="272 1787 1422 1921" style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ have more positive attitudes towards and awareness of environmental sustainability; ▪ have more positive attitudes to learning outdoors; and ▪ rate their health and well-being as higher.

3.6	<p><u>Key Findings</u></p> <p>The evaluation was undertaken between September 2018 and June 2019 in eight schools. 171 children completed an on-line pre-programme and post-programme questionnaire and twelve children from two schools took part in two focus groups.</p>
3.7	<p>The evaluation presents robust evidence that the Programme has a positive impact for all of the outcomes measured and continues to be a positive experience for the children who attended it. In summary, the post programme questionnaire and focus groups indicated that the children, after their involvement in the Programme:</p> <p>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ spend more time in their local parks either on their own, with family or with their teacher and take part in a wider range of activities ▪ show a substantial improvement in their level of knowledge of their local park and were more positive about their connection and enjoyment of nature and attitudes to environmental sustainability; ▪ were more positive about learning outdoors and approximately 60% responses included about feeling 'happy', 'good', 'fun' 'amazing/amazed' or that they 'love/like' learning outdoors; ▪ were generally more positive in their responses relating to their perception of their health and well-being; ▪ enjoyed learning outdoors (93%) which is the same result as the 2016/17 cohort of children and they mentioned how fun the Programme was, how much they learned/enjoyed specific activities and/or learning about/being in nature/outdoors; ▪ were less worried about learning outdoors by the time they had finished the Programme; ▪ when asked for ideas on how they would teach outdoors, their responses reflected how the ParkLife Education programme is currently taught. The most popular suggestions were 'learn/explore nature, have time in the play park after the learning, learn how to look after/protect nature, explore beyond the park and visit the park more as well as keeping ParkLife activities the same'. <p>A copy of the evaluation report is included in Appendix A.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>Based on the positive findings presented, the benefits of the Programme are strengthened further as this is the second evaluation of the Programme which are akin to the 2016/17</p>

	<p>evaluation and is also supported by evidence from the focus groups. The report recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the Programme continues to be delivered in its current model to as many schools as possible so that more children can benefit; ▪ there should be a scaling up of the Programme throughout other areas/countries together with a further in-depth evaluation, such as a trial (with a control group) and a process evaluation; and ▪ the Council should consider sharing this best practice with other organisations throughout Northern Ireland and beyond. <p>3.9 <u>Next Steps</u></p> <p>Given the significant findings from this second evaluation, it is important that the ParkLife Education Programme continues in its current format and for the new contract which is being procured for its delivery, from 1 April 2020, is awarded.</p> <p>It is paramount that the benefits of outdoor learning as exemplified in the Programme are also communicated widely, as best practice. It is therefore proposed that a seminar will take place in Spring 2020 to promote the Programme, the value of outdoor learning and the wider benefits of increasing usage of our parks and improving physical and mental health.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>3.10 The annual budget for the ParkLife Education Programme has been allocated in the revenue estimates which is subject to final agreement in the departmental budgetary process.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>3.11 There are no known implications.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Report for Belfast City Council: An Evaluation of the ParkLife Education Programme 2018 -19