

A BETTER SPACE: MILTON GARDENS

Who's the Expert?
2019 CONFERENCE

The journey so far...

What a difference 2 years can make to a little park in the Milton ward. When a parent brought her concerns about the park to a Parent Forum, the Engagement Team said let's see what we can do to support parents to bring about some small changes. That conversation at that Parent Forum sparked energy and enthusiasm in a few parents who knew and used the park, but how could they possibly make a difference?

The Engagement Team connected parents at regular meetings with the Southend-on-Sea Borough Council - Parks Department and Southend Police Force. The parents received feedback from surveys they carried out with park users which was fed back to these meetings. Together, as the A Better Space team, we then had an opportunity to apply for CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funding, which gave us another massive boost to make real physical improvements to the park. Something very special happened - a relationship was built and improvements were happening alongside the pots of funding coming in. Parent volunteers were happy to litter pick, paint existing statues and gates and clean graffiti off existing play equipment. The Parks Department supported the project by responding to the feedback from the surveys, cutting back shrubbery to improve the visibility across the park, repairing playground surfaces and replacing damaged play equipment. They also installed two new pieces of play equipment. Parents now find themselves discussing problems and finding solutions, listening and learning as they go.

A model for the future...

We now have a name (A Better Space), we have a logo, and we have an email address. By receiving local support and funding from Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, Make Southend Sparkle, Folk like Us, The Balmoral Community Centre and the Co-op in Hamlet Court Road we have been able to work with local Artist Dave Taylor to create mosaics either side of the main gates, to produce two new animal/insect statues to add to the nature trail and a large butterfly shaped insect hotel. We are also looking forward to seeing the arrival of three nature information boards, three replacement waste bins and raised flower beds very soon. We will have a site safe, which will contain litter pickers, gardening equipment, health and safety guidelines and a first aid kit. We are still in the process of having many conversations regarding training and the future.

The aspirations for A Better Space are that no matter how big or small the community space is; it will always have the potential to be A Better Space for everyone. Its ideas are more about the community and what that space can offer them. We have seen some wonderful nature inspired engagement events take place at Milton Gardens. To be able to bring this to the doorstep of many families is a wonderful feeling, encouraging physical and mental wellbeing for families, their children and hopefully the local community.

What happens next? I guess you will just have to watch this space!!!

"It's great to have the opportunity to work with the local community and parents to find out how they use the space, what they would like to see, what they would like there and to ensure that the park is delivering what they would like." - Paul Jenkinson, Parks Manager, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council



My Space - Is Your Space - Is Our Space

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Poster co-produced by Parent Champions & Hayley (SAVS)

