

Flo's - The Place in the Park

A social enterprise run by local people for local people

Play – Eat – Make – Work – Learn



Business plan - Three years to 2020

A proposal from Aspire working with a local Stakeholder Steering Group to incubate a new locally owned, managed and run Centre for Children and Families and social enterprise



Trusted.

Aspire has strong relationships with a wide network of local partners and customers across the commercial, public and third sectors in Oxfordshire.



Contents

	Pages
Section 1: Overview	4-8
Section 2: Detailed Proposal	9-28
Appendix 1: Projected Income From Enterprises	29-31
Appendix 2: Profit and Loss Forecast	32-33
Appendix 3: Stakeholder Steering Group (biographies)	34-37

Flo's – The Place in the Park

A social enterprise run by local people for local people

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

1.1 A dedicated centre for local children & families

At the heart of the vision behind this proposal is a dedicated centre for children and families from the local area. 'Flo's – The Place in the Park' will provide the space and services that are essential for early years' development and support for parents and carers. A new model of cooperative childcare nursery will, in its first year, create an additional 24 full-time equivalent places for 2-4 year olds in the catchment area, including the free early education entitlements and at least 8 places for 2 year olds; access to the health & midwifery services; and open-access children's services and drop-in sessions to complement other services provided in the area. We are also working with two other local parent-run initiatives with capacity to expand the childcare places locally. Once established, we will work to develop further childcare places within the community. We are working closely with The Children's Allotment, Oxford City Council's preferred provider for The Whitehouse Project site close by to Florence Park, and the Twiglets group at Barracks Lane Community Gardens. 'Flo's – The Place in the Park' has the capacity to support these two projects to develop a further 32 registered childcare places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds in years 2 and 3. This will potentially create 56 childcare places in the locality.

Flo's will also look at providing places for children with disabilities (a priority in the Council's Childcare Sufficiency report) and is well placed to work with local schools (particularly Larkrise) and offer wrap around and holiday care to their children to meet the needs of working parents, including the 30 hour offer for 3 and 4 year olds. Other family-centred services that will be offered alongside the community café, and in partnership with the community midwives and other partners, will include Stay and Play, parenting classes, healthy eating demonstrations and classes, natural crafts and activities in the park.

1.2 Diverse income generation activities

It is important that Flo's thrives in the long-term, provides open-access children services and is financially sustainable without requiring on-going funding from the County or City Councils. Therefore, diverse income-generating activities that relate to and support families and the vision for Flo's are also at its

core, such as the nursery, café, crafting and retail, meeting places and flexible workspaces. These resources will be targeted towards community groups associated with families and community-building across the different constituents of the catchment area.

The Café situated next to the main community space and drop-in area will provide a healthy, welcoming cafe, meeting and making space and will also provide the meals for the nursery. The City Council has also confirmed that it would not expect Flo's to underwrite any loss from the existing San Remo café contract within the park.

Flo's will also be responsible for fundraising through applications to the Big Lottery, Oxfordshire Community Foundation and local and regional trusts and foundations, and by organising community fundraising events. Flo's will also be able to receive donations from families benefiting from its services. The income generated from such activity will enable further investment to develop and sustain the community enterprise.

One source of early phase investment will be through the issuing of community shares in a community benefit society set up for the purpose of overseeing the community enterprise hub management and delivery. This will be through crowdfunding targeted at the local community. (For an example of a similar project, see the investment crowdfund run by Future Wolverton - <https://www.ethex.org.uk/oldschoolwolverton>)

This combination of multiple income sources will create a flagship model for service delivery, which will bring recognition to the County, external funding and encourage local ownership and engagement of volunteers.

1.3 Community Engagement: Alignment to 'Oxfordshire Together' and strong community support.

Flo's is powerfully aligned to the Oxfordshire Together vision. As a community we have proved we are willing to 'go the extra mile' to ensure that Flo's remains open-access and community-owned, with demonstrated high levels of engagement in campaigning, over 1500 signatures on the petition in support of the bid.

There is a strong and talented group of individuals who have already committed their time and energy as members of a Stakeholder Steering Group to oversee the development of these proposals and as potential future board members (see Appendix 2). This group is already meeting regularly and has been involved in talking to officers, councilors and community groups, as well as local parents, in the development of these proposals. The Stakeholder Steering Group have demonstrated their willingness to put voluntary time into getting it up and running, fundraising for additional special projects and governing it in the long term. Aspire will continue to work with this steering group to incubate and establish a new model of governance to ensure that resources generated are invested in community benefit.

And as an indication of local support and interest, at the recent Elder Stubbs Festival, opposite the building in the park, our proposal attracted over 45 offers of volunteering support from local people in just one afternoon (see below). This adds to a wider group of local people who have expressed interest and commitment to be further involved.

We have also undertaken initial consultation with community groups and individuals and have the in-principle initial support for our proposals from the following local organisations:

- Staff at the Children's Centre
- Oxfordshire Parenting Forum
- Oxford City Farm
- Good Food Oxford
- Members of Florence Park Community Centre
- Local schools (Larkrise, Oxford Spires)
- Ark T Centre
- Community Action Groups (Oxford County Council)
- Oxford City Council Officers
- Councillors (City and County)
- Oxfordshire Mind and Age UK
- Elder Stubbs
- The community Midwives currently still based at the centre

There are ongoing discussions with other local organisations including Restore, OXPIP, Broken Spoke, Community Midwives, staff at Helen House Hospice, local schools and anyone else we are aware of that might have an interest in use of the building.

1.4 Volunteers

We will create new volunteering opportunities for local people, and plan for our volunteer base to increase to 20 by Year 3. Volunteers will be coordinated by the respective managers of each of the business units (Nursery, Café, and Retail). The current FPCC website and email and local campaign has already attracted a large number of people offering support. For example, at the recent Elder Stubbs Festival alone (22 August 2017), volunteer sign-up to our proposal included:

- 10 offers with experience in Early years/teaching, children centres, child-minding and play-groups, including music, baby signing and training staff
- 3 offers with skills/experience in healthy eating, organic and local produce, horticulture workshops
- 3 offers with skills in fundraising
- 5 offers with skills in communications/social media, web-development and marketing

We also have offers of specialist support in safeguarding, social work, counselling, administration, community engagement and legal advice, as well as parents and carers who have used/want to use the building.

These offers demonstrate the wealth of community assets, goodwill and energy that already exists in this diverse neighbourhood, which is ready to be tapped into.

1.5 Diverse Community

The former catchment area for Florence Park Children's Centre is a diverse community from a wide range of ethnic, cultural and faith backgrounds it contains pockets of high levels of economic deprivation. We are keen to ensure that this is reflected initially in the Stakeholder Steering Group, the future governance structure and as providers and beneficiaries of the services provided. Associates involved in the project have a very strong track record in engaging with families from all backgrounds. For example, our work at Barracks Lane has included working with Asian families to build an outdoor tandoor which is regularly used for community festivals and events and 'migration of plants and peoples' projects with unaccompanied asylum seekers at Oxford Spires School. We recognize that Aflah Nursery has expressed interest in this centre, and we would hope to work with them, amongst others, and gain their support to offer community services for families who use their childcare provision from the Muslim community.

1.6 Partnership working and local employment

With so many locals involved in running the centre for the wider community, we aim to work in partnership with local groups to build a responsive service, with high levels of quality. We have talked to many community groups who are all interested in providing services from 'Flo's – The Place in the Park'.

With the addition of the café and flexible working space, we see this as a key opportunity to trade services and generate local employment opportunities in the running of the services, in supporting local groups and social entrepreneurs, and expand the quantity and quality of community work that will take place. We will have a particular commitment for those on the margins of employment.

1.7 Sustainability, physical and mental health and making the most of the park setting

There is significant research that demonstrates the positive cognitive, emotional, behavioural and social benefits of learning outdoors in the natural environment - <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fr0112forestschooolsreport.pdf>. There are also known physical and health benefits of increased activity and access to green space <http://www.nhsforest.org/oxford-health-nhs-trust>. Children need to have a greater connection with the nature and where their food comes from in order for the next generations to reduce their environmental impact and develop more sustainable communities.

The proposed service provision puts enhanced engagement with the environment at its core, using the park setting, through play in nature, through healthy eating, through use of food that would otherwise be wasted, and, we hope, through many other green initiatives. We are exploring initiatives with Wild Oxfordshire and with partners bidding for the Sport England Families Fund.

SECTION 2: DETAILED PROPOSAL

2.1 Our Beliefs

- Play** We believe play is the essence of creative learning. Play enables tension to be released and deep level learning to take place. We want children to learn through play in their early years and we want all generations to relax and spend enjoyable time together in the wonderful park and Flo's nurturing presence at its heart.
- Eat** We believe in eating food that is healthy, using locally sourced, fresh ingredients and minimising waste. We believe that food brings people together. We want to provide places where families can come together and get involved in food – learn about ingredients and cooking, enjoy eating together and feel nourished on all levels.
- Make** We believe in each child and adult's creative potential. We want to create an environment as well as products that entice people to want to use their hands as well as their heads to create beautiful things from natural resources.
- Work** We believe in helping finding people find core purpose and meaning in the work they do and bringing work, values and desired lifestyle into balance
- Learn** We believe in lifelong learning from cradle to grave. We believe learning should be relevant and fun. Wherever possible we create opportunities to learn outdoors, using the elements and the nature around us.

2.2 The Florence Park Building (History)

Florence Park Children's Centre was decommissioned in February 2017 due to lack of government funding. Our proposal, presented in outline here, revitalizes the Centre, creates new childcare places, and develops the centre for community interest and creativity, founded in strong values of learning, wellbeing, social inclusion and responsibility for others and the environment.

Space currently includes a crèche room, a very large community drop-in room, a meeting room and various office spaces, including one room currently occupied by the community midwives.

The building is well equipped and located in the middle of a beautiful park, perfectly situated to establish a space, where the community can come together to play, eat, make, work and learn together - engaging 'head, heart and hands' across generations.

2.3 Our vision

Our **vision** is to create a financially viable and sustainable centre for childcare, community and creativity. It will be a welcoming space that is founded on values of learning, wellbeing, social inclusion and responsibility for others and the environment. We do not attempt to replicate the old children's centre model of service but to offer a vibrant new model from which innovation can grow.

This business plan outlines the products and services, infrastructure and resources, income generation and funding required to achieve our vision of a centre which can deliver much needed children's services to the community based upon a sustainable model of financial independence.

The Nursery, Café and Retail elements will be run as separate micro-enterprises, and contribute to all building costs and services, shared administrative and cleaning costs. All three business units will operate according to the same ethical guidelines, but will have responsibility for their own policies to meet statutory regulations (food hygiene, Ofsted standards, safeguarding etc). The agreement between the centre management and each business unit will require adherence to common branding, values and ethical guidelines around inclusion, equal opportunities, environmental impact.

2.4 Activities and enterprise strands

We have developed a proposition with a number of activities and enterprise strands that are complementary and mutually supporting. These are:

- a) **The Nursery.** Initially a 24 place nursery geared to meet the needs of local parents. We have conducted our own market research that indicates that there are surplus places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds at Donnington Doorstep, Larkrise, Comper and other local providers, but that there is a dearth of holiday care and childcare for 1 year olds and children with disabilities. We will work with the County's childcare sufficiency team and with other local providers to respond to the delicate and change balance of childcare supply and demand in the area.

We will ensure that our childcare and early education provision is led by experienced early childhood practitioners and with substantial outdoor and forest school experience. We will provide much needed childcare places with a nature-orientated pedagogy combining creativity with making the most of the natural surrounding of the park, and extending this within our family learning and holiday offer. We are in conversation with two other local parent run groups – The Children's Allotment and Twiglets who are keen to develop further nature orientated childcare provision and expand places on The Whitehouse Project site and Barracks Lane Community Garden. 'Flo's – The Place in the Park' has the capacity to support these two projects to develop a further 32 registered childcare places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds in years 2 and 3. This will potentially create 56 childcare places in the locality.

There are several examples of successful, parent-led childcare cooperatives in London and Cambridge, as well as more developed networks abroad in New Zealand, Canada, Sweden and America. There has recently been research conducted by the New Economics Foundation (NEF)¹, Cooperatives UK and Impact Hub which has highlighted the affordability, higher levels of parental choice and engagement, as well as positive child socialisation and attainment associated with “co-produced childcare”. Impact Hub is soon to launch an online platform to support the logistical organisation of a childcare coop, which would provide a valuable resource. In most operating cooperatives, paid staff time is supplemented by volunteer hours donated by parent coop members in proportion to their child's attendance. This means that staff costs are lower than at competitors, so parental fees are lower than comparable nurseries in the same area. In many cases parents unable to make up the time commitment are able to pay slightly higher fees to cover extra staff capacity.

- b) **Family and Community Support.** The main drop-in space will be co-located within the café space offering ongoing open access to parents wanting to Stay and Play during Flo's daily opening hours. Flo's will therefore provide ongoing daily open access provision to families locally – a warm, welcoming space where they can get advice and support from peers as well as specialist information when needed. This model has yet to be tried and tested anywhere in the county as far as we are aware – but we believe new approaches are essential in a time of reduced public and grant spending power. We will also work with the midwives, health visitors, and partner organisations to offer a range of tailor made session on topics such as healthy and affordable eating, play ‘on a shoestring’ and outdoor activities. We will offer a minimum of at least 2 specialist-led sessions per week. We expect to reach at least 200 parents within the first year.

More specialist parent courses training will be offered with partner organisations using the bookable training room. We are talking to the midwives about their continued use of office space, a clinic room within the centre and the potential to offer open information sessions to expectant parents.

- c) **Workspace and social space hire.** As more people want to work closer to home and integrate work with a less stressful lifestyle, hire of desk space and rooms for flexible use becomes more attractive. We will generate income through letting rooms and desks to community groups, freelancers and organisations. Part of this will be negotiating a new deal with the midwives for their preferred space within Flo's and talking to other groups who have already expressed an interest in being co-located there. We will also generate income from letting the Café and community space for functions when it is not open to the public.

- d) **Workshops and courses.** We will develop a programme of courses, including professional development, early education, nature connection, mindfulness, stress reduction, healthy eating and crafts – using natural and locally sourced resources and making the most of the green environment of the park.
- e) **The Café and Community hub.** The café will be set up with the advice and support of a local business owner on a tenant basis providing main meals and snacks for the nursery and healthy food for staff, professionals and the general public on a drop in basis, in beautiful calm surroundings with a focus on nurture, welcome for all, health and wellbeing. We have discussed the ethos of the project and the need for profits to support the wider running of the centre, social impact and other services.
- f) **Retail sales.** Revenue from sales of craft supplies and natural play materials with a local ethical provenance. Flo's will host demonstrations and workshops and sell 'DIY' craft kits and materials – locally sourced and with minimal impact on the environment.

2.5 Social impact: The project will provide wide-ranging benefits and outcomes in our community and will provide:

- A continued friendly place for the parents and carers who currently use the centre
- Space for learning and training to boost employability and life skills
- A focal point for the community to meet, play, eat, make, work and learn together
- Improvement of the local environment with a friendly, open space for all
- Work and meeting space for local businesses and home-workers
- A route to market for small local producers of craft materials
- Childcare for local families with a focus on play and connection with nature and the outdoors, supporting Oxfordshire County Council's sufficiency of childcare places
- Local jobs working in the nursery and the community hub and cafe
- Any profit goes back into improving the community
- Targeted projects for the socially isolated and more vulnerable groups

As we build momentum after the reopening, period user and beneficiary numbers will increase over the three years of our plan:

Average number of local beneficiaries and customers per month	2017	2018	2019
Families supported with nursery service (Nursery)	20	46*	100*
Workers using the workspaces/hot desks	6	10	10
Participants in programmes and courses put on by the centre	10	18	20
Customers using the Café and community drop in space (Café)	600	1200	1700
Individuals using the meeting room for community for group events	173	346	346
Customers buying craft products (Retail)	260	520	520

*assumes working with other sites to expand number of parent cooperative childcare places – focus on outdoors

2.6 Links to other strategies and policies

Flo's will support Oxford City Council priorities for a Vibrant and Sustainable Economy, Strong and Active Communities and a Clean and Green Oxford. Our values chime well with the City Council's priorities and will be evident in the way we run services, our welcoming approach, our sourcing of products and produce, the way we manage our waste, our educational ethos and the way we do business. We are already well connected with Low Carbon networks, the Community Action Groups in the City and Good Food Oxford.

2.7 Building development

The building is already well suited to the activities proposed, as many of them are similar in nature. The current Crèche will convert to the Nursery – but work will be needed to create a new secure entrance separating the Nursery from the other activities. External works will also be needed to create a new fence and to open new access ways from the street, the park etc.. Consultation and specifications have been discussed with the Parks and Building Works Departments from the Oxford City Council and estimates are indicated in the costings for the project. We hope that many of the fixtures, fitting and current equipment can form part of the transfer of assets agreement with the County Council.

2.8 External works

In order to open up the building to the wider community we think visibility and access need to be improved through external works to create new gates, pathway and remove excessive shrubbery (including 2 large Leylandi trees which currently obscure the building). We will also need to erect a new dividing fence to ensure the Nursery has secure outdoor space not accessible from the community hub.

2.9 Day to day operations

We have developed enterprise and community activities that are complementary and will use the available space to best effect. There will be crossover between these, and the rooms they take place in whilst providing access for all users to facilities such as the toilets and kitchens.

Managing day-to-day operations will require a centre business manager and administrator who will support all services – workspace, nursery and workshops. They will also take bookings for rentable spaces, events etc. and organise cleaning and security, as well as other premises 'shared services'.

In outline, the operations will run as follows:

- a) **The Nursery** - We will continue to undertake detailed market research to determine gaps in the current local market. Currently we perceive this to be year round provision for 1 and 2 year olds and holiday provision for 3 and 4 year olds. The Nursery will operate as a separate business unit on a tenancy basis. We are talking to experienced providers and also exploring new models of cooperative childcare as described several in other sections

of this proposal. The Nursery will share office/reception and finance services with other services using the building – thus sharing costs and achieving best value for money.

- b) **Workspace hire, meeting rooms and social space hire** - We know that there is the demand for workspace and flexible venues – including continued location of community midwives. Depending on the outcome of these discussions we believe we will have 4 to 5 hot desks (current office space) that we let out on an annual 'package' via the centre administration. These packages will include services such as WiFi and photocopying, confidential phone booth, etc. There will also be priority/reduced rate of meeting room spaces. We will also hire out the meeting room all week and the meeting room and community room for social functions.
- c) **Workshops and programmes** - These will be booked with a booking form/user agreement. This will include details about access, security, cleaning, risk assessments and insurance etc.
- d) **The Café** - The Café will serve breakfast, morning coffees, lunch and afternoon teas. It will be open 7 days a week between 9 am to 5pm, or 9am to 7 pm, depending on the season. It will provide healthy lunches for nursery children and other users of Flo's. It will also be a draw, bringing many more users to enjoy the park. The menus will be vegetarian, healthy, using local ingredients and minimising waste. The Café will operate within the ethos of community benefit and creating local employment.
- e) **Retail sales** - Part of the community hub/café space will be used to sell craft products and natural play materials. There will be regular craft demonstrations and stay and play experiences, (eg make your own play dough). Sales assistants and volunteers will be on hand to help people with their own projects, advise on materials and resources etc. The emphasis will be on empowering parents to develop skills and confidence to create and play with natural materials. Till function could be shared with Café during less busy times.

2.10 Marketing and community engagement

Local need

Florence Park was established in 1934. It is a unique park, being the only estate in Oxford that was gifted such a wonderful area of land to be cultivated for the enjoyment of its residents. As well as the children's centre, current facilities are: tennis courts, mini golf, table tennis, parking facilities, newly refurbished toilets, a brand new play park and older kids park, bowling green, refreshment kiosk and band stand. The park enjoys beautiful flower beds, friendly park gardener, woods and copses to explore, a stream to discover, fields to play in, trees to climb, dens to build, brilliant dog walking, wonderfully designed avenues of trees, changing seasonal beauty, secret stashes of fruit and nuts, breeding frogs and birds including woodpeckers.

This is a vibrant park, ten minutes walk from Cowley Road and Templars Square shopping centre. The children's centre is surrounded by activity with tennis courts, a bowling green and a large well-used public children's play area adjacent. Across the road is a large community allotment area called Elder Stubbs. This is another communal hub with a focus on adult mental health and growing food. It hosts an annual live music festival and many events.

During the summer months, car parking is available within the park, accessed from Rymers Lane. Alternatively on-street parking is available around the park. The 103/104 Heyfordian bus service stops on Rymers Lane. Alternatively numerous buses stop on the Cowley and Iffley Roads, which are both a short walk away.

As well as the families brought to Flo's for the nursery and community hub, we can expect footfall from general public using the park. This will be expected to vary seasonally. Good signage and marketing will be key to attract the shoppers, residents and workers who visit the surrounding area each day as well as local residents and those who work from home.

Targeted marketing will also be made to attract staff at Knights Court, the Oxfordshire County Council staff building for Social and Community Services, which is just a 5 minute walk away. The Cafe will be a space that is family friendly while also being appealing as a meet up point for professionals and to remote workers due to its provision of free WiFi to customers.

We are well connected with Florence Park Community Centre and 'Next Door' the online community network of 841 households in Florence Park area. We will build on this existing network, whilst developing separate but linked Facebook and other social media presence for each of the 3 micro-enterprises at the centre.

The building is not currently visible or accessible to other users of the Park – including the leisure services, tennis courts and playground. Flo's will work closely with Oxford City Council to integrate activities and encourage more visitors to the park. This will require some reconfiguration of external fencing, planting and signage/visibility from the road and the park.

Our market research shows a growing demand for high quality childcare, healthy eating, and artisan skills and products. The Centre aims to become self-sustaining within 3 years, with the potential to offer a model 'urban' for other city centre communities around parks.

More specifically, the market and demand for our activity and enterprise strands is as follows:

a) The Nursery – Demand for Childcare

The Government funds all 3 and 4 year olds for an entitlement to 15 hours of free nursery education/childcare through the national Nursery Education Funding Scheme. The [Nursery Education Funding terms and conditions \(pdf format, 415Kb\)](#) sets out the rights and responsibilities of the council and

providers being funded for Early Education places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. For the new Nursery to be eligible to take funded places, it will be required to confirm each time they claim Nursery Education funding that they accept the terms and fully comply with Oxfordshire's [nursery education funding scheme](#).

The government is also expanding the number of funded places for 2 year olds on offer. It is also extending the free childcare entitlement to 30 hours per week for some families from September 2017.

Approximately 2,000 two-year-olds in Oxfordshire are entitled to free early education. That is around 40% of the two year old population. There is strong evidence that high quality early education makes a positive difference to young children. The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education study found that high quality early education has particularly strong impacts on the cognitive and social development of children, and that these benefits last throughout primary school. Providers accepting funded two-year-old children need to be judged good or better in their most recent Ofsted inspection.

- [Requirement framework for settings wishing to offer places to funded two year olds \(pdf format, 238Kb\)](#)
- [Self assessment checklist for settings wishing to offer places to funded two year olds \(pdf format, 208Kb\)](#)
- [Guidance on claiming funding this term \(pdf format, 215KB\)](#)

From September 2017, the government will introduce an additional 15 hours a week of free childcare for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds. Draft statutory guidance, including eligibility criteria, is available on the [DfE website](#).

Current Oxfordshire Childcare Sufficiency data from Oxfordshire County Council suggests that there is a significant demand for new places in this area. Our local knowledge and on the ground evidence is that this is for very specific gaps only. (Under 2s and after school and holiday care). We have been in touch with Donnington Doorstep, Little Troupers, Comper, Larkrise and local parents. Many of them have vacancies, including slow take up of additional 2 year old places created at Donnington Doorstep Preschool. We are keen to ensure that we are not setting up surplus provision that will undermine existing provision in the area. We will work closely with other providers and with County Council sufficiency officers to fine tune our offer over the initial set up period.

We will establish an initial 24 places within the current nursery room at Flo's, as this can be done without compromising the enterprise and community engagement essential to our model. We are talking to two other groups and could expand places in the area on other sites should demand in the first year warrant this approach.

b) Workspace and Social hire - (desk space and room hire)

There is a growing trend for people to seek work closer to home, where they can leave their cars and stressful commutes behind and walk or bike. Flo's will pair work with health, creativity and leisure - <http://www.gensler.com/design-forecast-2015-the-future-of-workplace>. Flo's will meet a trend towards more local working and wanting to connect to nature and recreation for wellbeing and mental health. Examples of other let-able work space hubs include the Old Music Hall in Cowley (local), and this one in Putney, London - <http://www.third-door.com/> - which combines workspaces with childcare packages. However, places are limited and may be taken up by just one or two co-located local organisations, including the community midwives. There is a need for affordable room hire across Oxford for training courses, work based meetings etc. Our room rates will be competitive with similar spaces in the area. However we expect the main use of these rooms to be for community groups with hot desks in the centre, for staff meetings and training, for workshops for early years teachers and for parenting courses, mindfulness etc.

We know that there is high demand for room hire locally and for good venues for children's parties and other social functions.

c) Workshops and programmes

We are confident we will be able to fill a programme of regular workshops and training for children, adults, teachers and parents on various topics related to creativity, parenting, health, Learning through Nature, and Wellbeing.

d) The Cafe

There is a growing demand for cafés serving affordable, healthy and mostly vegetable based diets. The number of vegetarians and vegans is growing. Several cafés catering for this market have opened around the Cowley Road over the last couple of years, but there is little competition currently for this market in the Florence Park area. We have talked to local residents who support the idea. Will Pouget runs several successful food outlets in Oxford City and has a food production company close to the park. He will manage this business and is confident in the market and keen to support a local community initiative.

e) Retail Sales and Crafting

“Britain’s craft boom produces new model artisan army” – last year’s Guardian article reports figures compiled last year by the Crafts Council, showing there were 11,620 craft businesses in the UK, with 43,000 employees. The overall value of craft skills to the British economy last year was £3.4bn. Our local networks tell us there will be high demand for a place where local crafters and hobbyists can buy high quality and ethically sourced materials. Where local residents can ‘knit and natter’, use a sewing machine, and get help and advice with a project. In 2016, local community interest company The Nature Effect ran a successful programme of craft workshops for socially isolated groups funded by the Big Lottery. We believe crafting helps reduce social isolation. Annie Warburton, the Crafts Council’s creative programme director, said: “At one level our lives are increasingly virtual. The return to making and working with our hands is in part a reaction to that. There’s also an increased awareness of provenance. People are aware of the ethics of where things come from and how they are produced. Then there is the sense of wellbeing that comes with making things yourself”

Competition and other provision

We have investigated local provision for each activity and enterprise strand:

a) The Nursery

Oxfordshire childcare and the early education market is a mixed economy. We have been in touch with local schools, Larkrise (nearest) and St Gregory The Great, which both have nursery classes and with Little Troupers and Donnington Doorstep preschool. Whilst term time places for 2, 3, and 4 year olds appear to be undersubscribed at the moment, we intend to work closely with schools, local PVI settings and with OCC to ensure parents are aware of local choice and to fill gaps in care for children with disabilities, during holidays and after school. Our focus will be a unique early years pedagogy based on the approaches of Reggio Emilia and Forest Schools. We are excited to pilot a new parent cooperative model of childcare and work with other parent led groups in the area to expand overall number of registered childcare places – including new developments in other sites nearby: the children’s allotment and Barracks Lane Community Garden.

b) Workspace Hire

The nearest workplace hubs we are aware of are The Old Music Hall and Oxford Innospace – both Cowley Road and well occupied. We believe we can offer competitive prices and that the unique setting of the park will attract plenty of interest from those wanting to balance work with health, recreation and leisure. Many local residents have office spaces in cabins in their gardens and need a few hours a week of office services, as well as a place to meet and network.

c) Workshops and programmes

We believe we offer a totally unique range of workshops and programmes, linked to the three business units. Festivals, Families, Food, Parenting, Teaching, Crafting, Wellbeing and Nature Connection under one roof – and also under the sky by using the facilities of the Park setting. We also have the capacity and the local knowledge of community groups and the track record to demonstrate that we are able to attract funding and develop additional targeted projects and attract all sectors of the local community.

d) The Cafe

There is a Costa Coffee on the corner of Templars Square. There is also a refreshment kiosk San Remo located right behind the building. We will be offering a very different food range and welcome experience to either of these concessions. There has been a big growth in independent healthy eating cafés around the Cowley Road in the last couple of years with the nearest being Magic Café, Jolly Postboys, Camerado Living Room (ArkT) as well as the successful Wild Honey healthfood shop all in Magdalen Road. The area has becoming increasingly ‘foodie’ and we believe Florence Park community is the new frontier. We are also well known to Good Food Oxford for our food education projects and we will support their aims for affordable food by offering low cost meal options.

e) Retail Sales for natural play materials and crafting

No local competition. The popular ‘Fibreworks’ closed down in Cowley Road a couple of years ago due to the proprietor’s ill health, and is much missed by local crafters. There are successful craft shops in North Oxford and the centre of town. We know that crafting is a particularly good way to bring a diverse range of groups and individuals together with a non-judgmental focus to share skills from different nationalities and backgrounds.

2.11 Differentiating our offer

We have the experience, skills and local network to achieve success across the activity and enterprise strands, and recognise the need to differentiate our offer to the local community. Three elements come together to make us unique:

- The Park: our experience of working with the natural benefits of green spaces and communities
- High quality service provision: using quality locally sourced food and materials with wellbeing at heart, nature in mind

- Ethos: offering a welcoming environment to all sectors of the community and across all generations

2.12 Promotion and engagement

We will take different approaches to marketing and engagement for the different activities and enterprises:

- a) **The Nursery:** We will use local networks and also elicit support from the County Children's Information Service and Early Years and Childcare Teams to make our childcare offer available to those with the highest needs. We will also use our local networks through Barracks Lane Community Garden, Mother and Toddler Groups, relevant Facebook groups etc. We would like to launch this in October 2017 with open days etc. with a view to opening in April 2018.
- b) **Community drop-in, workshops and programmes:** We will start with some funded programmes and craft demonstrations that will be free to participants at point of entry along side pop up cafe. We will use networks through Health and the City and County Councils and partnerships of local schools in the City.
- c) **Workspace and Room Hire:** We will use contacts through the local business and community venues. We will advertise the meeting room for hire through web-based sites such as Daily Info and Oxford City Council.
- d) **The Café:** We will leaflet the area, use our social media networks and the reputation of Will Pougets's other concessions in Oxford City. We hope to open the Café in January 2018.
- e) **Retail sales:** We will use our existing networks, and are already booking stalls for the lead up to Christmas to sell our craft kits at local farmers markets and craft fairs. If we get agreement on the lease we will start promoting at these events. We hope to open this with the Café in January 2018.

2.13 Pricing strategy and occupancy assumptions

We have established a pricing strategy based upon a number of elements:

- the costs of delivering an activity or service
- the financial contribution to core costs and overheads
- the pricing of local competition and other provision
- what we believe the market will bear – including offering affordable services to those in most need

Our approach to pricing and occupancy for each of our activity and enterprise strands will be:

- a) **The Nursery:** County rates NEF and Funded 2s plus charges for meals and extras as appropriate and in line with other local nurseries.
- b) **Workshops and programmes:** Our non-grant funded workshops will be offered at delegate day rate £55 for up to 20 people to include refreshments, materials, and trainer fee. We will also run shorter courses for £30 per head for teachers 'twilight' sessions. Room Hire will be offered at an affordable rate to community groups or a delegate rate can be arranged to include refreshments/lunch etc.
- c) **Workspace hire, meeting rooms and social function hire:** There will be at least 6 hirable desk spaces at £250 per month to include hire charge, access to photocopier, WiFi, waste, security running costs etc. 'Oxford Innospace' in OX4 (Magdalen Road) charges £250 per month and has 100% occupancy (August 2017). Social function hire and meeting room assumptions are based on other local similar venue – eg Florence Park Community Association, Sandford Village Hall and Talking Shop.
- d) **The Café:** The café will be incubated and overseen by a very experienced company who currently run the Vaults, the Alpha Bar and Will's deli in Oxford City. They will provide vegetarian meals every day and cater for the nursery and for meetings and functions at the centre. Their menus are reasonably priced and their menus healthy and nutritionally balanced. Annual contribution to Centre's running costs will be around £24,000 per annum.
- e) **Retail sales:** We conservatively estimate sales of an average of 25 units per week in the first year with an average of £5 per transaction. Our products will range from very low cost haberdashery to more high end quality toys and materials.

2.14 Management and people

Aspire will take the executive lead in the first 6 months to help incubate a locally managed governance model. We will draw on local expertise and continue to develop the diversity of our Stakeholders' Steering Group (see Appendix 3). Key tasks in the first 6 months will be to open Flo's under an initial licence to use, execute the business model, establish the community benefit governing board, negotiate the full long term lease arrangement and attract start-up funding and investment.

Aspire will appoint a project manager to lead this work. Our Stakeholder Steering Group will meet every month to monitor progress against the business plan. We have established Key Performance Indicators for the different activity strands such as Nursery occupancy and Café customer numbers, and bookings, and will monitor these as a routine.

2.15 Staff

We will employ a small staff team to provide the day-to-day coordination of activities at Flo's.

- **Flo's Business Manager:** responsible for day-to-day operations at the Centre, finance, contracts including fees for the Nursery and lettings of hot desks
- **Flo's Administrator/receptionist:** responsible for front of house meeting and greeting and some admin support for the Nursery as well as taking bookings and communications for Flo's.
- **Cleaner/caretaker:** responsible for opening up and taking care of the cleaning of the whole building.

The Nursery, Café and Retail elements will be run as separate micro-enterprises and contribute to all building costs and services, shared administrative and cleaning costs. All three business units will operate according to the same ethical guidelines but will have responsibility for their own policies to meet statutory regulations (food hygiene, Ofsted standards, safeguarding etc). The agreement between Flo's management and each business unit will require adherence to common branding, values and ethical guidelines around inclusion, equal opportunities, environmental impact.

2.16 Volunteers

We have had a huge amount of interest in volunteering for this project (see 1.3 and 1.4 for details). We will create new volunteering opportunities for local people, and plan for our volunteer base to increase to 20 by Year 3. Volunteers will be coordinated by the respective managers of each of the business units (Nursery, Café, and Retail). The current FPCC website and email and local campaign has already attracted a large number of people offering support, including over 45 new potential volunteers from Elder Stubbs Open Day on 22 August 2017.

2.17 Finance and funding

Financial sustainability is essential for the long term and we will have complementary income streams that capitalise on the space, heritage of the building and dynamism of the community.

We will generate enterprise income from the following activity areas:

- a) The Nursery:** The Nursery will run as an independent business unit but with shared services including management time, business support and administration. Government funded places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. 24 full time equivalent places.
- b) Workspace hire:**
 - 6 desks @ £250 per month translates to annual income of £16,200 towards premises and central services (at 90% occupancy)
 - Room Lettings: Potential room hire income £648 per week to allow for cheap/free subsidised use by community groups

- Social Space: letting the venue at weekends for social functions generating an income of £13,200 at 60% occupancy levels
- c) **Workshops and programmes:** We conservatively estimate that we will run one workshop per month in the first year with a delegate fee of £55 to include lunch and top quality training and facilitation.
- d) **The Café:** Café pricing is affordable and we anticipate a good footfall as well as providing food for the nursery and for functions. Annual contribution to Centre's running costs £24,000.
- e) **Retail sales:** Conservative assumption of low level sales in the first year as market is tested and product range developed. We have bespoke craft kits and many volunteer crafters who can demonstrate and staff the venue initially.

We have prepared a budget for the next three years. The budget is based upon our experience and research into the financial performance of similar trading enterprises that we have visited and independent advice (see Appendix 1).

We have identified the investment necessary and sources of funding to make our plan happen and these are reflected in the cash flow forecast and financial modeling (see the several spreadsheets within the attached Excel document).

2.18 Financial performance

Income for our activity and enterprise strands will grow over the period of the plan and we have a good understanding of the direct and other costs associated with their delivery. These are cautiously realistic projections in terms of pricing, demand and occupancy rates. We believe that the revenue is likely to be greater. However we want to ensure our services are affordable to all and we are therefore prepared to develop in a slow and steady way and adapt according to needs. This is reflected in the Profit and Loss Summary (Appendix 2) and the attached spreadsheets which underpin it.

2.19 Investment and sources of funding including CAPITAL

To realise the vision for Flo's, we need funding for capital items and working capital to cover running costs whilst revenue grows. The investment requirement is £73,000 and we will source this through grant funding and social enterprise start up investment, including an OCC transition fund. The breakdown of our funding requirement and source of funds is as follows:

Investment Needs	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Internal works to building to meet nursery standards and security and external works to meet health and safety	£29,750	-	-
Working Capital based on upward tapering occupancy levels	£53,149	£10,677	-
Total	£72,899	£10,677	-

Source of funds			
Grant from local charities, lottery etc (St Michaels and All Saints charity and OCF) City Council, donations	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
City Council Children's Centre funding	£15,000	-	-
Transition fund Grant	£12,500	£10,000	£7,500
Crowd funding/share issue	£35,399	-	-
Total	£72,899	£20,000	£17,500

2.20 Making it happen

We have an action plan and team in place to execute our business plan. The Stakeholder Steering Group with Aspire will manage the project and draw on the resources and expertise of other local people as well as attracting external support and investment.

In summary the main areas of activity are:

Yr 1 (from October 2017): £12,500 from Transition Fund

- September 2017: Grant awarded and terms of lease for rent-free short-term licence to occupy 6 month period agreed.
- Early October: Aspire appoints salaried, interim part-time project manager and occupies premises, with support and guidance of the Stakeholder Steering Group to develop the community enterprise model and activities. Start of incorporation process for new community ownership entity ahead of transition phase.
- October to March: family support and drop-in sessions begin in the Florence Park premises – working with other organisations – family craft, Baby Café, family Stay and Play, midwives, etc.
- Early October: detailed scope completed of capital works needed. Detailed business plan with agreement with City Council about the nature of café/refreshment provision that can be provided.
- Mid-late October: Start to engage philanthropic investors and initiate fundraising activities.

- Early November: application submitted to Oxford City Council's 'fund to support the development of children's centres' for capital works. Begin Ofsted Registration of Nursery.
- December: capital works begin on Nursery – advertise offer
- From January 2018: community offerings open in stages, including - Café/open access community meeting place (space for meeting, training and making); Stay and Play and Baby Café session; Community Services (hot desks and meeting rooms, open and available for hire)
- April 2018: The Nature Nursery opens.
- March 2018: Aspire transitions formal responsibilities for premises and activities to newly incorporated community enterprise entity, under direct community ownership and accountability.
- April to September 2018: The new community enterprise entity has an additional 6 month rent free period as it establishes itself, starts to recoup initial investment and the new enterprise and fundraising activities raise income.

Yr 2 (from October 2018): £10,000 from Transition Fund

- Contribution towards salary and on-costs of the part-time project manager for Flo's

Yr 3 (from October 2019): £7,500 from Transition Fund

- Contribution towards salary and on-costs of the part-time project manager for Flo's

2.21 Uncertainty and risk

We have identified areas where there is risk and our business plan reflects our response to these. These relate to setting up as we prepare to take over the building and operating risks as we develop our activities and enterprise provision.

What could go wrong?	What we will do about it
Delays in getting a lease - so no time to secure other investment needed	Constructive engagement with County Council and City Council estates and legal departments
Nursery places don't get filled	Community engagement, advertising, working with OCC early Years and childcare

	teams
Café is underused	Marketing through local engagement and through other businesses
Income doesn't cover expenditure	Financial planning and business advice through Big Potential and other sources of business start up support
Insufficient investment funding raised to proceed	Use our experience and contacts to raise funds or terminate project Potentially undertake a community shares issue to provide start-up capital