



# Business Plan 2024-27

# Introduction from New Ark Manager & Committee Chair

As we celebrate our 50th year (!!)

 we are extremely proud and excited to bring you our **2024-27 Business Plan**, which sets out our key organisational priorities and strategy for continuing to add value to our local community.

Like many charities, New Ark was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, cost of living crisis and escalating fuel bills. It is a testament to the passion and commitment of our dedicated staff, volunteers and supporters that we have been able to continue to deliver invaluable services to children, families, young people and adults of all ages and abilities.

The ongoing cost of living challenges mean that we must continue to seek opportunities to increase our sustainability and secure our future for many years to come. We want to continue to build the numbers of children, young people and adults benefitting from our services and expand the use of our site and facilities to ensure we are running as cost-effectively as possible.

**New Ark's ethos is to provide a safe, caring, adventurous environment for everyone developing skills for life.** In order to maximise the impact we have on the children, families, young people and adults that benefit from our services, we have identified **five key strategic objectives** to focus on which epitomise our core values;

- 1. Excellence in Early Years Provision**
- 2. Supporting Children and Families**
- 3. Inclusive Alternative Curriculum**
- 4. Green Therapy**
- 5. Collaborative Partnerships**



SAM BROWN  
NEW ARK MANAGER



JO CURPHEY  
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE CHAIR



# Our History



New Ark was created in **1974** when local parents set up a play scheme for the neighbourhood children. They started off with a caravan at Oxney Road, which they used as an office and store.

Workmen building the Soke Parkway in **1975** donated their site hut and that was dismantled and rebuilt by parents and children to become New Ark's first Play Centre.



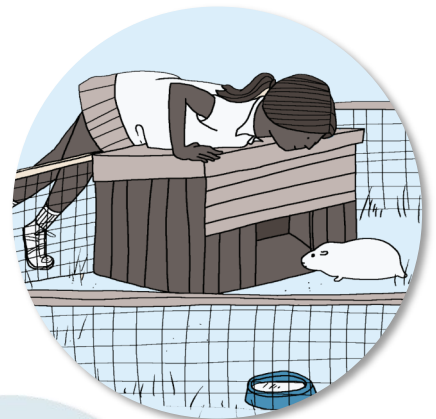
In **1979** funding was secured in the UN International Year of the Child to build New Ark **Adventure Playground** at our current site at Hill Close.

New Ark is a place where children are encouraged to play in ways that are creative, adventurous and explore our world. Play makes life exciting, interesting and fun, and this is why **play is at the heart of everything we do at New Ark.**

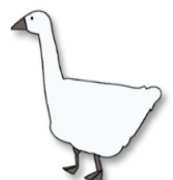


Our **Eco Centre** began in **1983** when Friends of the Earth helped to create a beautiful woodland area and sensory garden. Our children can observe the life cycles of wild creatures and they learn to appreciate the colours, shapes and scents of plants.

Our **City Farm** was created in **1984** with rabbits and guinea pigs, ducks, chickens, and geese, as well as a goat, pig and sheep. It is loved by children, young people and adults of all ages.



New Ark was created by members of the local community 50 years ago and it has brought joy to many generations of children and their families. **There is something for everyone to enjoy at New Ark.**





# Excellence in Early Years Provision

Ofsted have praised the **'unique provision'** offered by New Ark's Preschool and applauded how hard our team work to ensure **our children's feelings, voices and choices are respected**, and they are **encouraged to think critically and use their imagination** as they enjoy playing and exploring our fantastic facilities.

*"Children are confident, articulate and friendly. They enjoy participating in a wide range of activities available to them at this unique provision. For example, they learn about animal care at the on-site farm, nature and exploration at the Eco Centre and managing risks on play equipment in the extensive outdoor area. Parents also appreciate how much these activities benefit all aspects of their children's development." Ofsted, 2021*

We have been welcoming children to our preschool since 1981 and we focus on **making learning fun, building our children's confidence and supporting their social and emotional development**. We encourage our children to experiment, explore and safely take risks in a controlled environment;

*"Children have excellent opportunities to be physically active and engage in risky play, which they learn to manage well. They climb, balance and swing with confidence on challenging physical play equipment, such as high balancing beams and bars." Ofsted, 2020*



At New Ark **we believe very strongly in children's right to play**. Play is a child's natural way of learning about the world, themselves and other people. We know from experience that children need play opportunities that encourage exploration, adventure and enterprise, and **having enough time and space for play increases children's health and happiness**.



*"New Ark offers children a unique and original opportunity to engage in outdoor and indoor play activities in a safe environment with qualified and highly experienced staff who interact with the children at their own level and provide quality care for the children lucky enough to attend New Ark."*

Parent Feedback





We plan our activities and experiences around our children's individual interests and needs, and **provide opportunities for our children to be independent**, such as learning to dress themselves for outdoor play. We seek to build positive relationships with parents and carers, with whom we share regular updates on their child's progress through the use of Tapestry.

We have found that the impact of COVID-19 is still being felt in our children, and **we have increased our focus on social skills, speech and language, and independence skills**, as these are areas which have been less cultivated as a result of lockdown and subsequent COVID-19 Government restrictions.

Our staff are skilled in working with children with a variety of diverse needs and to complement our fantastic outdoor facilities, **we developed a sensory room in our main building**, which was funded through the generosity of our preschool families and local businesses.

Time in a sensory room **helps children improve their visual, auditory and tactile processing, as well as fine and gross motor skills**. By providing a sense of calm and comfort, sensory rooms **help children learn to self-regulate their emotions and behaviours**.

*"Today is my son's last day of preschool and wow what a difference you have made to our Theo! We decided to give up Theo's nursery place and send him here because when I came to view preschool you all seem down to earth and easy to communicate with and people who care.*

*Theo's speech has come on amazingly and what a difference it has made to Theo & to our family and he is one happy boy. Thank you from us all xx"*

Parent Feedback

## **What's Next?**

We saw a decline in our preschool numbers due to the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to work towards a return to full capacity. In support of this **we have extended our enrolment criteria to include two year olds**.



# Supporting Children & Families

New Ark was created by local parents to provide neighbourhood children with a place to play. Over our 50-year history we have continuously increased the volume and variety of services we offer to children and families, and have expanded our provision to include our **Toddler group, Preschool, After-school Club, Holiday Club,** and **Play Support Service.**

We offer a wide range of activities and **prioritise outdoor adventurous play** as well as encouraging our children to **engage with the animals** on our City Farm and **appreciate the natural world** in our Eco Centre garden.

We are committed to equality and inclusion and **New Ark is a place where diversity is valued.** We have always strived to keep prices as low as possible in order to ensure that lack of money does not prevent anyone from enjoying our facilities.

To complement our After-school Club service we established the walkover from Newark Hill Primary Academy to safely escort children from the school to New Ark every day to support working parents.

*"I have been using New Ark's afterschool club and holiday club since 2009 between my two children. Both boys absolutely love attending the service. They are extremely reliable, reasonably priced and have so much for the children to keep occupied. I would be lost without them.*

*Not only is the service good for my children it is also educational and aids their development in various ways. My youngest son could possibly be on the autistic spectrum and the staff not only have worked closely alongside me but have been extremely supportive through a difficult time."*

Parent Feedback

*"New Ark is a fab place where children play freely in a safe and imaginative way. It's not like any other play environment as children are encouraged to play in the open air and get as dirty as they want. There are trees to play under and hills to climb.*

*Good old fashioned play is encouraged by fully trained staff. My children all went to New Ark and 40+ years later, Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren have all attended and love it."*

Parent Feedback





*"My children love New Ark as much as I did when I was a child! Being a full time working family New Ark is a complete lifesaver during the school holidays. I know the children are going to be safe and engaged while we are at work."*

Parent Feedback

We extended the opening hours of our Preschool and Holiday Club to provide additional childcare for parents, and offer all day sessions alongside hourly rates to ensure there is flexibility for children to attend ad hoc play sessions.

In 2022 we signed up for the **Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme** in order to provide free Holiday Club places for children living in poverty whose family would otherwise be unable afford to send their children to a Holiday Club.

In addition to supervised play sessions, we provide a **free nutritious lunchtime hot meal** to children, involving them in choosing and preparing elements of our menu to promote their understanding of healthy eating.

To complement our usual range of activities we have **secured the support of local charities, businesses and volunteers** to offer our children coaching sessions with a professional trainer, origami and crafting sessions with talented volunteers and even a magic show with a local entertainer!



### **What's Next?**

The feedback from parents/carers and children has been very positive and **we are committed to continuing the HAF programme** for children and families who are most vulnerable to the effects of poverty and deprivation during school holidays.

*"Both boys really enjoyed the HAF programme. I was worried about 9 year old Ismail at first because he is on the autistic spectrum and likes to be alone a lot. New Ark staff made him feel at ease, they followed his lead and he was very comfortable."*

*"One of the main reasons I signed up for the HAF programme was so that Ismail could benefit from New Ark's farm. He loves animals, and finds their company soothing. Unfortunately because we have a small home, there isn't enough room for Ismail to have a pet of his own. He loves the animals at New Ark."*

*"I'm grateful for the HAF program, I wouldn't have been able to afford the sessions had they not have been free. Also, I would not have signed them up for any other provider other than New Ark. Staff at New Ark are passionate about what they do, every one of them was approachable and friendly. They get why play is so important, which gave my children these opportunities instead of sitting through the holidays behind a screen."*

Parent Feedback



# Inclusive Alternative Curriculum

In 2002 we established our **innovative Play Support Service** at New Ark. We accept referrals from primary and secondary schools across Peterborough to work with children who are struggling to cope in mainstream school.



There are many reasons why children struggle in a school environment and some children find it very difficult to express themselves and how they feel through words. **Many of the children referred to us have experienced trauma** arising from Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), such as being placed in care or witnessing domestic abuse. They also often present with **neurodiversity** factors (e.g. Autistic Spectrum Disorders and ADHD), which compromise their ability to manage

strong feelings in positive ways. This can manifest in negative behaviours resulting in children being put on a reduced timetable or at risk of being excluded.

*"My son had multiple exclusions and was close to being permanently excluded. Since coming to New Ark there has been a marked change in Jake. He feels listened to and supported by the staff at New Ark. They have helped him so much, giving him an opportunity to be himself and express his feelings. The work they do with children is invaluable and New Ark is an amazing resource."*

Parent Feedback

Our large traditional Adventure Playground provides a different range of sensory experiences and **boosts our children's confidence and physical health by providing opportunities to run, jump, balance, climb and swing.**

We deliver an **alternative curriculum which is based mainly on the outdoors** and includes our City Farm, Eco Centre and Adventure Playground.



**Being around animals is very therapeutic** for the children, and helps to reduce their anxiety. They build a unique bond with the animals which boosts their emotional health.

We also work in a mindful way with our children in our Eco Centre garden where **they are encouraged to explore and develop their understanding of our environment and become immersed in the world of nature.**

*"I absolutely love coming to New Ark. The people are really kind and I love seeing the animals."*

Child Feedback



We plan a timetable for each child which is tailored around their individual needs. The majority of their learning takes place both through **play and activities designed to create positive learning experiences** until they are able to return full time to a classroom environment.



We focus on building a trusting relationship with each child and spend lots of time talking about and expressing feelings. We engage the children in hands-on activities that develop their **social and communication skills, problem-solving abilities, emotional self-management, resilience and coping strategies.**

*"The child I visit New Ark with thoroughly enjoys his time there. His favourite activity is collecting eggs on the Farm and checking them for freshness. He is very fond of the chickens and turkeys and loves a cuddle with the guinea pigs. The staff have a great knowledge and understanding of the children they work with and adapt the activities to the child's needs and likes."*

Teacher Feedback

Our children often have low self esteem and lack self confidence, and many are experiencing emotional turmoil. **We provide numerous opportunities for our children to succeed**, which improves their confidence and self esteem. We value their contribution by encouraging their input in putting ideas forward during sessions. It is important that **children are listened to, given responsibility and feel valued.**

Our alternative curriculum is very popular with the children and **our therapeutic, child-centred approach to learning epitomises our core values and our belief that every child matters.**

*"I am 10. I like caring for the animals, helping them and feeding them. It makes me feel calm and I just feel relaxed."*

Child Feedback

We have found that even the most complex and hard to reach **children thrive at New Ark.** Our aim is to see happy children returning to full time education and we have supported many children to achieve positive outcomes.

## What's Next?

Our Play Support Service has had a great deal of success in helping children to **improve their emotional wellbeing and behaviour management** to enable them to **return successfully to full time education.** Now more than ever there are increased numbers of children who are struggling in schools and **we are working to raise awareness of our service and expand this area of our provision to more local schools.**





# Green Therapy



New Ark is a **caring and therapeutic safe haven**, where children, young people and adults reap the benefits of interacting with our animals and enjoying our green spaces.

Spending time outdoors has a **positive effect on physical health**, including increasing Vitamin D levels and boosting immunity. Research has also identified **numerous benefits of nature and animals for mental health**, which is referred to as 'Green Therapy' as it has been found that engaging with the natural world (including animals) can help to **reduce stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression, aid relaxation and sleep, boost self-confidence and self-esteem, and improve resilience**. Spending time outdoors playing and exploring in nature has been shown to **improve attention and concentration levels in children with ADHD** and reduce symptoms.

*"I bring primary children attending a special school to New Ark every Friday. They learn amazing new skills - feeding animals, collecting eggs, and making friends with others. My students really enjoy the calm and therapeutic setting. It brings them joy and helps them learn about nature in a peaceful and inclusive setting."*

Teacher Feedback

Similarly there are **benefits to children with Autism**, who have been found to experience improvements **in relation to social interaction, communication, behaviour, emotional, cognition, and sensory issues**. Children with Autism often have lower levels of the hormone Oxytocin, which is responsible for emotional bonding and feelings of wellbeing and calm. Contact with plants and animals is known to increase Oxytocin production, which is believed to be one of the reasons that **interventions involving animals and nature are often very successful in work with individuals on the Autistic Spectrum**.

Children attending our Toddler group, Preschool, Play Support Service, Holiday and Afterschool Clubs enjoy the benefits of playing on our Adventure Playground, exploring our Eco Centre and visiting our City Farm. We also regularly **welcome group and family visits**.

**We cater for groups of children of all ages and abilities** and can adapt visits to cater for each groups' educational needs by including talks and activities which fit in with a specific aspect of the curriculum.

*"Thank you Carolyn for our visit today with the preschool - it was great fun and a lovely way to spend the morning. We will definitely be coming again."*





We also work with special schools and colleges, and offer **regular group and 1:1 sessions**, plus **animal care courses** for children and young people with additional needs.

*"New Skills for Independence had their final week at New Ark Farm and received a certificate for all their hard work. A big thank you to all the staff at New Ark for making our visits so welcoming and enjoyable"*

College Tutor Feedback



New Ark provides a unique learning opportunity and is a place where children and young people can **connect with animals, nature and the environment** and grow in confidence and independence. Our **inclusive and nurturing approach** ensures everyone who comes to New Ark feels valued.



We offer placements to animal care students and young people undertaking enrichment activities for **Prince's Trust, Duke of Edinburgh** and **National Citizen Service**.

We also have a number of adults who regularly visit our City Farm, which has secured funding to become a **Social Community Hub**, many of whom have vulnerabilities and/or additional needs. Some love to don their wellies and get stuck into mucking out our birds and larger animals, while others come along to our for a cuppa and a chat and enjoy interacting with, and helping to care for our small animals.



### What's Next?

We are continuously seeking to develop and expand our outdoor provision, and increase the number of schools and colleges we work with. We are also working to raise awareness more widely of what we have to offer adults through local **Social Prescribing** networks.



*"New Ark is a truly wonderful place, not only for the animals lucky enough to find themselves there, but for everyone that spends any time there at all. It is a place where you can be 'yourself', whatever that 'self' might be. Therefore, those with learning difficulties, additional needs and mental health conditions are welcomed, and they know that all of their contributions are valued, as is their company."*

Volunteer Feedback



# Collaborative Partnerships

Throughout New Ark's long history, we have always sought to add value to our local community and **we welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with organisations who share our values.**

## How we can partner with your organisation

New Ark has always been a small charity which makes a big difference, and **with your support we can help even more children, families, young people and vulnerable adults** to benefit from our unique facilities and therapeutic approach.

There are lots of ways that your organisation can contribute to our important work. These include:

- Nominating New Ark as your 'Charity of the Year'
- Strategic partnerships
- Corporate donations
- Grant funding
- Payroll giving
- Sponsorship
- Fundraising events
- Gifts of items and services
- Marketing and promotional activities

In return **we can help you to deliver against your Corporate Social Responsibility objectives.** A partnership with New Ark will provide you with a great opportunity to **raise your profile** and **demonstrate your organisation's commitment to making a difference.**

We can also offer a variety of outdoor group projects at our site which are fantastic for **team building activities to engage and motivate your staff**; who can also offer their time through regular volunteering to support their local community and **develop their skills while improving their physical and mental wellbeing.**

New Ark is also a fantastic venue to hold a 'family fun day' to **celebrate and reward your staff!**





## Educational Placements and Projects

New Ark has been offering opportunities for children and young people to engage in a wide range of educational and extra-curricular activities for many years. We provide **work placements** for animal care students on our City Farm, and childcare students in our Preschool.

We also welcome college students undertaking other courses such as construction, design and technology (D&T), textiles, horticulture, art and design, business, and marketing, who would like to complete a project for New Ark to improve our facilities or raise funds for us. In previous years D&T students have built duck houses for our farm, and business learners have planned and delivered fundraising events.

In addition to **regular and one-off group visits from local schools and colleges**, we also offer **animal care courses** which can be adapted to suit learners with neurodiversity, disabilities and other additional needs.

## Venue/Facilities Hire

Our **Eco Centre is available to hire for Forest School lessons**. The beautiful trees in our outdoor classroom provide covered learning areas alongside a mud kitchen, bug hotel, woodland pond, and play equipment made from natural materials. We also have an indoor classroom with kitchen and toilet facilities. **Outdoor learning is a great place to practice mindfulness with children because it offers endless opportunities to explore, enjoy, relax and be present.**

*"We've been coming to New Ark with our parents' support group for several years now.*

*The New Ark team are friendly and accommodating and the venue is affordable. It's a fantastic place for both parents and children to share some quality time outdoors"*

Support Group Feedback

New Ark is a great venue for community groups and is available to hire during evenings and weekends.

## What's Next?

We are working to promote our services and facilities in order to engage with an even greater number of local schools and colleges and partner with a wider range of local organisations who share our values and goals.





# Financial Overview



## Income and Expenditure Summary

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
<b>Income</b>					
Grants Receivable	143,003	171,510	165,371	104,016	115,680
Donations & Gifts	6,561	11,476	6,254	8,326	7,464
Charitable Activities	98,085	60,511	17,518	44,339	71,029
Interest Receivable	101	207	18	12	572
<b>Total income</b>	<b>247,750</b>	<b>243,704</b>	<b>189,161</b>	<b>156,693</b>	<b>194,745</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
<b>Direct Charitable Expenditure</b>					
Playground	62,003	61,977	17,278	22,396	17,728
Playgroup	76,580	66,384	70,743	56,365	57,202
Other	88,101	86,304	75,114	93,243	99,013
	<b>226,684</b>	<b>214,665</b>	<b>163,135</b>	<b>172,004</b>	<b>173,943</b>
<b>Other Expenditure</b>					
Salaries and pensions	12,529	16,316	12,856	21,008	21,908
Independent examination	1,320	1,380	1,380	1,184	1,284
Accountancy costs	3,000	3,720	1,554	746	1,850
Professional Fees	881	1,448	872	1,023	762
Subscriptions and licences	260	532	400	969	730
Fundraising expenses	618	0	0	81	466
Bank & payroll processing charges	1,979	1,913	1,902	1,344	2,060
Interest payable	8	0	0	0	0
	<b>20,595</b>	<b>25,309</b>	<b>18,964</b>	<b>26,355</b>	<b>29,060</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>247,279</b>	<b>239,974</b>	<b>182,099</b>	<b>198,359</b>	<b>203,003</b>
<b>Fund balances brought forward</b>	<b>84,318</b>	<b>84,789</b>	<b>88,519</b>	<b>95,581</b>	<b>53,915</b>
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>84,789</b>	<b>88,519</b>	<b>95,581</b>	<b>53,915</b>	<b>45,657</b>

There have been a number of different factors which have impacted on New Ark's financial growth during the past five years.

We were forced to close during the COVID-19 lockdowns, and while we were able to furlough our staff, we had to continue to meet the ongoing needs of the animals on our city farm.



An increase in parents working from home reduced attendance at our After-school Club and Holiday Club, and school referrals for our Play Support Service declined as a result of the continuing high rate of pupil absences and schools' own financial constraints.



We were unable to run any fundraising events for almost two years due to ongoing restrictions on group gatherings. And as part of their own budget-cutting measures the local authority withdrew our grant funding in 2021, which represented a further £33,000 loss in our annual income.



While our income reduced, our costs increased, including our fuel bills which rose dramatically in 2022.

Thanks to a very successful fundraising campaign during 2022, New Ark has been able to continue to provide invaluable services to a wide range of children, families, young people and adults, while keeping our prices as low as possible to ensure as many people as possible can enjoy New Ark.

## What's Next?

As our numbers of children continue to increase, we are turning our focus to developing our partnerships with educational providers and local businesses to increase our income so that we can invest in expanding and improving our provision and facilities. We also need to increase our promotional activity to raise awareness of our services and facilities to a wider audience in order to ensure that even more children, families, young people and adults can benefit from all that we have to offer at New Ark.





# Contact Us

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 New Ark Adventure Playground

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