



January 2025

Monthly Report



Introduction & Contents

Project Play is a grassroots NGO working to create safe spaces for children on the move in northern France to play, learn and grow.



In this report:

Updates, News & Observations

- Key figures: number of sessions run, children worked with and hours of play facilitated.
- News relevant to the UK-France border, and our observations relating to the impact of border policies on children's rights.

Our Activities

- Update on our service: our monthly themes
- Activities spotlight! Our favourite activities from this month and how we design sessions to support key developmental outcomes for the children we work with.

What Can You Do?

- Further information, contact details and avenues to support us / get involved.



January 2025



Updates, News, and Observations

WE CARRIED OUT

12

SESSIONS

WE WORKED WITH

40

CHILDREN

WE PLAYED FOR

34

HOURS

Both France and the UK have signed and ratified the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**, meaning they have the obligation to **respect, protect and fulfill** the rights within it. Instead, they **pursue hostile border policies** which prevent children on the move from accessing their rights.

Mental and Emotional Wellbeing

For children on the move in Northern France, 2025 has begun with many of the same challenges as 2024. Shelter continues to be precarious, police violence in living sites and around crossing attempts has continued, and children are stuck in limbo for weeks whilst hoping to travel to the UK.

We witness the devastating impact these conditions have on children's mental and emotional wellbeing. Children struggle to regulate their emotions and relate to their peers in a positive way. In January, we met several children who displayed violent play (throwing toys and hitting things) as a way of expressing this emotional dysregulation.



Shelter

Although shelter options are more readily accessed in winter, when less families are present in Northern France, the options available to families are poorly adapted to their needs. Families often have to move between multiple short term accommodation options, and these tend to be distant from the Calais and Grand Synthe living sites. In January, two of our sessions were cut short as families had to leave very early to access travel to accommodation centres outside of Calais.



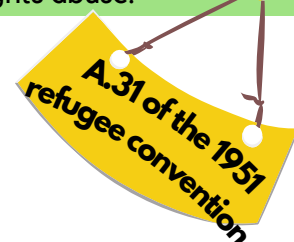
Access to Asylum

Many children on the move in Northern France are hoping to cross to the UK, but the lack of safe routes available means the only way to make this journey is by small boat. In January, we received multiple testimonies about the actions of the police to stop such crossings. One 15 year old expressed their frustration at being in limbo whilst waiting to start their life with extended family in the UK. Simultaneously, they were scared to cross since they knew small boat crossings are extremely risky.

We call on the UK government to open safe routes now to end this human rights abuse.

Disability rights

In January, we worked with a child with a physical disability. The state does not provide any adapted or additional support to such children and their families. The rights of children with disabilities are specifically protected under the UNCRC, and we call on the French government to fulfill this right.



www.project-play.org/take-action

Contact us:
advocacy@project-play.org

Our Activities

As always, this month we endeavoured to create a safe space for children to play and learn. Our sessions are planned carefully to foster a sense of community and collaboration. This is especially powerful when we start sessions with circle time to build relationships and communication skills. We plan main activities to support skill development. Each session is finished with some free play to give autonomy and space to just play!

This month, we explored:



Space

We began January with space week! Children loved creating huge space murals using dark paint, glitter and stickers. Not only does this allow creative expression and support fine motor skill development, it also encourages collaborative working as children worked on a project together. We also created small moon volcanoes, using vinegar and bicarbonate of soda to create a reaction. Children enjoyed the scientific and sensory elements of this activity.

Animals

With the arrival of our new volunteers, we started animal week! We created two large cardboard animals for children to decorate together, once again blending creativity and teamwork. We also brought back a Project Play favourite, farm day, where children have to tick off a number of animal related activities. Children also loved acting out different animals in circle time.



Our Activities

Self Esteem

We noticed several children attending our sessions were struggling with negative self-talk, criticising themselves and their artwork. When living in traumatic situations, it can be hard for children to keep a strong sense of themselves and their strengths.



In response we created a session to build up self-esteem. We used the story "The Dot" which focuses on celebrating your art work, then created art work which began with a single dot. Then we played a compliments game encouraging the children to share things they liked about each other. We finished by creating self-portraits to celebrate each individual, which they were then able to display in the accommodation they were staying in. Since this session we noticed the children are more able to say positive things about themselves.

Free Play!

Our sessions always feature plenty of free play - giving children space to choose what they'd like to do and where they'd like to take their play.



January 2025



What Can You Do?

Thank you for reading our monthly updates! We couldn't do what we do without the support of amazing people like you. If you'd like to get involved:



Stay in Touch!

Follow us on social media:



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Donate

We rely on donations to keep playing. If you can, please consider:



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[Joining our community of monthly donors](#)



Engage



Your voice counts. If you'd like to learn more about life for children on the move, and how you can take action, [click here](#).



Would you like to **join our team**? We're always on the look out for motivated people to help us with our work! [Click here](#) to find out more.



www.project-play.org

[Sign up to our mailing list to receive this updates.](#)



Thank You!

For more info on our updates & observations:

Visit:

project-play.org/our-advocacy-work

Contact our advocacy team:

advocacy@project-play.org

For more info on our activities:

Visit:

project-play.org/our-work

Contact our ground team:

info@project-play.org