

Category: 14, Design for society  
Client: Scotland Yard Adventure Centre  
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Brands & Reputations.

# SCOTLAND YARD ADVENTURE CENTRE

Moving from well-respected locally  
to a national centre of excellence



## Executive summary

(245 words)

Scotland Yard Adventure Centre, known as The Yard, is an oasis in the heart of Edinburgh that provides indoor and outdoor adventure play facilities for children and young people with additional support needs. It is a small charity serving the East coast of Scotland with a local remit and national ambitions.

Their Annual Report, is their primary communications tool. Its quality of design and content has had an enormous impact on raising the profile of the organisation with various audience groups including local government, NGO care groups, corporate and private contributors as well as staff, parents and the media.

It is also an important tool to develop fundraising capacity and giving it the confidence to realise its potential to be a national organisation with a network of play centres across Scotland.

The impact of its new communications strategy despite a modest budget is dramatic and all this against a backdrop of a charitable sector facing hardship and closure.

The Yard has achieved amazing success and this confidence is reflected in the upbeat messages carried in its Annual Report 2011/12, which also celebrates 25 years of achievement and clearly outlines the needs of the people who use the service and its essential role within the sector.

Tayburn has worked with The Yard for the past four years on their reporting and broader communications needs. In that time we have witnessed the organisation transforming itself from a well-respected local provider to a nationally recognised centre of excellence.

“For our new volunteers the annual report is a wonderful introduction to The Yard. It reflects our ethos and the imaginative/innovative work we do with disabled children and families who come to The Yard.”

**Alice Brown**, Volunteer Co-ordinator at The Yard

## Project overview

### Outline of project brief

#### Strategic thinking

To roll out The Yard across Scotland and raise its profile nationally The Yard recognised that it would need to:

- Gain national coverage without investing in expensive advertising channels.
- Get MP's and MSP's through the door in order to meet families with children with complex needs and to convince them of a national need for specialist play and youth work services.
- Invest more in communications, both in print and online.
- Attract high quality staff with experience of operational management for national charities.
- Attract an experienced Fundraising Director to diversify income sources to include the corporate sector and to drive a national fundraising campaign.
- Invest in its volunteers through creating a specific volunteer co-ordinator's post and become an accredited Investor in Volunteer organisation.

### Description

#### Introduction to The Yard

The Yard is a much loved and essential service. Located in Edinburgh's new town, it is the only purpose built indoor and outdoor adventure play service for disabled children in the East of Scotland.

The people who provide care and support to families at The Yard are an amazing bunch of enthusiastic and imaginative specialist playworkers. They reinvent everyday items such as bubble wrap, and cast-off fabric as stimuli for creativity, learning and engagement.

And they deliver amazing results. The centre provides much needed support and respite for over 1,500 families of disabled children and young people with additional support needs who attend. This opportunity to play with other children like themselves in a safe and inclusive environment helps develop confidence, self-esteem and life skills which can be transformational.

Having reached a 25 year milestone in its existence The Yard is looking forward to a period of growth. In essence, looking at how it can roll itself out nationally to ensure that every disabled child across Scotland has a place to play.



## Project overview

(continued)

### Well-equipped for a national roll-out

The economic situation of the last three years has created a gloomy backdrop for most organisations, be they in the private, public or third sector. In 2009/10, The Yard, like many small charities, focused most of its efforts scrambling around, trying to raise funds to make ends meet in an increasingly competitive environment with ever tightening purse strings.

In 2011/12 the additional income created by the annual reports and its higher profile, meant that it had more than 80% of its funding in place allowing efforts to be focussed on longer term ambitions rather than hand-to-mouth fundraising.

In the period 2012/13 the strategic planning is starting to take shape as follows:

- Memorandum of Articles of Association amended to allow the organisation to operate nationally.
- Big lottery application made to investigate the model of expansion that is best suited to The Yard.
- Social needs audit under way in five pilot areas.
- New staff structure in place and Operations Director in position.

The Yard finds itself in a very enviable place. Led by an inspirational management team, supported by a talented and motivated team, they can continue to do amazing things and be confident about their future.

### The Yard and Tayburn

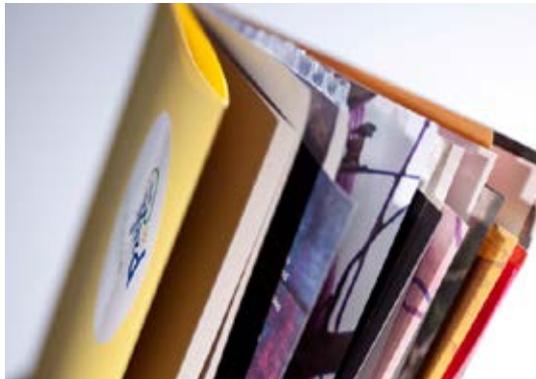
As a creative and effective agency, Tayburn is always on the lookout for opportunities to deliver outstanding creative solutions that make a real difference. As a responsible agency we're also on the lookout for ways we can help charities on our doorstep. And that's how we came to meet The Yard. Our journey together began four years ago when we were first brought on board to see if we could tell The Yard's amazing story in a truly amazing way.

Over the time that we have worked with The Yard, the Annual Report has always been the main focus of their communications materials. It has been the document given to visitors, posted to funders, included in applications and read by parents because it tells a credible, compelling and differentiated story that captures the spirit of the organisation.

However, in 2011/12, it also needed to show the drive, ambition and people involved in the delivery of its service, if it was to be taken seriously in its plan to go national.

## Project overview (continued)

Previous Annual Reports  
produced by Tayburn.



## Project overview

(continued)

### Overview of market

The charitable sector is increasingly fierce and competitive. After 25 years of successfully delivering a localised service The Yard knew it would have to grow and develop its services if it was to succeed in the future.

Charitable organisations can no longer rely on grants from local authorities or voluntary income from the commercial sector. Today, charities like The Yard often find themselves up against larger national organisations, competing for a smaller share of a smaller pot of money. So without clear strategic direction and ambition to grow the organisation, it was clear that they too are going to struggle to survive.

However The Yard is fortunate because at its helm is strong leadership, made up of a professional Board and an ambitious team of managers and strategic thinkers. At the heart of the organisation are vulnerable families who need help with the challenges of everyday living and children with

multiple complex needs who, first and foremost, want to make friends and have fun.

Over the next three years The Yard needs to work hard to raise its profile and be seen as an organisation with the skills and ambition to operate in the national arena.

To do this it knew it would need to invest its funding differently and think strategically about its organisational direction.

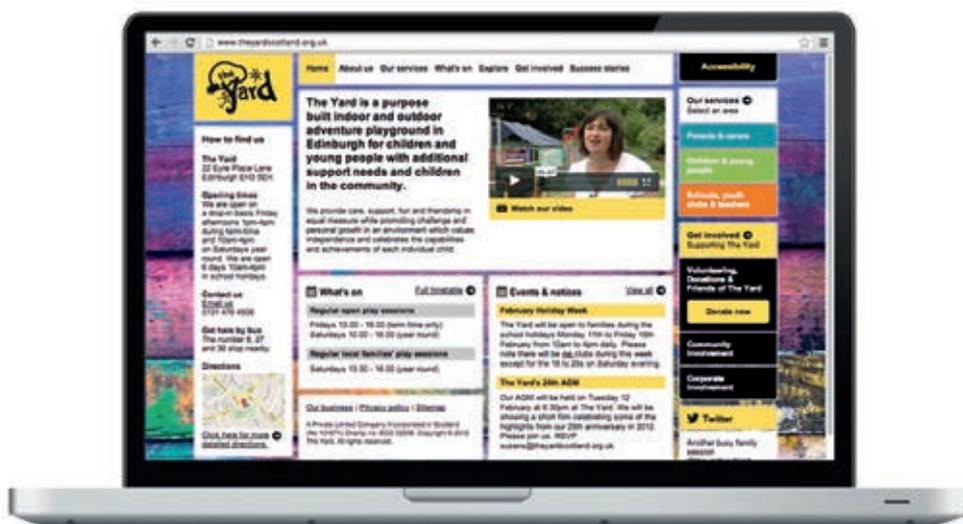
### Project launch date

November 2011 to July 2012

### Size of design budget

Tayburn provided all of the creative, design, photography, artwork and copywriting services free of charge, and talked our illustrator, and printer friends into working for cost.

New website and social media strategy.



## Outline of design solution

(245 words)

With limited funds to spend on marketing materials the annual report had to make The Yard stand out from other charities. It had to deliver the aims of the organisation professionally and strategically whilst explaining the compassionate side of The Yard which is all about caring and understanding.

The annual report needed to tell the story of The Yard: what they do, how they do it, and most importantly how it impacts on the lives of the children, parents, workers, teachers and volunteers who meet at and use The Yard. The organisation is people focused – the families and children who come to The Yard are what drives it forward. They are at the ‘heart’ of the organisation and it is their words that we wanted to use to convey the emotional attachment they have for it and why it is such an exceptional service.

However The Yard considers itself as a business and although service led it is strategic and ambitious. Therefore it was important that both sides of the organisation were conveyed in the proposed concept so that readers understood that this is an organisation with energy, drive and high expectations, that believes in itself and the people in its care.

With a clear brief and access to many different stories from the families we came up with the concept of ‘heart and head’ which would use stories from those who depend on The Yard as an organisation and those who deliver its services.

We wanted to tell their story from two perspectives; the children who go there, and the support structure that allows this to happen. For the children it’s all about the adventures they can dream up and have at The Yard, while for the staff, parents and community it is a continual labour of love that has seen it thrive.

The document is split into two sides and can be unravelled to show all the individual stories that make up the experience. The report is made out of recycled material reflecting The Yard’s ethos that anything and everything can be recycled for play.

Annual Report 2011/12 –  
The current publication.



## Outline of design solution

(continued)

- The annual report was used as the only tool to bid for potential television programmes such as BBC Children in Need and DIY SOS The Big Build.
- It was sent with invitations to local government ministers and NGOs.
- It was sent to organisations working with vulnerable children, children with disabilities, those in the caring profession and youth work organisations.
- It was mailed to General Practitioners throughout Edinburgh and the Lothian's.

The report has won a Scottish Design Award (Annual Report), a Roses Award (Gold) for Annual Reporting and a Fresh Award (Bronze) in the Charity category.

Annual Report 2011/12 –  
The current publication.



## Outline of design solution

(continued)

“The Yard has a truly magical quality about it, everyone who I have spoken to has nothing but praise for the service. This is reflected in the time and effort that all the trades and everyone involved have made in the last nine days to transform this much loved and desperately needed place.”

**Nick Knowles**, presenter of DIY SOS, BBC

The Yard transformed by  
DIY SOS The Big Build.



## Summary of results

This annual report has been the catalyst to The Yard becoming a national organisation; successfully raising its profile and securing enough support for it to be able to open play facilities across Scotland.

Since its publication at the start of 2012, The Yard has become recognised as the leading organisation in inclusive play across Scotland. This has given it the confidence to plan its national roll out and grow as an organisation.

### **Increase in donations**

The Yard increased donations from the corporate sector by over **100%**. This donation source is now valued at **£120,000** and this total continues to rise at the time of publication.

### **Increase in support in kind**

The incredible power of national television delivered **£600,000** from DIY SOS The Big Build project alone. This amount was measured by placing a market value on all the time and equipment investment made during the renovation project.

The Yard also saw an increase in local charity partnerships, particularly with Edinburgh's many private schools including Merchiston Castle and Loretto.

### **Improvements in staff morale and resource**

The success of the annual report in terms of raising awareness and the fact that it has won multiple creative awards has led to a demand from staff at The Yard to be involved in its production in some way. This has manifested itself in staff helping to collate the final printed piece and also in content generation too.

The playworkers and associated team are immensely proud of their organisation and they recognise that the Annual Report has an important role to play in communicating evidence of their involvement and hard work. This engagement has led to a positive shift in morale generally throughout the organisation.

### **Increases in market distribution**

The charity was approached by the National Lottery to apply for support with a national roll out. At the time of publication this opportunity is still being realised.

### **Increases in market share**

The demand for the services provided by The Yard is now Scotland-wide. It was previously Edinburgh and Lothian's only.

## Summary of results

(continued)

### **Increase in footfall and service provision**

The Yard increased user numbers to maximum capacity and also set up new services including the 8-12s club at weekends.

### **Increased levels of visibility and engagement**

The Yard secured Scotland-wide interest from organisations interested in replicating the service in five different areas – Stirling, West Lothian, Dumfries, Cumbernauld and Fife.

It also achieved greater visibility with key local and national government officials and other NGO's by improving the awareness of the specialised and expert nature of The Yard's services. Visits included those from Marco Biagi MSP, Rt Hon David Mundell MP, Michael Matheson Minister for Public Health, Tam Baillie Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People.

The Yard was the only Scottish Charity to secure a six minute slot on UK wide Children in Need 2012 show valued at **£564,000\***.

The Yard also secured a one hour slot on National Television on BBC DIY SOS The Big Build. The Yard was the only charity in the UK that was chosen to be featured on the show. The resultant show was watched by **3.9m** viewers and valued at **£2.4 million\***.

\* Source: Spirit Media using BARB audience data and ITV station cost for 30 second commercials for mid November 2012.

### **Improved recruitment**

The charity also used the opportunity to restructure internally to create new Operations Director role. This position was recruited from a large national third sector organisation.

“Amazing, I am so thrilled that this has happened to The Yard. My family loves coming here and now the only problem I foresee is getting us to leave. I am blown away, it is so fantastic and I feel so grateful to everyone who has worked so hard to make this transformation happen.”

**Gillian Pass**, parent of Erin and Jamie who regularly use The Yard

## **Other influencing factors**

The distribution of the Annual Report in February and the 'go live' of the website in July 2012 have been the only marketing activities undertaken by The Yard during the past two years and there have been no other substantial changes or influencing factors that could have affected the results as detailed above.