

Last year I reported that it had been an eventful 12 months during which the Committee had taken the decision to remain as an independent group based here at the Balidon Centre. We would work with the Children's Centre but had declined the invitation to run it.

Our focus this year we thought would be to ensure that our confirmed independence was built on a sound financial base & that we also put in place for the benefit of all involved in our Group the professional standards that one would associate with a responsible 21st Century employer.

I mentioned at the last AGM that we were looking for a person to join the Committee who could dedicate time & energy to the Group and eventually take on the role of chair. We have been extremely fortunate that Andrea de Beker saw & responded to our advert. She has brought with her drive & enthusiasm combined with a vast knowledge built up working in both the local authority & charitable sectors. Andrea has co-ordinated the development of job specifications for all key roles in the group, the establishment of Contracts of Employment and a revised Group Constitution. Most importantly however she has been willing to give her time to act as a link between the Committee and the Group in helping to tackle the day to day issues that impact on our staff & volunteers. Andrea I am so grateful for all your hard work this year.

A period of stability to help launch our newly confirmed independence was probably too much to hope for. Mary Gilson our teacher on whom we had relied so heavily elected to 'retire' but then afforded us much needed continuity by agreeing to take on a part-time 'Group Co-ordinator' position starting this term. This was a role we designed to run alongside a newly created & County Education funded Children's Centre teacher who would share their time between the new Oakland's Children's Centre & our Group. Katie Chantler was appointed to this role but as I present this report tonight we face further uncertainty as to how the teacher role will develop.

Our priority of course remains to provide the best experience & opportunity for our children & during the uncertainty that has existed this term we are extremely grateful to all our staff & volunteers for their help in meeting all challenges faced.

The work of our employed fundraiser John Purkiss has been fantastically supported by our own fundraising team. Highlights include last years calendar project that raised over £2000 and a no. of other events including a pizza eating competition that not only kept the money coming in but also afforded publicity opportunities. I know that the fundraisers are full of new ideas & the 2010 calendar is about to hit the streets of Yeovil. Our website @ www.yog.org.uk is now a 1st class window showing what we do & I commend all of you who have not yet done so to visit the site. Many thanks to those responsible for keeping it both current & informative.

I must also thank all those who have supported the Group & made donations large or small, they really do make a difference and we are grateful for every single one. Against

a background of a continuing harsh economic climate it never ceases to amaze me how generous people can be.

I wish also to thank all members of the Committee for their support this year. Particularly I want to thank our Treasurer Simon Skipper who during the past year has not only kept his eyes on the finances but has along with other members of the Executive given up a lot of time attending what have become increasingly frequent meetings.

I want also thank Paula Dowding who stood down this summer as secretary after many years, I am grateful for all you have done for the Committee over that time.

The last person to thank is Sarah our Administrator. Whilst everything else may be changing Sarah has remained as a source of constant support & reassurance to all on the Committee. Her commitment to the smooth running of the Group & her willingness to promote its work at every opportunity is hugely valued by us all.

But of course in the end it is all about the experience we give our children. Here on behalf of all the trustees my sincere thanks to all staff, volunteers, drivers & escorts for their continued enthusiasm & commitment to our children & their families. Once again you have risen to the challenges faced this year.

As to the future from a personal point of view I trust that all involved with this wonderful group will continue to fight for the right of our special children to enjoy the opportunities that I believe can only be offered by a specialist centre with its team of dedicated professional staff & volunteers. We control our own destiny as an independent group but must continue to build upon our strong ties with professionals in Health & Education to ensure we can influence positively outside of our Group.

As I step down as Chair this year I wish my successor well and I will be delighted to continue to offer my support as a Committee member.

I have asked Mary as our 'Group Co-ordinator' to give a brief explanation of what is happening within the Group at present.

Thank you for your time.