

YEOVIL OPPORTUNITY GROUP
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY 10TH NOVEMBER 2010

Present

Sarah Thompson, Sheila Kiddle, Simon Skipper, Andrea deBerker, Mel Fludder, Trudie Read, Julie Lewis, Angela Roadnight, Mairead Farrell, Sue Shaw, Wendy Vincent, Terry Kimpton.

Apologies

Annette Davies, Sarah Farnham, Paula Dowding, Simon Rowbottom, Micheala Sharman, Steve Clayton, Alison Carr, Wally Cotterall Mary Gilson, Suzanna Donald, Viv Golby, Louise Gall, Kath Belcher.

Minutes from last year's AGM agreed to be accurate. Proposed by Simon Skipper and seconded by Mel Fludder.

Chairperson's Report

Andrea de Berker welcomed you everyone to the AGM in our 40th year of operation. We are truly blessed by the support we receive from so many people and organisations enabling us to provide our very particular service to children and their families.

Over the past year the Group has continued to progress and develop. Mary Gilson has worked as our interim Group Co-ordinator during the last academic year and has supported the staff team to move to a new structure with a Child Care Manager in post. We were delighted that Sheila Kiddle one of the Senior Nursery Nurses was keen to take up this post as from April thus allowing a term's handover before Mary finally left us in July. Sue Shaw and Sheila have taken on the new roles of Special Educational Needs

Co-ordinators (SENCOS) for the group with Mary's support. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mary for working with the Trustees and staff team throughout the this transition period and enabling the Group to move forward.

As a result of funding reductions Somerset County Council has needed to reduce the teacher input to the Group to a half time post. We are delighted that Sarah Farnham has been able to provide this support alongside her part time post at Reckleford. Sarah brings a wealth of experience and we are already seeing the benefits of closer ties with the team at Reckleford Children's Centre. The staff team are working hard to develop the work with the children within the Early Years Foundation Stage format. We were delighted that following our Ofsted inspection (which took place in the heavy snow in January) we were awarded an overall assessment of 'good' with three outstanding areas.

The staff have continued to work hard and we are very lucky to have such a committed team. We have welcomed two new permanent nursery nurses – Becky Davies and Paula

Bates. We saw Natasha Davenport go on maternity leave and become the mother of a bouncing baby boy. Her maternity leave was covered by Louise who worked with us until the end of the summer term when she herself went on maternity leave. Tash is now back with us. Our thanks go to them all and in particular Sheila who is now leading the team.

We have continued to provide Rainbows Time Together Groups and would like to thank Aiming High for funding the service this year. We are pleased that Sue Shaw, our Senior Nursery nurse has continued to run the group since Mary left. Rainbows gives parents of very young children the opportunity to meet up with other parents and to play with their children. Many of the children go on to attend the main group later and many parents have made friends with other parents by attending the group.

During the year we have provided Somerset Total Communication Training and are very pleased that Mary has been commissioned by Somerset Early Years to continue to provide training. Somerset Total Communication is a sign assisted language programme which encourages and enables children with difficulties in developing verbal language to communicate.

We have continued to work positively with the Multi Agency Identification and Support in the Early Years (MAISEY for short) groups to identify children with additional needs and ensure that they receive appropriate support and later successful transitions to primary schools. We have noticed the reduction in therapy time since the therapy team moved out of this building but we continue to benefit from their input to the children's care and progress and look forward to maintaining our very positive relationships with them. We also have benefited from our positive working relationships within the Somerset Early Years Team. We envisage the next year will be testing given the current and developing financial constraints but are confident that we have a good foundation of positive multi-agency relationships.

We continue to work with children with complex needs and their families and to support them both here and in their other early years placements. The numbers are lower than in many previous years but most of the children need a high staff input and so our child staff ratios are high. Sheila will tell you more about the direct work with the children later. We envisage that we will continue to provide our service to children with complex needs in the future and our professional colleagues tell us that the numbers are increasing with the advances in medical care. We offer our service primarily to children in Somerset but we given our location we do have children from Dorset attending. We are lucky that we can provide transport with our own minibus and are pleased that the Variety Club is willing once more to support us with a new minibus when they can find a sponsor.

Our fund-raising committee has again been active during the year producing a calendar again last Christmas and a sponsored Pizza eating competition at Tamborino's each raising approximately £1000. We are very grateful to them and to Tamborino's for their continuing

support. Tamborino's now has two dishes on their menu which make a specific donation to the Group when they are purchased. The fund-raising committee is organising a Carol Concert to be held on 27th November at Holy Trinity Church here in Yeovil so please see Mel for tickets and spread the word amongst your friends and colleagues. We are also taking up Gift Aid tax relief on donations to the Group where we are able to.

We have such a wide variety of supporters it is almost insidious to mention anyone in particular but we do thank Yeovil and Yeovale Rotary Clubs, Sherborne Country Fayre and many individuals who undertake events such as sponsored parachute jumps to raise money for us. As you will have seen the building here has been refurbished and our sensory room is now in our specific space. We are in the process of refurbishing this and the kitchen with the support of the local Rotary Groups. I would like to make a special mention here for Sarah Thompson, our administrator who does a sterling job maintaining our relationships with so many groups and individuals.

The volunteers who support our service delivery are an enormous benefit to the Group enabling us to further improve our staff ratios and I would like to thank them on behalf of all the Trustees, staff and children for their loyal and reliable service to us.

We also offer placements to a variety of students who learn more about children with additional needs by their placements with us. We also this year have an apprentice, Laura. We are pleased to be able to help her develop her career in child care.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Trustees, again all volunteers, for their time and commitment to the Group. In particular Simon Skipper, our Treasurer, for managing the finances and producing the accounts – quite a task and he will tell you more about our finances later. You may remember last year we voted on a new constitution. This has now been accepted by the Charities Commission and there are copies of it around the room for anyone who is interested.

Over the next year we are planning to continue to offer our very particular service, to work in partnership with parents and professional colleagues, to improve our IT systems and to update our literature and policies.

Finally we would like to invite you all to attend our Open Day on Saturday 15th January when we are celebrating our 40 years anniversary. Do come along and see more about how the group works with the children who attend.

Child Care Manager's Report

This was presented by Sheila Kiddle, We currently have 17 children on our register – low numbers but very busy children, needing lots of individual support.

To explain a little of what we do here at the Group, I have a story of a child and how we helped him and his family. I am not using the child's name, to ensure confidentiality.

Joined aged 2 ½ with a general developmental delay, limited communication skills and not yet walking.

- Home visit to discuss the child's needs and the family's wishes. We include the parents in all conversations and decisions regarding their child.
- Advice from his Physiotherapist to encourage movement and balance. Activities were put on far side of the table to encourage coasting. Once he started to walk independently we used activities/exercises to improve balance and muscle strength.
- Advice from his Speech and Language Therapist, following her therapy plan to help the child to understand and express himself. All staff are trained in Somerset Total Communication, using signing and symbols to support speech. We used this to help the child to understand the routines of the morning. We also used photos to aid choice making at snack-time.
- Advice from his Occupational Therapist as he was not keen to touch certain textures and would become distressed. We used playdough and lego bricks to encourage big pulling/pushing movements to aid his sensory development.
- All activities and strategies which worked in the setting, we shared with his parents and gave them resources to use in the home. This offered continuity to the child and made for a more relaxed home environment.
- Pre-School Entry meeting, where all professionals involved got together with his parents and discussed his strengths and areas of need. This gave the new setting a clear picture of how to help the child to settle.

We are very fortunate to have input from so many professionals. We really appreciate all the help we receive and are very grateful.

Accounts:

These were presented by Simon Skipper Treasurer. He explained that on Page 5 of Summary: restricted funds were special grants for minibus (fitting seats, etc), and a hoist in new minibus to help children and staff.

It has been a good year for fundraising. We have received money from Yeovil District Hospital for a teacher's wages and therefore have funds to appoint a teacher at a later date if necessary.

With an uncertain future, our reserves will keep us going.

The sensory room refurbishment will be between £12,000 and £15,000. We will apply for grants to support this, which is seen as a long term investment.

Due to Council cutbacks, everyone's future is unclear. However, the building refurbishment is positive.

As always, our biggest cost is wages for staff, followed by the minibus. For the expertise and commitment from the staff, we receive a big input from them, for not overly generous remuneration. Other costs are minimal.

The accounts are approved by an independent examiner and then posted on the Charity Website. These accounts will accompany any grant applications.

Charitable donations likely to reduce but the fund-raising efforts will not slow down.

Committee Members:

No new members come forward.

Julie Lewis and Mairead Farrell agree to stay on as Trustees. Trudi Read asked to consider co-opted or full Trustee and she agrees to become a full Trustee.

The Committee elected for next year will be: Andrea de Berker, Steve Clayton, Mairead Farrell, Mel Fludder, Julie Lewis, Trudi Read, Simon Rowbottom, Michaela Sharman, Simon Skipper, Wendy Vincent

Any other business:

No other business

10th November 2010