



**a group which facilitates inclusive arts and sports activities for children with additional needs and provides support to their families**

You Can Do It began in late 2007 as a group of parents with children with Down Syndrome who were meeting for general support. Most of our children were of primary school age and in mainstream primary schools and we identified that once our children started school all preschool support ceases (Portage, health visitors, regular speech therapy sessions, Homestart, preschool specialist groups e.g. Down Syndrome Education international). Through talking with other parents with children with a variety of other needs this also seemed to be the case for many families, including those whose children attending non-LEA funded special needs schools (e.g. Ingfield Manor school)

We found there is a need for parents to discuss schooling issues, general health issues, lack of sleep, transporting, lack of professional support, lack of awareness issues and discrimination issues and **ALSO TO CELEBRATE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR CHILDREN!**

However we found that our children are unable to access extracurricular activities as other primary school aged children who attend mainstream primary schools. Neither could our disabled children in mainstream schools access LEA special needs schools activities as they are not on role at those schools. This **AFFECTS SIBLINGS TOO!** We decided that what our children needed was extra specific support to enable them to access the activities, by having trained (1:1) personnel who could attend to their communication needs and personal care issues as necessary.

Horsham DC Community Recreation Officer advised us to form a constitution group and give ourselves a name so in Feb 08 we formed a committee and "You Can Do It!" was born! We could then work with the council services to facilitate inclusive activities. The Director of Community Services agreed that the local council would recruit a bank of support staff who would be employed to support our disabled children in their chosen activities. We have also provided a Disability Awareness Training Session for these staff and Leisure Link coaches and session leaders.

We have identified other groups of parents in similar situations by canvassing Springboard House, Ingfield Manor School, QE II school and other local mainstream primary schools. Thus we could present a significant number of children who would benefit from these inclusive activities. We have designed a membership form and photo consent form for YCDI, as well as 3 further forms necessary for completion prior to a child partaking in a Leisure Link activity to ensure the most appropriate support personnel is employed for each child (Activities form, Medication Form and Parental Consent Form; Specific Epilepsy Forms are also required for some children).

As a new group we held a Launch Tea Party 16<sup>th</sup> March 2008 and invited the local press. Following the press release several more families came forward and joined the group. Several potential support workers were also identified, and You Can Do It! current membership is now over 30 families (75-80 children plus parent/carers).

Our first inclusive activities occurred in May half term when 7 children signed up for African Drumming and Multisports (football, basketball and hockey). Both activities were 3 hrs and a number of the children were supported by council employed support staff. Others were accompanied by parents/carers. We had a further press article covering these activities.

We have 7 further inclusive sessions planned for the summer holidays including Dance, Jewellery Making, Two Drumming sessions, Tennis, Football and Cricket. These are all detailed in the Summer Activities Brochure (circulated to all schools in the Horsham District), by the You Can Do It! logo next to the activities with instructions for booking!

There are also a number of Disability Baseball Taster sessions running during the summer, hosted by Horsham Junior Baseball Club.

We also have a page on Horsham DC web site to complement the current Ready and Able Club activities for >16yrs with additional needs, as well as a mention in the ICIS website.

Bluecoats Swim School, Christ's Hospital now provides regular Saturday lessons for 5 children with additional needs, each with 1:1 coach in the pool. The children are working towards swimming independently, with the hope they will be included in mainstream classes in the future. YDCI! funds partly cover the extra cost of swim instructors.

In the future we aim to expand swim provision to additional venues with additional staff for other members of the club, and to increase the number and choice of inclusive courses in summer and run term time inclusive courses. We would also like to see inclusive 'Summer Clubs' in many more venues throughout West Sussex so that parents have a greater choice for all of their children.

Following the YCDI! chairperson attending the Sussex County Sports Partnership Extending Activities Workshop on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2008 in Uckfield, where disabled children tended to be labeled as non-sporty 'turned off' sporty types, we have applied for funding to run inclusive trampolining and gymnastics types courses in Autumn 08 and Spring 09 terms. We await confirmation of this funding as part of the Sussex Extending Activities Programme, from Sport England, w/c 7<sup>th</sup> July.

Through the Carer Support Service and Child Disability Team Funding we have also secured a residential visit to Knowles Tooth Family Support Centre (4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Aug) for families from You Can Do It! The center will be available for people to stay as a holiday or to visit for the day. This is free to members and most of the food is also provided!

Funding/Fundraising – as a group we have raised funds via Tea Party donations, a Jumble sale, a Volleyball Tournament, individual donations/sponsored events, a jewellery party, Rotary club donations.

We have also made successful grant applications via Horsham and Crawley Mencap, Carers Grant (Knowles Tooth Residential visit) and await confirmation of Extending Activities Government Funding from Sport England.

Our hope is that our new club, You Can Do It! will grow through continued support from our collaborators such as Horsham DC, Bluecoats Sports Centre and other organisations, to enable children with additional needs and their siblings, parents, families and friends to access more events and activities together in the Horsham district. In this, the whole community benefits from a more inclusive society.

Society has come along way in recent decades, but we still have some way to go to make more children and their families feel included in more ways. It is not the children who exclude themselves, it is lack of awareness, attitudes and the physical environment which disables them from participating.

We would like to think we can remove some of these barriers for our children, so we can say to them YOU CAN DO IT!

## **Information I have put in the Horsham pages of Sports and Arts**

### **You Can Do It!**

Age 0-11. Club facilitating inclusive sports and arts activities for children with additional needs such as Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, autism and others. Their siblings and friends are also welcome and the club provides support to their families.

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