**WELLSPRING WEST SUSSEX**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017**

Over the past year 2016-17, Wellspring West Sussex has continued providing information to families of children with disabilities and special needs through our newsletter, website and Facebook page. We have also delivered creative arts workshops to children with special needs and their siblings.

We published two editions of the newsletter in 2016. Issue 1 was Social Networking and looked at ways for children and young people to communicate and stay safe online. Issue 2 focused on Early Years and contained details of the Family Information Service, and other support networks available for parents with young children. Both editions in 2016 included details of Chris North’s ‘Paint Pots of Music and Poetry’ project and 4 page pull out looking at ‘Money Matters’ giving useful financial support and websites listing sources of help.

The 2016 newsletters were funded by donations carried over from last year from Crawley (£1300) and Worthing (£250) Lions Clubs as well as Sidlesham W.I. (£94). Funds received for the newsletter account this year were from Bognor Regis and Chichester Lions Clubs (£200 each), the Thornton Trust who sent £800 in two separate donations, Midhurst Rotary Club (£100), Sidlesham Parish Council (£100) and Judy Mellor (£25).

During 2016 our website and Facebook page were kept up to date with details of events happening across the county. On average the website receives 30-40 visits per month and our Facebook page now has 92 people who “Like” it and are regularly updated with events and news shared. It is also a useful way to “Share” news and events from other disability websites and groups. Through the Facebook page this year, I have also been contacted by a parent looking for support with her recently diagnosed autistic son and a Forest School leader offering sessions to children with special needs.

With the grant from Awards for All received last year, Adam Gellibrand provided more music workshops and Chris North offered his ‘Paint Pots of Music and Poetry’ project with groups of young children across the county. Part of the Awards for All funding was also used to publicise the workshops in the first newsletter of 2016 and Chris wrote a report on the project which was published in Issue 2.

This year we received £100 from the Thornton Trust and £60 from the Sidlesham Community Association which has enabled Wellspring to fund 7 places for children with special needs and their siblings at my Craft Club. Several of these children attended more than one course. A 7 year old boy with developmental and learning delay and his 6 year old sister attended the People themed club in 2016 and Spring club in 2017. 7 year old twin brothers, one with Down’s Syndrome attended the People club and Animal club in 2016. Also at the People club were an 8 year old boy with developmental delays, a 10 year old girl with learning disabilities and her 5 year old brother with visual impairment. The brother and sister also attended the Seaside club in 2016 and the brother came to the Spring club in 2017. All the children had a wonderful time at the clubs and I enjoyed seeing them develop friendships with the other children while working. The parents also had the confidence to leave once they could see their children were safe and able to easily communicate in the small group. I received fantastic comments from the children who said “*"It's really exciting and fun”* and *"There are lots of things to do”.* One parent’sfeedback*: “What a fantastic time the boys had at craft club over the last few weeks. They were so proud of all their artwork, and rightly so, they really made some fantastic things with your help. It's so lovely to see the poster of all their photos showing them in full flow, and what a lovely memory. Really can't say enough how grateful we are for all your effort, time, patience and inspiration. It's so nice for my son to be able to participate in craft activities with his twin and to be helped to fulfil his potential in such a warm and encouraging environment. This has helped his ability to participate fully in school art classes and to be so proud of his achievements.”*

Over the next year we will look at reducing the number of people on our postal mailing list in an attempt to save on postage costs, and continuing looking for new sources of funding for the newsletters and Creative Arts workshops.

Other funding this year came from £280 quiz winnings. Through Easyfundraising.com where online shoppers can “earn” donations for Wellspring, we raised £48.87 and £118.01 from Localgiving.com. We are extremely grateful to everyone who has supported Wellspring West Sussex in the past year.

Lizzie Baily

Chair – Wellspring West Sussex

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