**WELLSPRING WEST SUSSEX**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2017-2018**

During 2017-18, Wellspring West Sussex has continued to provide information to families with disabled and special needs children and young people 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 2017. Issue 1 was Get Active and focused sports and out of doors activities for children and young people across the county. The centre pages gave information on financial support to enable participation in sports and leisure. It also included my article “20 Years of Wellspring”, giving details of the ways in which we have grown since Wellspring was founded in 1996. Issue 2 focused on mental health - titled “Mind Matters” and contained details of support networks available for parents, children and young people. The newsletter had details of “Wheely Wonders” – inclusive family days run at my smallholding. This edition also had a paid advert from Christine Richards Therapies (£50).

Issue 1 was funded by The Thornton Trust, Midhurst Rotary Club, Sidlesham Parish Council and a donation from Judy Mellor. Issue 2 was funded by West Sussex Travel Society Charity, the Rotary Club of Bognor Hotham and John Wiley and Sons Ltd.

During 2017-18 our website and Facebook page were kept up to date with details of events happening across the county and relevant national information. We received £100 from Horsham Lions Club to pay for one year of our website hosting. On average the website receives 30-40 visits per month and our Facebook page now has 119 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. Followers of the Facebook page can also Share details with us.

This year we received £350 from the Thornton Trust and £115 in quiz winnings which has enabled Wellspring to continue funding places for children with special needs and their siblings at my Craft Club. At the People club in April to May 2017, an 11 year old autistic boy came with his 8 year old sister who had learning disabilities and an 8 year old boy with cerebral palsy and his 5 year old brother. At Christmas Craft Club 2017, a 7 year old boy with visual impairment attended the course and a 5 year old with severe disabilities attended one session with two friends of 5 and 3 who have undiagnosed conditions. At the first session of Spring Craft Club 2018 a 7 year old boy with autism came with his two sisters aged 7 and 10, and the last session was attended by a 8 year old boy with developmental and learning delay and his 8 year old sister.

All the children were very proud of their art and crafts and it was wonderful to see how they integrated with mainstream children in the groups. The older non-special needs children were also very kind and helpful. The parents had the confidence to leave their children in the safe environment. I received very positive feedback from all the families and they are keen to come back!

In May 2017, my friend Jen Keil who runs Woodland Wonders Forest School and I were approached by a mother with a disabled son who was looking for suitable activities for him and his friends. In July 2017, we ran our first “Wheely Wonders” family day on my smallholding which was attended by 5 children with special needs and their parents. The day consisted of a morning of Forest School activities with Jen which families paid for, followed by a picnic lunch on our field then an afternoon session at my Craft Club where places for the children were funded by Wellspring. Following the success of the first day, we ran five more family days up until Christmas with more new families booking in each time. Chris North also came to the September and November days and added some of his fun and magic to the afternoons. Jen and I were so pleased at the popularity of these days and will continue to run more next year with the hope of being able to get funding for the Forest School morning too.

Over the next year we will be looking for new sources of funding for the newsletters and Creative Arts workshops. We will be looking for more businesses who may wish to have a paid advertisement page in the newsletter. We will also ensure our mailing list is complying with the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) laws.

Other funding this year came from the Rowan Bentall Charitable Trust which will go toward the production of our next newsletter. Through Easyfundraising.com where online shoppers can “earn” donations for Wellspring, we raised £27.13 and £61.04 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

September 2018