**WELLSPRING WEST SUSSEX**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022**

During the year (2021-22), Wellspring West Sussex returned to normal providing information to families with disabled and special needs children and young people through our newsletters, website and Facebook page. We were also able to return to delivering face-to-face creative arts workshops with children and young people with special needs and their siblings.

The second newsletter of 2021 was published in the autumn and was on the theme Celebrating Diversity. We featured a local student who had returned from the Paralympics in Tokyo, and an article about Harry Ragless and his family who were campaigning for a beach wheelchair in Worthing. There was an inspiring article by Charlie Williams – now working as a Climate Scientist who made it clear in his article that he is not defined by his disability. This edition was funded by the Thornton Trust and Chichester Lions Club as well as including paid advertorials from ABA Autism and Southern Mobility Vehicles.

Our website and Facebook page were kept updated with relevant local and national information. The website received approximately 600 visits in the year and our Facebook page now has 200 people who “Like” it and are regularly updated with events and news shared. Followers of the Facebook page also Share details with us and this can then be put into our newsletters. We put each newsletter on the website when it is published and send an email to our online mailing list of 71 contacts. The website now has updated pages on Adam Gellibrand’s music workshops, Chris North’s creative workshops and Wheely Wonders days.

My Craft Club restarted following the pandemic with the Christmas sessions in 2021. I was able to provide a place for a 7 year old sister of an autistic boy funded by the Thornton Trust. She returned for the Spring Craft Club in March 2022 and funded places were also given to a brother and sister both with additional needs, an 8 year old boy with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy and his triplet sister. All the children enjoyed the activities and the parents were extremely grateful for the places provided.

Wheely Wonders days took place in 2021 with two dates in April with 23 children over the weekend. Over two days in June we welcomed 31 children; 14 had not attended a Wheely Wonders day before. In June 13 children attended and in July 9 children came for the day. These days from April to July were funded by the Hedley Foundation and the Thornton Trust. We were very happy to find out in July that our application to the National Lottery Community Fund/Local Connections Fund Round 2 had been accepted and we received funding for four more Wheely Wonders days from August to November. We welcomed 10 children in August, 13 in September, 18 in October and 16 in November. The October day was made extra special as we had a visit from Chichester’s MP Gillian Keegan and her husband Michael. Gillian said *“It was fantastic to visit the Wheely Wonders. Lizzie does an incredible job organising fun and creative activities for these children. It was great to see the massively positive impact the weekend activity service has on both the children and also their families who support them.”* A full report on all the 2021 Wheely Wonders days was published in the Celebrating Diversity newsletter along with a page of lovely feedback from parents, including these comments: *“It’s a really lovely day that goes at a lovely pace for all to be able to enjoy each part of the day fully because sometimes we need to make an emergency trip to the bathroom or connect feeds which means we would usually miss out.”*

*“I cannot speak highly enough about the day and the freedom it gives to both the children and their parents. Thank you so much Wheely Wonders!”*

*“All the children, no matter what their disability will never get left out of any activities from arts and crafts to fire lighting. This is such an incredible resource, I feel truly blessed we found it.”*

Funding this financial year came from The Thornton Trust (£500), Chichester Lions Club (£150), Local Connections Fund (£1468), Baily Thomas Charitable Trust (£1468), Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust (£1800) and The Toy Trust (£960). Through Easyfundraising.com where online shoppers can “earn” donations for Wellspring, we raised £20 and 5 donations were received, including from Sharon Langton (£115), Midhurst Rother College (£115.95) and Lizzie’s Christmas Craft sales (£145).

In the next year we will be looking for new sources of income to enable us to continue running all our workshops as well as supporting us with printing the newsletters and costs of post and packaging. We will be looking for businesses who wish to advertise in the newsletter and on our website and pay the monthly website fee. Our mailing list will be kept updated to ensure it is complying with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) laws.

We are extremely grateful to everyone who has supported Wellspring West Sussex in the past year and the support of all volunteers as well as the staff at the University of Chichester and Gillian Keegan MP.

Lizzie Baily

Chair – Wellspring West Sussex

September 2022