



**Kingston Society for Children and
Adults with Learning Disabilities**

KINGSTON MENCAP

**Affiliated to the
Royal Mencap Society**

The voice of learning disability

ANNUAL REPORT

2008

KINGSTON MENCAP Committee 2008

CHAIR

Gill Wood

VICE CHAIRMAN

Roger Wooderson

HON. SECRETARY

Cherie Furniaux

HON. TREASURER

Liz Mayes-Reid

GENERAL COMMITTEE

Sue Baker
Kim Bright
Fiona Burkeman
Colin Cushing
Heather Notermans
John Phillips
Eric Richardson
Iris Todd

SEEKERS Leaders:

June Bright & Shirley Temple

XPRESSION Leader:

Eric Richardson

FUTURE FRIENDS Co-ordinator:

Jill Kemp

KINGSTON MENCAP

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at
Dysart School, Ewell Road, Surbiton, Surrey
Wednesday 1st April 2008 at 7.30pm

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the AGM held on 2nd April 2007 and any matters arising
4. Annual Report and Chairman's Remarks
5. To receive and adopt balance sheet and accounts for the year ending 31st December 2008
 - a) Comments by the Treasurer
 - b) Confirmation and appointment of Honorary Auditor
6. Election of Officers, Committee and Representative
 - a) Chair, Vice Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer
 - b) General Committee
 - c) Representative with a learning disability
7. Any other business (as notified to the Chair prior to the meeting)
Presentation of 100+ hour Volunteer Certificates

NB. Written nominations for Officers and Committee can be sent to the Chair at 17 Oakway, London SW20 9JE at least 7 days before the date of the meeting or can be taken from the floor. Nominations should be fully paid up members of the Society and should be proposed and seconded. The consent of the nominee is required.

The AGM meeting will be followed by our Guest Speakers

and

“Wine & Buffet”

“Photographs”

“Information”

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday the 2nd April 2008 at Dysart School, Ewell Road, Surbiton

The chair Gill Wood warmly welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Steph James the head for Dysart's hospitality. A number of people, who were non members, had come to hear about the Independence and Wellbeing strategy under consultation. and Following general house keeping, pointing out the two emergency exits and asking for mobile phones to be switched off, the Chair requested for general questions to be held until the end of the meeting.

Apologies: Anne & Max Hawes, Ann Gallagher, Iris Todd, Vicky & Lee Hope, Phil Taylor, Mr & Mrs Din, Dan Lipscombe, Ann Williams

Minutes of the previous meeting dated 30th March, 2007 had previously been circulated to members and there were four matters arising

- 1) The new 19+ club started up in October 2007 and Jill Kemp would be giving an update later in the meeting.
- 2) The learning disability service was inspected in July by the Commission for Social Care and Inspection (CSCI) and copies of the report and action plan are available.
- 3) The new Kingston Learning Disability website went live in June.
- 4) There is now a new sign at Fairlawns.

Approval of the minutes was proposed by Richard Broom and seconded by Pat Cox.

Chairman's Report

The Chair reported that since the 2007 report a lot had taken place and a sub group of the Trustee committee were actively searching for a holiday home concentrating around the south coast and in particular around Littlehampton and Christchurch. The sub committee had recently viewed nine properties but none were quite right and were continuing the search and hoped to find a suitable home for this summer.

Gill said there will be many changes taking place in the future and members must continue to feed through their views and comments to ensure the voices of carers and service users are heard before change happens not after. She asked for comments on items mentioned in the newsletter to be passed on and said members views were needed and very important.

Gill told the meeting about the Learning Disability Partnership Board where decisions are made and she is a carer rep along with Karen Jerwood. She hoped others carers would get involved and attend board meetings to see what goes on. They are open meetings held every three months and Glen has more information if required.

Gill thanked the trustee committee, in particularly Liz for all her work with the accounts and Cherie for her continual support as secretary. She thanked members who had taken the lead at different and varied events and also thanked club leaders and volunteers for the opportunities and inventive activities they find to do each week.

Making Kingston Mencap what it is today!

Approval of the annual report was proposed by Roger Wooderson and seconded by Richard Broom.

Treasurer's Report

The Chair said the accounts had been tabled and invited the treasurer to say a few words. Liz reported it had been another good year for Kingston Mencap, giving over £38,000 to good causes compared to £17,000 last year. Liz outlined these donations
£5000 Dysart – used to install an amazing light and colour display system
£5000 Bedlesford – for their new sensory room
£5000 St Philips – towards refurbishment of classroom and toilets (some committee have already visited and seen children enjoying the improved facilities).
£5000 Xpressions – annual donation toward activities each term week
£3000 New 19+ club – plus extra for set up costs
£6000 Stud Farm annual rent and further £2000 for access paths
£6000 User Involvement Programme

The treasurer also reported we had received a substantial amount of money from a will bequest by the late Mrs Jean May Berry which will be used to purchase a holiday home for use by our members. This will protect the capital of this wonderful gift whilst still providing something for all members and families can enjoy for many years. She closed by saying it had been a very fulfilling year for Kingston Mencap.

Approval of Kingston Mencap Accounts were proposed by Sue Peck and seconded by Heather Notermans

Approval of Seekers, Xpression and 19+ clubs were proposed by Sue Peck and seconded by Roger Wooderson

Appointment of Honorary Auditor

Louise Healy had agreed to audit the accounts in 2008 and was proposed by Gill Wood and seconded by Liz Mayes-Reid

A letter of thanks and a small gift will be sent on behalf of members

Election of Officers and Committee

The following officers had been nominated

Chair	Gill Wood
Vice Chair	Roger Wooderson
Secretary	Cherie Furniaux
Treasurer	Liz Mayes-Reid

Proposed en bloc by Pat Cox and seconded by Peta Wooderson

The following Committee had been nominated

Sue Baker (new)	Kim Bright
Fiona Burkeman	Colin Cushing
Di Lacey	Heather Notermans
John Phillips	Iris Todd
Peta Wooderson	

Proposed en bloc and by Sue Peck and seconded by John Phillip

Any Other Business

a) 100 hour Volunteer Certificates– some volunteers had received their volunteering certificate at an Award ceremony arranged by KVC but some were unable to attend and were presented at the AGM by Simon Pearce.

b) Support Group – Kingston plan to fund and run a carers support group.

c) New Mencap logo – Members present agreed to use new logo as from 21st April 2008

d) Claire Webley of Royal Mencap reported on the Learning Disability Coalition – a group of 10 charities making sure choices for disabled are the same as everybody else. A petition for the government to provide enough money to councils for learning disability services was to be sent and 10,000 signatures were needed. Forms were available to sign.

e) SOS – Fiona Burkeman reported SOS promotes sports and fitness for people with a learning disability. Her son went along to one of their evenings and enjoyed sporting activities but when his carer requested an application form to join was refused. Fiona thought this was unacceptable and her son had been discriminated against. Sue Baker commented that she was unhappy with SOS as skiing and bowling was full up. Glen commented he had spoken to SOS and had been told that everybody would be included. Some training would come under RBK sport and leisure. Fiona is to write letter of complaint to national chairman and Jackie Batten of Service User Parliament would be interested in receiving more details.

Official Business ended at 8.00 pm.

Speakers introduced by the chair

1. Charlotte Fitzgerald – presented the Independence and Well Being draft strategy. Charlotte of community care services reported they were looking at what people need to stay in their home to keep them safe and well. A little bit of help initially can save on crisis help later on. Transport, support for carers, housing, learning – accessible and affordable, information and advice and support needed to allow people to do so much. Working with health, social services, education and voluntary groups to make sure all information and services in one place. Want to involve carers and users and encourage people to be volunteers and be good neighbours. Charlotte asked for ideas on what services were wanted and what stopped you getting help. A questionnaire is available to register ideas. Member of the audience commented on delay in processing eligibility criteria and Charlotte apologized and said she hoped to get report out in June. Member commented that it was hard for people with disabilities to take on the system if they do not have a good care manager and asked that the social care team, that fall far short, be looked into. Member of the audience raised concern for people with moderate needs and said council had been poor in the past at getting information out promptly which can be out of date and incorrect. Charlotte hoped that day centres etc staff should be able to signpost people to the help they need (training would be needed). Information can be given on the website and can be updated. Simon added getting information to all is difficult but were continuing to improve this and try different things. Councillor Nick Kilby felt information should be promoted through doctors and employees. People need to tell how services are going and feed back when going wrong. The Chair thanked Charlotte for the presentation.

2. Simon Pearce, head of community care, reported the council had set the budget and learning disability services were getting more, particularly in light of the CSCI report. A lot of departments were suffering cuts. New strategies will be introduced in consultation with carers with learning disability safeguarding on website. Since January we have a new brokerage team and they work differently to care manager who work actively with carers for level of need and make things happen. The council was doing a review of assets and planners have been looking at the Cocks Crescent. A developer was interested in providing a day centre on the old Texaco site, opposite New Malden library and carers and users to be involved in any issues. The Chair thanked Simon for his annual update

3. Glen Mills handed out leaflets on staff roles in the commissioning strategy structure. He spoke about the changing role of care management and fliers were available on the new support brokers. Free training courses were running again. He had brought copies of the Commissioning Strategy and action plan which he said needed to be read together. The borough buy lots of different services and a briefing plan on how to be buy services from particular providers. Glen wanted people treated with dignity and respect and the same headings used in the Commissioning as in Valuing People Now.

We need more money to be put in supporting the Parliament to get good feedback with more choice needed on housing and support to meet individual needs.

Glen also wants more opportunities for day and evening activities including work and leisure.

Access to health care is important and Glen wants PCP to work closely with GPs with an emphasis on individual service and health needs.

4. June/Shirley (Seekers Club)

They reported a good year with donated money used for a theatre trip. Their sponsored walk raised £1000. Club has gone on lots of trips and outings which are heavily subsidized. They have 53 members and 10 helpers with a wide range of ages. Subs and transport cost are going up but still remain small. Kim reported various things done at club – bingo, it's a knockout, snooker and darts, parents evening with fish and chips

5. Eric Richardson (Xpression)

James who attends the club said he plays air hockey and Xpression is a good club.

Everton who also attends club said he liked ball games, cookies, Easter eggs and cycling.

Eris reported they have 25 members and 12 volunteers and he was sad to see original members moving on. They had a good relationship with the club house caretaker.

£3000 has been received from the Kingston Magistrates rowing team and funds have been raised with a sponsored walk and run. There is a full range of varied activities on offer including football, basket dodge ball, swimming, who wants to be a millionaire and there have been trips to the theatre and Chessington world of adventures. Rakat provides a good transport service with our own driver. Eric finished by saying he was thinking about stepping down as leader due to the difficulty in juggling demands on his time especially as he was working fulltime now and recently married.

6. Jill Kemp (19+ Club)

Jill reported the club known as 19+ had a new name Future Friends, chosen by members. The club started in October and runs fortnightly and has approximately 20 members. The club is offering centre based and community activities with the community activities being more popular. Jill thanked Bethan Clark for agreeing to become treasurer and her band of volunteer supporters.

7. Mike Corrigan

Mike reported that he owes his job to the parents in Kingston who were keen for an integration of services. PCP, children's services and hospital trust to be merged into one organisation and have one manager and when this happens there will be a single assessment and referral point. The number of children with complex health needs has gone from 300 to 426 and are all receiving support from services. He wants to support children locally to stay with their families. A new location for staff is needed and Moor School is a possibility, although it needs refurbishing. With the new management structure he is accountable to parents and asked for their support as big changes are needed. He finished by saying he wanted to create opportunities for children.

8. The Parliament supported by Jackie Batten

Philip Hitchin Chair of the Parliament spoke about the parliament which was formed in 2005 to represent people with a learning disability. It was there to ensure people with a learning disability are listened to and involved in decision making.

John Diamond one of the Parliament Representatives said RBK need to sort out transport problems and try and get a new day centre and new transit vans.

The Parliament have had meeting with the police and produced emergency cards.

The parliament has taken part in consultations, attended forums in London and taken part in valuing people training. In September 2007 members stepped down ready to form a new parliament. 25 people have been interviewed with a view to becoming members of parliament or project workers. Reps will be chosen in an election and it's hoped a new parliament will be up and running by May.

9. Julie & Stella (Stud Farm/Victoria Park Café)

Julie Blythe said the farm was in its third year and lots of progress had been made. They have built lots of raised beds, a destructive deer had been removed and they are hoping to run a market stall on a regular basis in New Malden.

Graham who addressed the meeting works at the farm project and said he was enjoying the course and was doing ok.

The head of parks was impressed with the farm. Recycled wood is being used to make bird boxes, feeders, herb boxes and wheel barrow and they have lots of order. John said it was quiet and he was very happy working at the farm. Pottery for containers and woodwork course are being introduced.

Both Julie and Stella thanked Kingston Mencap for their support and Gill Wood for her close attention to the development and would like to see more parents visiting.

The Chair added that Stella and Julie were doing a great job and steering the project workers into fulfilling the dream of making it a going concern with paid workers.

The Victoria Park cafe has recently installed a cinema screen and a DVD club is now running on certain days.

There are also hygiene courses on offer although take up has been slow.

Gill thanked speakers and invited members to ask questions and raise issues

a) Fiona asked Simon to only consult service users when they have a definite site for a new Causeway and not to raise hopes.

b) The Partnership Board is open to everyone and this information needs to be extended so people know. Minutes are on the website.

c) Julie said you can drive into Stud Farm, although we have been told it is not allowed

d) The chair asked Mike Corrigan to comment on the lack of a nurse at Dysart School featured on the front page of the Surrey Comet. Mike replied that the nurse left in December and was the responsibility of PCP, but a nurse had been recruited for temporary cover.

e) Eric informed the meeting that Xpression Art work was on display at the Stanley Pickering Gallery at Kingston University and could be viewed daily from 11am-6 pm.

f) Sue Peck thanked Eric for his work at Xpression

Meeting ended at 9.45 followed by buffet and drinks

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2008

The last year has once again been a very busy one for everyone involved with Kingston Mencap and I am pleased to present on behalf of the Trustees this report for 2008

Kingston Mencap trustee committee continued to meet every month, to discuss and explore opportunities with the sole aim of making a better life for those with learning disabilities here in Kingston.

We feel it is important to put people with learning disabilities at the centre of everything we do. We want our local group to be supportive and provide up to date information to help improve the lives of those with learning disabilities, their families and carers and to help empower members to speak up for themselves and to challenge things they don't like or don't want to do! The committee work tirelessly to attend numerous meetings throughout the year with various groups and organisations and of course work closely with staff working in children, transition and adult services to ensure the voice of carers is heard and not forgotten. We clearly need to be listened to and work with those who are shaping the learning disability service here in Kingston. We want services that are modern and improved, with a better building and a joined up service to ensure everyone and everything is taken into consideration, especially for those who have attended a day service for many years and to those entering transition and adult services.

MEMBERSHIP

We continued the trend of attracting new members during 2008 and with our ever ageing membership we more than ever welcome new members and are committed to making contact with younger families.

It has helped enormously that some members signed up to pay their annual subscription by standing order and we are forever grateful for the huge amount of members who not only pay their subscription so punctually but also include a donation.

The members who have chosen to receive the newsletter and other information by email save much time, energy and funds and again we cannot impress enough the amount of work this saves.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

The continuing emphasis for all our activities is to provide and respond as flexibly as possible to members' individual requests and to support and to maximise independence and choice.

In everything we plan we try to provide suitable and interesting social days with the age old favourites such as the annual trip to Thames Ditton Railway, but we are always open to new ideas and suggestions.

Three teams entered the annual Bowling tournament in May and once again we booked the Richmond Venturer for 2 day trips down the river Thames for

small groups in June and September. During July we organised a summer's evening boat Disco aboard the Clifton, followed in August by an enjoyable morning of cycling around the park with Companion Cycling and a picnic lunch at the stockyard in Bushey Park. After the summer holidays we held a Jazz evening with a live band and finished the year with a Halloween party at the end of October with members favourite disco and karaoke DJ.

We have no difficulty filling the seats and signing up members so we must be doing something right but again I can't emphasis enough we want members to make suggestions and are willing to try out new things if you let us know your suggestions and views.

HOLIDAY HOUSE

The early part of 2008 was spent looking for a suitable house for members and families and a small sub committee spent several weekends looking in various areas along the south coast. After much searching we found a house in Christchurch which fitted the bill and we went on to purchase in early August. The secretary and I spent many days cleaning, sorting, buying and setting up ready for the first holiday in October and several members enjoyed breaks during the autumn and winter months.

It was always our aim to make the house as disable friendly as possible and we went on to make plans for a wet room downstairs for use by disabled members and to install a ramp to the front door, all in a very open plan setting which we know will benefit all members enjoying a break.

CARERS GROUP

On the 30th April we held our first carers group meeting. Committee agreed funding for 6 months and we continued to run and fund this group for members with a named facilitator until the end of 2008 and have now agreed funding for 2009. This has proved successful and something members told us they wanted by their attendance, to talk over problems and experiences and to share information with others. We had speakers on various subjects and other individuals attended to find out carers views and to ensure they are not only heard but taken into consideration when changing or setting up a new service.

CLUBS

The high quality of care and leadership provided by our Club leaders and the remarkable and reliable commitment of so many of our most valued volunteers is paramount in the continuing success and popularity of the 3 clubs we run.

Seekers continued to flourish with more opportunities and activities on offer each week with a great bunch of volunteer supporters. The trips out to the theatre and days out during the summer were as popular as ever. We continue to fund the weekly transport costs but the members sponsored

walk provides much needed funds. The programme of events now comes in an easy read picture format which has proved very popular with members.

Xpression spent their first weekend break away in the New Forest and at end of the autumn term members said goodbye to the leader, who although leaving Xpression signed up to our trustee committee.

We are so very lucky to have a new committed leader to guide the club through 2009 and of course not forgetting the support of all the volunteers, many of which are students.

Future Friends, in their first year, have continued to develop under the very able leader and although only meeting fortnightly have provided lots of different opportunities for members to try, ranging from a BBQ in the summer, working on a mosaic and wall climbing. They fundraised by running a 49 club and will be forever grateful for the support of a member's brother who donated his sponsorship money from various events he took part in during 2008

NEWSLETTER

The newsletter has grown in size although only produced on average every 2-3 months now. There always seems to be plenty of news to share with members and I am grateful to receive the various comments. The newsletter is mainly for parents and carers to keep everyone up to date with what is going on, but many members now receive their own personal copy and regularly tell me they like to see the photographs taken at the various club evenings or our social events they have attended.

To rally support and new members we sent out a complimentary copy of the newsletter to everyone on the disabled children's and adult register and in return signed up a number of new members. Members told me they liked having their very own copy, and it is still our aim to provide an easy read copy also.

FUNDRAISING/DONATIONS

Flag Day in October beat all records and with the brilliant organisation of one person and the important volunteer can shakers we raised another magnificent sum.

Christmas card sales were well down in 2008, although we actively looked for a new organiser, it will be no surprise to hear that card sales have probably had their day! It will take a very dedicated person and the commitment of members to continue buying otherwise and we will probably stop in 2009 - that is unless someone comes forward!

The **Christmas Fayre** social afternoon with stalls continued to be a popular fund raiser. Loyal members donated goods, came and spent their hard earned cash, and stayed for tea and cakes and enjoyed a well earned sit down and chat.

The **Christmas Raffle** is now in competition with lots of others and we don't sell the tickets we used to but we always manage to make a good sum and are still so very fortunate to receive lots of great prizes and donations from members and local businesses which we are forever grateful for. But one thing is for sure no fundraising would be possible without our wonderful band of volunteers!

We were so grateful for the support of Kingstonian FC who raised funds by holding a sponsored walk and we were presented with a magnificent cheque at the football game on April 26th

We received a legacy of £2000 from Chris Conacher as well as various other donations throughout the year, to celebrate birthdays, in memory of a loved one and we are eternally grateful to everyone for thinking of us.

Birthday cards and vouchers were sent to all our members with a learning disability and we receive many thanks throughout the year. We know how much it means to an individual who may have few cards on their birthday and we will continue to send

During May we started on the long journey in making a bid for the Big Lottery Fund for a Saturday Drop in club. We have been unsuccessful so far but we will continue in 2009 and hopefully receive a grant to kick start this exciting new project.

ROYAL MENCAP

The new membership agreement and new logo were adopted following members agreement at the 2007 AGM and as from April we began using the new logo. This has created extra expense as we had to start to change our letterhead and some of the Flag day stock to abide by the membership agreement.

During the early part of the year, with changes to Royal Mencap's Memorandum and Articles, London set up 4 district groups and we were asked to send representatives. We attended the first meeting but found the distance to travel and the time and commitment expected was too much with all the other meetings we felt we should attend in Kingston.

The end of an era for Mencap's home in Penrith Road when the 4 remaining residents moved successfully into a new home in Thetford Road. This is part of the supported living scheme and we are delighted that residents along with their regular care staff have settled in well. The home in Traps Lane will also be closing in 2009 and the Kingston residents will be moving into supported living.

During May we attended the London meeting to discuss the problems local groups encounter on a day to day basis, but find we are in a minority, as we are one of very few groups to be run by a volunteer committee.

Four trustee members attended a day's Trustee training and again we were astonished at the amount of rules and regulations we were expected to know about. It was at this meeting it came to light that our 2 trustee

members on committee with a learning disability are as liable as the other trustees, although the amount of understanding would make this impossible and we felt this was wrong.

As ever we are ever grateful to our local development officer for the input and support she managed whenever asked throughout 2008

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Working with people in other organisations and other local groups is a key part of providing effective support and ensuring we keep up to date with what is happening and to ensure information we gain is shared with you, our members.

We attended meeting with both Dysart and St Phillips and continue to work closely with other local groups in the borough.

CHANGES WITHIN RBK

The whole year has been one strategy after another within learning disabilities and there have been numerous changes this past year. In January the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) report and action plan were published and a new group was set up to ensure action happened! This group is made up of staff, carers and people who use services and meet up each month, including a Kingston Mencap representative. The Commissioning strategy was unveiled and during the summer consultation meetings took place to discuss what service users, families and carers wanted included in the Change Plan for modernising day services. It was agreed there needed to be a new Communications strategy to ensure families/carers received accurate information in the right way for each individual person and discussion took place over details of an information officer similar to the one in children's services.

An information day about health was organised by the learning disability Parliament and many family members and committee attended to add their experience and personal stories. We also attended meetings to discuss Individual budgets, Brokerage and Supported Living - so much information for everyone to take in and digest!

CAUSEWAY

The Causeway plans were updated on the Cocks Crescent site and we continued to hear the ups and downs of a new centre on the old Texaco site. The involvement of Barratt's Homes continued throughout 2008 and even as I write there is a new proposal being submitted. We desperately need a new centre ideally on the Cocks Crescent site but the Texaco site is a possibility, to give room for a Parliament office and to enable all the learning disability team to be on one site, but we need it to be built now!

Money is wasted on an old building that is far too big and not the right way to be running a modern day service that will continue to drain funds and stop more exciting, innovative work happening in the future.

Stud farm continues to grow and the popularity of the accredited horticultural courses increased attendance and we are still very committed in seeing it succeed. The manager kept committee up to date with what was going on throughout 2008 and provided details on the new woodwork courses and also the hygiene courses running at Victoria café. The original Stud Farm lease expired in 2008 and in May we agreed to fund half the annual rent for a further 3 years if the funding could be matched elsewhere and if and when a new lease was signed. We were sorry to lose the contact of the manager who oversaw the projects at the end of the year, as it was the first time in a long time we felt we were working together. There have been numerous access problems and communications have been lacking but at the time of writing we are in discussions with the Head of Learning Disability to ensure our input and co-working is not only accepted but valued as an important role in seeing this project succeed. As I write the draft Change Plan for modernising day service is now under consultation.

Many people contribute to the successes and achievements of our small voluntary society and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking everyone, our great band of volunteers who dedicate time and energy each week, our fundraisers and everyone who has helped us this past year. I thank you our members for your continued support and the generous funders who have supported us and our clubs this past year. Lastly, and on a positive note, each year brings more and more challenges and responsibilities and I take this opportunity to thank the Trustee Committee for their support, be it at meetings or supporting the social activities we run, knowing we will deal with every challenge that is presented and moving Kingston Mencap forward in 2009

Kingston Mencap would be nothing without this huge input from everyone
Thank you one and all

Gill Wood
Chair

Seekers Club Report 2008

Seekers Club as usual has had a very busy 2008 with several outings, theatre trips and activities which have all been reported in the Kingston Mencap newsletter.

We thought it would be nice to write a little about the helpers, drivers and escorts of the Seekers Club without whom there would be no club.

June and Shirley have both been associated with the club for many years, June 30years with Derek when he drove the mini bus and Shirley since 1983 when she went round to help Ethel make the teas and has been there ever since. That was in the days when the club met in St Johns Church hall in Grove Lane.

When we came to our present hall many of the helpers who came with us are no longer here, but we have a willing band of new volunteers and the club has progressed over the years.

With new helpers comes new ideas and though some of the old favourites remain, Pat, Heather, Pam, Claire and Christine organize craft, cooking and fun game nights. Peta is our disco queen and Roger is in charge of the 'boys' activities i.e. snooker, pool and table tennis. Kath is in charge of the teapot and disco nights its all hands on deck!

The helpers all give much of their time to the club not just Mondays, but evenings and days for our various theatre trips and outings. Two new sixth form students have recently joined us Araby and Dillon and Helen Johnson has returned from Lancashire to help when work permits.

We also have a team of drivers and escorts who turn out in all weathers to get the members to club and home again. Again without them there would be no club.

All this takes a lot of time and organisation, trips and outings to be booked and arranged, transport to be organized, birthday disco food to be bought and provided.

So many, many thanks to all our helpers who are all volunteers who willingly give their time and energy to Seekers Club.

Thanks to all
June and Shirley



This Report is Split into several Subsections as follows;

- 1. Members and Volunteers**
- 2. Club House**
- 3. Finances**
- 4. Activities**
- 5. Events**
- 6. Transport**
- 7. Leadership**

1. Members and Volunteers

Our membership and volunteer numbers have remained fairly steady in the course of the year, with on average 18-20 members showing up for club nights. We have also welcomed a number of new volunteers, including Kerry Williams, Dee Bitros, and Lewis Austin.

Leaving us, at least temporarily, were Martyn Parish, Rachel Harding and Kirsty Oudot, who have other commitments on Tuesday evenings until further notice.

2 Club House

The club house remains of questionable decorative quality. However, it still serves us well for our activities and the building management have been reasonably unobtrusive: This itself has been a double-edged sword, as although we have had no major problems with our use of the building, the building management have made a deal with a Wu Shu Kwan Kickboxing club as that they access the building at 8:30pm, which is exactly when we finish using the building. During the year, we had aspirations to make Xpression two hours long in order to get more mileage out of community based activities and enable new activities that would not be appropriate for the current one and a half hour slot that we currently run. The building management had agreed for the Kickboxing club to use the facilities here without contacting us for our agreement. Further to laying waste to the plans of extending the club's opening hours, it is also inappropriate for any other activity to commence after the club has finished in case we experience any emergencies and have to respond to them after club opening hours.

The kickboxing club is advertised to be running from 8:15pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays despite the fact that the Xpression de-brief runs on until at least 8:30pm.

3. Finances

Financially, the club remains stable and secure, with currently just over £17,000 in our accounts.

Throughout the year we have received around £7300 in total of donations, including £6000 from the Kingston Magistrates Boaters Club. All of us at Xpression would like to extend our warmest thanks to all of our donors. Without their help so many of the weekly activities would not be possible, and plans for more ambitious projects would be unthinkable.

Ideally, with additional funding, it would be highly beneficial to the club and the volunteers to have a volunteer training residential weekend away. These are invaluable to the Squad club as it endows the volunteers to be more skilled and comfortable with working in the community with the range of needs that the members exhibit.

Additional to this, the members' response from the year's residential weekend away was unanimously positive. All the members' were asked for feedback on the weekend away, and the general consensus was that:

- The bed's weren't comfortable enough (5* next time?!?)
- The activities were great
- The disco left a lot to be desired (poor music, small Venue)
- Although it was fun doing the activities with the Squad, if the option was there, they would rather have the next weekend to be exclusively Xpression, thereby allowing both more members and volunteers from the club to be in attendance.
- Self catering for 47 people was very difficult and provided a fair share of logistical challenges in addition to being difficult catering for specific dietary requirements.

Consequently, it would be good to secure the funding for an Xpression only weekend away that is independent, catered and run for and by Xpression.

With additional funds, Xpression would also greatly benefit from a Volunteer training weekend away. Training weekends have been instrumental for the Squad in the past, as it enables the volunteers to gain greater insight into dealing with challenging situations, how to make activities more accessible for

4. Activities

Xpression continued its tradition of creating a programme of activities that cater for being representative of the member's feedback on the types of activities they want to experience and new uncharted territories – activities that the member's may not have experienced before.

Some of the newer activities included our own rendition of Harry Potter's "Quiddich"; involving holding a broom stick between your legs while attempting to throw a vastly over-inflated ball through hoola-hoops. Certainly one of the surprise successes of the term

5. Events

This year heralded Xpression's first residential weekend away! In partnership with The Squad club in Wimbledon, we went to the Avon-Tyrell adventure centre in Hampshire, in the New Forest. The Activities were varied, adventurous, and calamitous – the best combination of adjectives for any activity.

The members took part in rock-climbing, raft building, low ropes, swimming (although this was just one member, and an unscheduled additional activity tacked on to the raft building exercise!). Other activities included problem solving, cooking, and a disco.

It was a great weekend and it wouldn't have been possible without the invaluable help of Ruth Hearn, Kirsty Oudot, Chris Brocklesby, and Diane Marlow.

6. Transport

Diane Marlow continues to provide regular, unquestioning, relentless service to Xpression. Our relationship with RAKAT has also continued to be fruitful, and we have again not been let down all year by their service to us.

Our main, ongoing issue with transportation throughout the year has been in relation to providing for members' specific medication needs. The issue has revolved around his requirements for an escort on the bus who is trained in administration of Rectal Diazepam.

We have hopes that this issue is now resolved, as the GP has agreed to change his prescription to another, orally administered medication, which is far more dignified and appropriate for the context of the youth club.

Finally, this year two of our members have been trained to help with general escorting duties on the club nights and they are receiving payment for their services. They have both been an extraordinary help for me and the club as it has freed up volunteers from having to arrive early to help with escorting.

7. Leadership

This year was Eric Richardson's final year as leader of Xpression, Eric had to resign as Xpression Group leader due to increases in professional and personal commitments, handing over the reins to me. It was with great pleasure that I took on the responsibilities of leadership with the club, as I have volunteered as deputy leader for four years, and have been involved with organising activities and many behind the scenes.

The transition should be seamless, as I am continuing with the pre-existing philosophy of Xpression, and any changes to the great formula will only be undertaken very carefully.

I look forward to leading the club through its fifth successful year, and continuing to help the club grow and develop.

Dave Cafferty



Report for January to December 2008

Introduction

The club was formed in October 2007 to provide leisure activities for young adults with learning disabilities in Kingston borough between 19 and 35 years old. It was originally called the 19+ leisure group but in early 2008 the members met at the Noodle Express in New Malden and over their meal thought up ideas for a new name.

The names were voted on and 'Future Friends' came out as a clear winner.

Future Friends runs fortnightly throughout the year without holiday breaks. Every 3 months a new agenda is given out with details of the activities planned. The agenda is written in an accessible format so that the members can choose the activities they want to come to.

Membership

At the end of 2008 there were 28 young adults who applied to attend the club activities. 27 of these have attended on at least one occasion.

Attendance has varied between 5 and 16 members. 19 members attended the Christmas dinner and disco on the 18th December.

Some of our members attend residential college outside the borough and are only able to make dates that occur within the college holidays.

Activities

There is usually only one activity planned each club night. Activities that have run this year are:

Art Activities

Photography, shadow puppets, kite making and mosaic making

Physical activities

Rounders in the park, bowling, climbing, swimming, dance

Other activities

Drama, kite flying, meal out, theatre, Girls Aloud concert.

The most popular activities have been dance sessions, swimming, climbing and bowling and members have also asked for another theatre trip.

On the 18th December the members met for a Christmas dinner at the Royal Oak pub in New Malden and Greg Rata, a member of Future Friends put on a disco afterwards.

Volunteers

Future Friends currently has 7 named volunteers and is always on the lookout for more as the club membership grows. On some evenings we have additional support from support workers who come with some of the members.

Finances

Future Friends is funded for its core running costs by Kingston Mencap and the Royal Borough of Kingston have promised the club £1000 per year for 3 years. In addition we have been extremely lucky to receive a substantial donation from the brother of one of our members who raised money by cycling one of the most difficult stages of the Tour De France – The ETAP. Gill Wood continues to collect unwanted mobile phones which raise £3.00 each for the club. Members are usually charged £3.00 per evening in subs but this is higher for the more expensive activities such as climbing, meals out and the theatre trip.

The future

We hope that Future Friends will continue in its success.

This year we will be doing a drama project with a drama company based in Surbiton called Bounce Theatre and we hope to arrange a short trip away for at least some of our members.

Report compiled by Jill Kemp, Club Co-ordinator.