



Hampshire Children and Families Forum

SRN PARISHES BRANCH

(covering West End, Hedge End, Botley, Bursledon, Netley and Hamble.)

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Minutes of Branch Meeting Held 26th April 2005 10 a.m.–12 noon at Freegrounds Infants School, Hobb Lane, Hedge End

1 Welcome and Apologies

Present:

Bob Stewart (Chair)

Linda Knowles (HCFF Co-ordinator)

Anne Stevens (Eastleigh Libraries)

David and Rachel Carter (National Autistic Society)

Penny Moore (Mini IQ)

Sarah Blohm (Atlantic Housing)

Karen Davies (School Health Nurse Eastleigh and Test Valley PCT)

Jacqueline Rolls (Eastleigh Borough Council)

Apologies:

Pat Statham (Eastleigh Playworker), Hannah Plom and Anne Stevens (Eastleigh Libraries), Lorraine Tate (Parentline Plus)

2 Speakers: David and Rachel Carter, National Autistic Society

The Carters introduced themselves as parents of an 11 year old son with Aspergers Syndrome, an Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Every year more and more children are being diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. ASD is a very wide spectrum of disorders with a common thread, diagnosed through what is called a 'triad of disorders'. These disorders are impairments of Social Communication, Social Interaction and Social Imagination. Briefly, Autistic children have difficulty understanding instructions and facial expressions, and have inappropriate social interaction (being either aloof and withdrawn or 'in your face') and cannot understand that another person's point of view can differ from their own. ASD is a 'hidden disorder' for which there is very little support. The biggest problem is the link with the school, and the Carters were full of praise for Wyvern Technology College which provides excellent support and communication with home.

There is a group for adults with ASD in Sholing, Southampton, but the Carters are concerned over the post-16 watershed when young people go to college and may not get the support they need.

They explained that there was very little support available for parents of autistic children. They had belonged to a support group in Andover, but when that group folded they decided to set up their own Autism and Aspergers Syndrome Parent Support Group and it has been running for about a year. They had over 30 people at their first meeting and now have over 60 on their books and regularly have twenty or more at their monthly meetings (normally on the 3rd Monday of the month) at the Bishopstoke Evangelical Church where they have invited speakers and lend books on autism.

In January this year the group became the Eastleigh and Winchester Branch of the National Autistic Society, and now have access to the resources of the society.. The group is run by a voluntary committee of five, and there is no charge for membership as they encourage their members to join the NAS. Theirs is the only NAS Branch in the area

As one of their members has connections with the Chandlers Ford Methodist Church Youth Club, they have the use of the church hall and equipment on a Saturday on a (roughly) monthly basis when they hold a family youth club. They find that being with a group of children with Aspergers Syndrome helps siblings understand the disorder better. They have held one successful social event, a skittles evening, and are planning another one in July, possibly a barbeque.

The group puts people in touch with one another and covers a wider area than just Eastleigh and Winchester: they even keep in e-mail contact with a member in the Falkland Islands. They get 3-4 phone calls per week now from people wanting information and support.

They advertise NAS through the schools, and Wyvern distributes information through its circulation area. The next phase will be to place posters in the Libraries, surgeries etc. They hope to set up a seminar in the near future, when they will have invited speakers. They already have a link on the HCFF website and will take advantage of offers to link to other local websites, and place links on their website.

3 Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising:

There was nothing to report following the last meeting except that the 0-19 proposal had been given a favourable reception by all branches. Bob Stewart recapped the reasons behind the proposal and reported that the Extraordinary General Meeting to ratify the proposal would probably take place in May. No change in working practices would take place until the funding was in place.

4 Current Work plan:

o Events:

The **Under Fives Fun Day** will take place in Hedge End at the Baden Powell Pavilion on Thursday June 9th and plans are well underway.

Following the **Focus Day** on April 20th, one parent requested a local 'mini' Focus Day for parents and children on the themes of Volunteer Reading, Creative Play, and Diversity. **LK** is to make contact with the parent and look into the possibility of setting up the event in Eastleigh and/or Southern Parishes if there is sufficient interest. It was suggested that the event could coincide with the **Big Draw** in October for which **LK** is hoping to run an event, but it may be more practical to wait until the Spring Term.

○ **Consultation**

This term's consultation is on Dental Care, and Linda is continuing research into after school clubs and play schemes.

○ **Proposal for an integrated database or 'passport' to facilitate parents' approaches to funding agencies and/or service providers:**

LK is preparing an outline of the proposal to present to HCFF executive and is preparing to research the feasibility of the project. She re-iterated her request for suggestions and advice.

5 **Newsletter:**

Evaluation of the newsletter suggests that readers are satisfied with the format and find it useful and 'reader-friendly'. The copy deadline for the next newsletter is May 6th so it can be ready to go to press on May 13th.

6 **Website:**

The web has been updated more regularly than before. The HCFF Directory is going on the web so that corrections and updates can be made before it goes to press.

7 **Information Exchange and Any Other Business:**

Anne Stevens reported that following the Hampshire County Council report on barriers to youth using the Libraries a number of 'user-friendly' changes were in place, including no fines, and a 4-week loan period. Cards were being issued to the print-disabled to allow them to borrow videos and CDs free of charge.

Jacqueline Rolls described her role in child-care support in the community, particularly in out of school clubs. Since the open-access summer playschemes have been cut, she is trying to support activities for families. People have been coming along saying they want to run activities, not necessarily play schemes and Jacquie hopes to attract funding to put on something.

Penny Moore introduced **Mini IQ**, for which she is an independent Associate. Owned by Book Club Associates, Mini IQ sells educational books and toys for 0-12 year olds mainly through home parties. Books and toys promoting early reading were available for examination. Penny

will be participating in the Fun Day in June and running an activity for the children.


Sarah Blohm introduced herself as newly in post with Atlantic Housing Group where she has a broad remit, not just through Atlantic Housing's tenants, but the whole community, to encourage local neighbourhood officers to get involved in local schemes similar to the Andover Green Scheme which prevented vandalism by getting young people to participate in landscaping projects. Sarah will contact young people's groups through HCFF and hopes to help publicise events like the Big Draw.

8 Date of Next Meeting:

To be confirmed.

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