

Neutral Ground Child Contact Centre

Registered Charity Number 1088970

Annual Report & Accounts

2021/2022



**NATIONAL
LOTTERY FUNDED**



2

Neutral Ground
received the
Queens Golden
Jubilee Award for
Excellence in 2003

William Temple Church Community Centre Eynsham Drive, Abbey Wood

SE2 9PT

Organisation

Status

The Centre opened in June 1993. Neutral Ground became a registered Charity in October 2001.
Registered Charity No 1088970

Governing Document

The new Constitution was adopted on 27th September 2000 and was amended by resolutions passed on 18th July 2001 and 26th September 2001. Changes and amendments to the Constitution were adopted on the 1st July 2015.

Objects of the Charity

The object of the Centre is to alleviate the hardship and distress of children resident in the Royal Borough of Greenwich and surrounding areas according to demand caused by the break-up of marriage, relationship and family and to preserve and protect the mental and physical health of such children by providing and maintaining a centre and facilities whereby such children can more readily enjoy the company and love of their non-residential parent or other significant persons.

Trustees

The Trustees are Stephen, Ivor, Jean, Paul, Joanna, Liz, Ruth & Stanley.

Management

The project is managed by the “Management Committee” comprising the Trustees who meet regularly bi-monthly, and at other times if necessary.

The Co-ordinator

Liz Cutajar was the Co-Ordinator at Neutral Ground from August 2012 to March 2017 employed on a part time basis. Gemma Smith (nee O’Sullivan) commenced as Co-ordinator from the 1st April 2017 until the present time.

The Volunteers

Jean Peck, Ivor Kinsey, Donna Lear, Denise Ostick, Karen Swan, Rosie Ainscough-Daniel, Petruta Cojan, Amina Salami, Kelly Whelan, Adriene Teixeira, Philippe Ladvocat, Daryl Osullivan, Ruth Turner, Ryan Scott, Viola Beharry-Bhudial, Karen Elliot-Seeds, Emma Power, Siobhan Lavender.

Affiliations

We are fully accredited members of the National Association of Child Contact Centres.

Training

The Co-ordinator and volunteers have all undergone extensive training which is updated from time to time as opportunities arise.

Finance

The Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2022 are attached.

The Centre

The Centre opens every Saturday from 10.00 am until 4.00 pm . The Centre is closed on bank holiday weekends and Christmas.

Outside Area

We have the great advantage of being able to use the secure outside area during the summer months. We have started creating a new and exciting outside space with a new football pitch and we are looking at more developments.

The Premises

We have two rooms for contact with one used as a lounge with comfy chairs and TV and the other with a range of play activities. We also have a coffee bar and kitchen for parents to use if they wish.

The Children

We are always looking for ways to improve the service we give. **Our priority has always been to the children, and this remains our prime motivation.**

Reports

Chair of Trustees Report

This year began well with a very positive accreditation report from The National Association of Child Contact Centres and the gradual relaxing of covid restrictions which has meant that over the year we could offer a more flexible service to more families. The pandemic continues to cast a long shadow, however, and we are not sure when we will reach a 'new normal' and what that may look like. Some families continue to feel unsafe about mixing with others.

There has been a continued increase in the number of referrals received over the past year, perhaps due to the stresses of lockdown or financial burden. We will continue to work within the government restrictions to be able to offer more families the chance to have contact. One positive outcome has been that some long term families have found the confidence to develop alternative arrangements and have managed to sustain them moving forward.

We have also been pleased to see some volunteers move on actively using their experience with Neutral Ground in the new challenges they have taken on. In addition, we have recruited new volunteers who are settling in well.

The loss of legal aid has continued to have a huge impact on people wanting to access our centre, as we offer a free service that many people would struggle to afford contact in other settings. At the beginning of the financial year, CAFCASS wrote out to Contact Centres across the country with a rather disconcerting and unhelpful letter suggesting that they were reviewing their commitments and support to Contact Centres. Thus adding to the uncertainty and precarious feeling that some Centres are experiencing. Fortunately, we are long established and have the support of a number of organisations which put us in a good position to weather such storms. We will of course keep a careful eye on developments as it is vital for Contact Centres to have good relations with CAFCASS.

In September, William Temple Church gained a new vicar, Rev Ruth Turner, who has subsequently joined our Board of Trustees and provided a welcome new perspective and enthusiasm for our work.

As ever, the Trustees have met regularly through the year and reviewed developments as we have gradually re-extended our services and ensured that we continue to have the appropriate protocols and policies in place. I finish with three quotes from our NACCC accreditation report received in April 2021 at the very beginning of this accounting year:

“The centre has demonstrated that all have worked hard to encourage parents to use the centre as a stepping stone to enhance the quality contact time children have with their absent parent and to improve their own communication between each other.”

“It is clear from the assessor meeting parents, children and volunteers that Neutral Ground offers an invaluable service for those families that have attended and presently attend.”

“A great amount of commitment and hard work by the coordinator, volunteers and committee members have ensured the centre is well staffed, supportive, available, welcoming, inviting to all who use the service.”

Stephen Whitmore, Chair of Trustees

Report from Co-ordinator.

After my fifth year at Neutral Ground I would once again like to thank the Trustees and the volunteers for the continued love and support they have shown me.

Since our last AGM we have worked hard to get through our waiting list and regain the atmosphere and families we had at our centre before COVID-19.

In September 2021 we removed our contact pods and introduced lateral flow tests for volunteers and visiting adults. This allowed us to return to a more communal contact session format allowing us to offer increased spaces for contact visits while ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all involved.

We continued to temperature check the children visiting their parents and handwashing and mask use remained in place.

We have continued to offer virtual contact to families who are isolating, offering zoom conference calls for parents needing advice and support.

In addition to our working relationship with Fare Share; we have made a link with Greggs and now collect unsold food on a Tuesday and a Friday. This helps to feed both our volunteers and families. We have also donated this food to local ambulance stations and the fire brigade if we have too much. The local adventure playground in Plumstead have also benefited from us having the excess food. In return we have given some families information about our centre.

September also saw the arrival of our New Vicar and Volunteer/Trustee Ruth Turner.



At Christmas we received many donations of advent calendars & Selection boxes from supporters of Neutral Ground to distribute to our families.

We have seen an increase of 2 new volunteers so far this year; and 2 of our volunteers were successful in their adoption journey and have moved on.

In June we had a group of 20 American students from European Cultural Experiences Ltd. They were directed to us by Volunteer Centre Greenwich. They worked hard to transform our garden area and fill our sandpit with sand.





We look forward to meeting our new families and the continued success of Neutral Ground Child Contact Centre.

Gemma Smith, Co-ordinator.

Wanted...

We still need to increase our number of volunteers. If you feel you would like to help in this way (or if you know of anybody else who would) please speak to Gemma Smith or ring her on 020 8310 0727 or 07954 211103 email contact@neutralground.info.

There are also vacancies on the Management Committee! If you feel you might be able to help, please speak to any member of the committee.

We also need help with fundraising!

Thanks...

- Violet Lundsten for updating the website
- To Gemma Smith, our Co-ordinator.
- To the volunteers for their dedication and commitment. *The high reputation which the Centre enjoys is very much due to their efforts.*
- To the members of the Management Committee for their input.
- Especially to all those who either currently support us or who have supported us in the past.

The National Lottery
 The Tudor Trust
 NACCC
 Santander Foundation
 PwC
 Blackheath Golf Club
 CAFCASS
 All Saints, Blackheath
 The Bishop's Lent Appeal
 Waitrose
 Hudgel & Partners
 Sainsbury
 DODS Parliamentary Teresa Pearce MP
 Other private donors
 CCK Church
 Co-op
 Tesco

**, Childhood Trust
United Reform Church
The Welling Freemasons
Mr Lucas Ainscough
Benevity Giving Platform
Mr & Mrs Kehinde**

The following notes form an integral part of these accounts.

Notes to Receipts and Payments for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

- 1 The Receipts and Payments have been prepared on a cash basis. This means that income and expenditure are shown in the Receipts and Payments as and when we received or paid in cash. On this basis
- 2 Statement of Monetary Assets and Liabilities as at 31 March 2022

Monetary Assets	2022	2021
(a) Bank current account	<u>31,023</u>	<u>28,893</u>
Represented by:		
(b) General Fund	<u>31,023</u>	<u>28,893</u>

Bank Reconciliation

Balance on Statement 31.03.22	31,888.46
Less: unpresented cheque 000614 for Rent Jan - Mar 2022	(865.00)
Balance as above	<u>31,023.46</u>

Memorandum

These accounts are prepared on a cash basis. There remains a balance of funds held by the Payroll Bureau at 31/03/2022 and carried forward into the financial year beginning 01/04/2022 in the sum of £870.68:-

	£	£
Balance brought forward 01/04/2021		474.92
Co-ordinator's Salary	16,556.64	
Difference in Payroll S/O	395.76	
Payroll Bureau Fees	<u>447.60</u>	
Payments made Apr 21 - Mar 22		17,400.00
Payroll Costs Apr 21 - Mar 22		(16,556.64)
Payroll Bureau Fees Apr 21 - Mar 22		<u>(447.60)</u>
Balance carried forward 31/03/2022		<u>870.68</u>

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Neutral Ground Child Contact Centre. I report on the accounts of The Charity for the year ended 31st March 2022 which are set out on pages 1 to 3.

Respective responsibility of trustees and examiner.

The charity trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year (under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed. It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of this Report

My examination was carried out in accordance with General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanation from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the next statement.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination no matter has come to my attention.

(1) Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirement:

to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act and to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Act have not been met, or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: 

Date: 13th January 2022

Peter Ludlow
4 Abbotswood Close
Belvedere
Kent DA17 5RN