

THE ENGINE SHED ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22



The Engine Shed
31 Grove Hill
Reading RG4 8PN
Registered Charity No. 1187504
www.theengineshed.org.uk





The Engine Shed is a special interest group for autistic children, young people and adults which was set up over thirteen years ago and is run by volunteers. The group was set up by parents and carers in response to the lack of welcoming and supportive recreational facilities for our autistic children and the profound isolation that autistic children and their family members were facing as result of this.

We run regular train play sessions in halls, organise days out at railway-themed attractions and also run sibling activities and parent information sessions and training.

We are one of the '10 Best UK Rail Adventures for Children' (Telegraph 2018).

Chair's Introduction

The last couple of years have been very difficult for autistic children and adults at our Engine Shed groups. The disruption to schooling and education (with children and adults either not attending or attending part-time), the cessation of regular social, recreational and sporting groups and activities and confinement to the house has been enormously challenging. The social isolation, the lack of regular activities and - for some of our members with learning disabilities - the lack of comprehension of what is happening around Covid has created substantial mental health problems in our community.

We worked hard to step up our activities again this year whilst we could - to create opportunities for community and interaction and to start creating positive memories again for the children and adults who attend sessions.

We were delighted to receive a grant from the National Lottery/Ikea in October to run sessions and days out. Our booked trip for 40 people on the Polar Express was unfortunately cancelled at the last minute due to COVID but is rebooked for 2022.

Our fundraising to buy a van to deliver our current sessions and to take the trains on the road continues and we hope that over the next year we will be able to secure our own van. This will enable us to deliver more sessions, including additional groups, and involve our older members in essential volunteering activities with peers.

We are grateful to all our volunteers; as well as the behind the scenes preparation, there is several hours of lifting heavy boards and boxes involved in running our sessions - and many people have been doing this for over a decade! Thank you all very much.

Sarah Snow, Chair

1 Train Play Sessions in the Community

Train play sessions in Reading and Chingford this year have continued to provide opportunities for inclusive play and interaction, meeting when possible throughout the last year. Lots of newly diagnosed children and their families are now attending sessions after Covid and we want to ensure that they can benefit from a full range of activities at this early stage of the journey.

Young people at The Engine Shed, Chingford



2 Train-Themed Days Out

We had a lovely time in August at the High Wycombe Model Engineering Club, who once again put on their annual summer fun day for us, complete with BBQ and home-made cakes. We are grateful to the local Freemasons for organising this event, and funding lunch and cake, and the team at HWMEC for their hospitality. This is the seventh year that this event has been put on for us and it was extra special this time as we have had so few opportunities to meet up.



The days out provide opportunities for further interaction and bonding. We were delighted to secure funding from sources including the Lottery/Ikea Places Called Home grant programme to support a group trip on the Polar Express. Our booked trip for 40 people on the Polar Express was unfortunately cancelled at the last minute due to COVID but is rebooked for 2022.

3 Screening of The Reason I Jump

We had a sponsored group visit to see the award-winning film *The Reason I Jump* in Reading in October. Based on the book by Naoki Higashida, this immersive film explores the experiences of non-speaking autistic people around the world. Members of our adult group attended, as well as parents and carers who attend our play sessions.



3 Moving ahead with fundraising for the van

As detailed in the last report, the van which the Reading group has relied on for monthly sessions for over ten years (owned and driven by our long-term volunteer, now in his mid-70s) is on its last legs. The van is used to transport our G-gauge trains and the huge track boards (measuring 10 feet x 4 feet). The large trains are a key attraction of many sessions; people do not have these at home and attendees enjoy driving and racing the trains with the dual controls.

We would like to have our own van so that our volunteer can give up his old van which he is only holding onto for us. We also want to meet the demand for additional sessions across the region. We receive lots of enquiries about bringing trains to community events and special schools but require the flexibility of our own van to do this.

The van will enable us to take the train resources into the community and to deliver multiple Engine Shed groups across the region, meeting regularly and bringing autistic children and young people, their parents and carers and older volunteers together.

Linked to the van purchase, we would like to develop a formal volunteer programme for our adult group members as part of this process. This will provide further volunteering, apprentice and possibly employment opportunities for members of the group (many of whom experience severe isolation) - whilst delivering an extensive programme of community train sessions for autistic children and young people across the region.

This creation of community and support will promote local friendship, connection and networks that will have long term benefits for all.

Building on the fundraising success of 2020-21, we were grateful to receive positive responses from a number of funders in the reporting year, including from Mobbs Memorial Trust, The Shanly Foundation, the Souter Charitable Trust and The John Sykes Foundation. We very much hope that we will be able to purchase the van within the year.

Grant is on the right tracks for The Engine Shed

By PHIL CREIGHTON
news@eng.today

A GRANT given to a group that helps children and adults with autism will be put towards its fundraising efforts for a new van.

Last week, The Engine Shed, received support from the Covid-19 Relief fund set up by the John Sykes Foundation.

The special interest group has been running from Katesgrove Children's Centre for 12 years, using model railways and train sets for participants to play with.

It hopes that the van will enable it to continue to deliver the Reading sessions and to meet the demand for additional sessions.

The group was set up by parents and carers in response to the lack of welcoming and supportive recreational facilities for autistic children and the profound isolation for individuals and family members.

Sian McCoubrey, a volunteer at the John Sykes Foundation, visited the monthly session along with Cllr Sophia Jones to present the cheque to Sarah Snow, chair and trustee of The Engine Shed.

"We are constantly asked to take sessions to other local venues and over the years have held events at



Reading's special schools, community fetes and fairs," said Ms Snow.

"We have been unable to meet demand for all session requests as we are limited by the lack of our own van and the accompanying driver/volunteer time to take on extra sessions.

"Coming out of lockdown, it became clear that the van which the Reading group has relied on for monthly sessions for over 10 years was on its last legs."

The van is used to transport its G gauge trains and the huge track boards.

"The large trains are a key

attraction of many sessions; people do not have these at home and attendees enjoy driving them with the dual controls," Ms Snow said.

"We would like to have our own van to meet the demand for current and additional sessions - and to involve our thriving Reading adult group in volunteering opportunities."

As well as the train sessions, The Engine Shed has expanded to include days out, sibling activities, film nights, training, social events for parents and carers and sessions for autistic adults.

For many families, The Engine Shed is one of the few places that they attend where their autistic children

SUPPORT:
The Engine Shed received a covid grant from the John Sykes Foundation

are absorbed in a stimulating activity with peers and where they have time to talk with others in a similar position," Ms Snow said.

"One unexpected outcome of the group is the coming together of older train enthusiasts, who bring their layouts and expertise, with the autistic children/young people who are similarly passionate about trains.

"This engagement has led to long-lasting volunteer placements, with three of our retired volunteers helping at sessions for over 12 years."

Ms McCoubrey was pleased that the Foundation could help The Engine Shed: "It was amazing to see so many children and young adults taking an interest in the model trains," she said.

"The energy in the building was electric and I could really see the benefit this group brings to the children and their families. It is a safe and happy environment and the children loved building and making railway tracks and playing with the trains.

"We really hope to be able to visit the group again soon and wish them lots of luck with their fundraising."

■ www.theengineshed.org.uk/
■ Charities and organisations who would like to apply for support from the John Sykes Foundation's covid relief fund can visit: www.johnsykesfoundation.org

4 Sustaining Activities

The Engine Shed is committed to accessibility. We have always sought to remove obstacles to individuals and families attending Engine Shed sessions - you do not need to book, you do not pay, refreshments are free. There are now a number of toy train-related activity schemes which are charging £12-£13 for a two-hour session. If you have 3 children like many of our attendees do, this equates to £35+ for two hours of playing with trains in a local hall. This is beyond the reach of many of the people who would benefit from the club's activities. During a financial crisis it is more important than ever that we keep sessions free of charge. In addition, booking online in advance does not always work well for families who are taking one day at a time depending on the needs of the child or young person. We remain committed to this no-cost / no-fuss model which is part of The Engine Shed's success.

We fundraise on an ongoing basis to keep the activities free of cost to our attendees. Trustees will be exploring funding opportunities this year, and we will also join the Charity Winter Draw in Reading again, selling raffle tickets to support our work. We would love to hear from anyone who would like to run a marathon, hold a cake sale or organise a fundraising event for The Engine Shed. We can help with publicity, materials and other support required.

Signed

Sarah Snow, Chair of Trustees

The Engine Shed
Year ended 31st March 2022

	2022 Restricted	2022 Unrestricted	2022 Total	<i>2021 comparison</i>
Income				
Grants received:				
People's Health Trust	0.00		0.00	2,482
Lottery & IKEA	4,332.00		4,332.00	0
Persimmon	0.00		0.00	1,000
COVID Response	0.00		0.00	6,950
Berks Community Foundation	0.00		0.00	2,190
Arnold Clark Foundation	750.00		750.00	0
Good Exchange	2,000.00		2,000.00	7,093
Local Connections Fund	0.00		0.00	1,800
Awards For All	0.00		0.00	9,750
Reading Borough Council	2,580.00		2,580.00	0
Mobbs Memorial Trust	3,000.00		3,000.00	0
Shanly Foundation	2,500.00		2,500.00	0
John Sykes Foundation	1,000.00		1,000.00	0
Souter Charitable Trust	2,000.00		2,000.00	
Misc donations		389.96	389.96	1,048
other income				
Total income	18,162.00	389.96	18,551.96	32,312

Expenditure

Venue Hire and Office rent	7,710.55		7,710.55	14,396
Equipment	764.52		764.52	8,102
Activity & carer packs	182.89		182.89	536
Excursions & other activities	2,355.75		2,355.75	0
Volunteer expenses	665.08		665.08	1,266
Refreshments	343.88		343.88	242
Website, promotional mats etc	288.00		288.00	75
Train and Book resources	0.00		0.00	121
Parent & carer activities	319.62		319.62	70
Insurance	298.56		298.56	299
Fees, misc expenses, running costs	3,980.80		3,980.80	440
other expenditure				0
Total expenditure	16,909.65	0.00	16,909.65	25,546
Total Income less Total Expenditure	1,252.35	389.96	1,642.31	6,766
Opening bank balance	17,366.00	1,022.48	18,388.48	11,622
Surplus/(loss) from above	1,252.35	389.96	1,642.31	6,766
Closing bank balance	18,618.35	1,412.44	20,030.79	18,388

The Engine Shed
Year ended 31st March 2022

Balance Sheet as at 31st March
2022

	£
<i>Current Assets</i>	
<i>Debtors</i>	0
<i>Cash at Bank</i>	20,030.79
<i>Total current assets</i>	20,030.79
<i>Current Liabilities</i>	
<i>Creditors</i>	0
<i>Total Net Assets</i>	20,030.79
<i>Funds</i>	20,030.79

Signed  22-1-23

Signed 

Sarah Snow, Chair of Trustees

Rod Leith, Treasurer