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ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

THE ENGINE SHED, 31 GROVE HILL, READING RG4 8PN
REGISTERED CHARITY NO.1187504



ABOUT THE ENGINE SHED

The Engine Shed is a special interest group for autistic children, young people and adults which was set up over fourteen 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 at our unit in Reading and in two locations in the London area, organise pop-up sessions and days out at railway-themed attractions. We 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

This year has seen a continued expansion of our activities and an exciting move into rented premises. The lead Engine Shed group in Reading moved into its own space in the summer of 2023; here the trains are permanently laid out and we can offer more regular sessions throughout the week, aimed at various age groups. We have been carrying our huge layouts into halls for over fourteen years and it has frankly been exhausting! The large G-Gauge layout requires angle-grinders and lots of manipulation to get into place at each session, almost doubling the length of the session with the preparation and dismantling at the end. Having our own unit allows us to be ready for visitors and to shape the environment so that it is as welcoming and accommodating as possible.

The Engine Shed in Bromley marked its first anniversary this year and in the same month celebrated a Send Champion for Community Award from SEND STARS in Bromley! We are delighted that the Bromley group has really taken off and created a warm and welcoming community in the SE London borders.

We enjoyed some wonderful days out to heritage railway attractions over the year. We are grateful to the organisations for offering these opportunities including High Wycombe Model Engineering Club, Fawley Hill and the Pinewood Miniature Railway in Bracknell

We are very grateful for the grants from local and national funders; these have enabled us to pay the rent on the Reading unit, create new railway layouts, purchase resources and to run the groups in three localities. We now have ambitious plans for the coming year: the landlord has offered us the opportunity to buy the Reading unit and we are fundraising to make this possible. We aim to create a rich and unique permanent Reading-based resource that is available for the community to use, and which meets many of the social and support needs of the autistic community with whom we work, including those with learning disabilities. We aim to be a safe space for autistic people and those who care for them.

Finally, all of our train-related fun requires many volunteers. We appreciate everyone involved in The Engine Shed - those helping with social media, writing funding applications, doing heavy lifting, helping with electrical work, creating layouts and making tea for everyone. Thank you for another wonderful year.



Sarah Snow, Chair

TRAIN PLAY SESSIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

We now have the lead Engine Shed group in Reading and the two groups in the London area: Chingford in the North and Bromley in the South.

Bromley: The Bromley group marked its one year of activity this year and we were delighted to win an award from the Bromley SEND Partnership.

Michael Stotter-Chambers receives the SEND Stars award in October 2023.



Chingford: The Chingford group continues to be very well attended. The group has been running for over thirteen years, led by Gillian Herbert and her volunteers - most of whom have been there since the very beginning!



Reading: The Engine Shed unit in Reading benefited from a grant from the Screw Fix Foundation which enabled us to transform the space into a multi-layout train emporium. We have a large room with G-Gauge and Hornby layouts and two smaller rooms, one for wooden track and the other for plastic track.

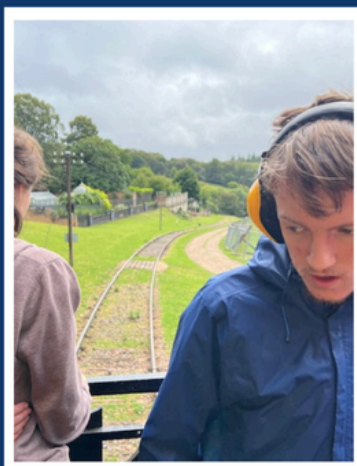


TRAIN-THEMED DAYS OUT

We enjoyed a number of train days out this year, including to Cholsey and Wallingford railway in our mini-bus, to Fawley Hill, and Pinewood Miniature Railway in Bracknell.

Once again we had a lovely time in August at the High Wycombe Model Engineering Club (HWMEC), at the annual summer fun day that the team put on for us. We are grateful to the local Freemasons for organising this event, and funding lunch and cake - and the team at HWMEC for their hospitality and enthusiasm.

The days out provide valuable opportunities for further interaction and bonding for our children and young people.



'Thank you so much for a lovely day out to Fawley Hill. It really was a magical day full of trains and animals....'

Email received by parent/carers

A Home for The Engine Shed in Reading

After moving into our rented unit in Reading, and receiving the offer to buy the space from the landlord, we are now working on creating a permanent and sustainable home and base for The Engine Shed.

The new permanent space will provide a foundation for further recreational and also volunteering opportunities for our adult members. With volunteers in place, adult members can attend during the day and find community and activity. Newly-diagnosed early years children have particular needs, and their parents are looking for support at the start of their journey. Having our own space, open and staffed by volunteers, enables us to offer sessions all week, for different age groups, where we can also deliver other activities and forms of support for children, young people, and parents and carers.

We are now working hard to fundraise to buy the unit, applying to trust and foundations and also running our own fundraising activities.

Sustaining our 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 charge to our attendees. Trustees will continue to explore funding opportunities for running costs this year. 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.



The Engine Shed
Year ended 31st March 2024

	2024 Restricted	2024 Unrestricted	2024 Total	2023 comparison
Income				
Grants received:				
Screwfix Foundation	5,000.00	-	5,000.00	-
Berks Community Foundation	9,570.00	-	9,570.00	1,500.00
Arnold Clark Foundation	-	-	-	-
Four Barrows Foundation	-	-	-	2,200.00
Good Exchange	-	-	-	1,550.00
Baily Thomas Charitable Fund	-	-	-	3,000.00
Reading Borough Council	3,900.00	-	3,900.00	-
Postcode Society Trust	6,000.00	-	6,000.00	-
Shanly Foundation	-	-	-	-
The Coop Community Fund	2,441.49	-	2,441.49	-
Souter Charitable Trust	3,000.00	-	3,000.00	-
Local Giving	500	-	500	500
Earley Charity	-	-	-	5,000.00
Awards For All	9,950.00	-	9,950.00	9,950.00
Misc donations	-	1,712.78	1,712.78	6,592.28
Other income	-	-	-	-
Total income	40,361.49	1,712.78	42,074.27	30,292.28
Expenditure				
Hire of Venues	14,472.20	-	14,472.20	13,693.82
Minibus and related costs	1,288.97	-	1,288.97	29,003.21
Utilities	1,642.62	-	1,642.62	-
Equipment	1,886.41	-	1,886.41	249.87
Days Out, Excursions etc	492.15	-	492.15	968.76
Activity & carer packs	-	-	0	140.9
Volunteer expenses	523.1	-	523.1	573.24
Refreshments	768.73	-	768.73	808.24
Website, promotional mats etc	150	-	150	216
Train and Book resources	-	-	0	251.62
Parent & carer activities	-	-	0	-
Insurance	408.24	-	408.24	298.56
Fees, misc expenses, running costs	3,066.24	-	3,066.24	374.56
other expenditure	-	-	-	-
Total expenditure	24,698.66	0	24,698.66	46,578.78
Total Income Less Total Expenditure	15,662.83	1,712.78	17,375.61	-16286.50
Opening bank balance	2,305.03	1,439.26	3,744.29	20,030.79
Surplus/(loss) from above	15,662.83	1,712.78	17,375.61	-16286.50
Closing bank balance	17,967.86	3,152.04	21,119.90	3,744.29

The Engine Shed
Year ended 31st March 2024

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2024

	£	
Current Assets		
Debtors		0
Cash at Bank	21,119.90	
Total current assets	21,119.90	
Current Liabilities		
Creditors		0
Total Net Assets	21,119.90	
Funds	21,119.90	

Signed



Sarah Snow, Chair of Trustees

Signed



M. Baker, Independent Examiner

