

## **Dee Street Playgroup**

### **Annual Report 2022 – 2023**

Dee Street Playgroup against all the odds continues to thrive in this community. The committed staff team each year identify the many and varied needs of the local children and their families and tailor our services to best meet these needs. The playgroup staff team work tirelessly to develop and deliver a high quality- learning environment and support services.

This year we provided a playgroup for 16 local children and early in September it became apparent that 4 of these children had additional needs, in the form of developmental delays, behavioural issues and Autistic traits. Once again, we were the first to recognise these issues and working in partnership with their parents began to implement our early intervention strategies. Contacting Health visitors, advising parents on strategies to help with the children at home. Liaising with outside agencies, preparing reports on the children for speech and language referrals etc.

I would like to mention the work of Mrs Lindsay Fulton who patiently day after day, worked tirelessly to support one of these children with quite severe autism. In September this child cried endlessly every single morning when coming into playgroup, this is to be expected of course as the child could not cope with transitions, we soon realised this child was a very visual learner and proceeded to make her visuals for her daily routine, but it was through Lindsays calm and consistent approach over many months that slowly the child began to come in without crying. This child could not cope with snack time and would not eat or drink anything for months, once again through daily slow exposure to the routine, six months on she began to eat with the others, toilet training was the same slow process day after day slow exposure to the toileting routine. This child still has severe autistic traits ,she has no social communication whatsoever, but the difference in this child's coping strategies is amazing, she is now toilet trained, she participates in all our activities, all be it in her own way , she is more engaged in the world around her, the difference in this child from September to June is night and day, and it was all down to Lindsays calm, consistent and methodical approach. This just

reinforces the importance of the early intervention we provide here at Dee Street.

We provided 2 places for children directly referred from social services, these children are on the at risk register, living in very dysfunctional homes. I provided reports for the family social workers, monthly monitoring and attended case conferences for these vulnerable children, but most importantly, and this is what we do so well at Dee Street Playgroup, the staff team provided continuity of care in a safe, loving environment where these children could just play and be seen and heard and praised and encouraged. That kind of attention and nurturing is so important for these very young children, and if our playgroup wasn't here where would those children get that support? That support which is so important to help provide positive outcomes for children who are at risk of not reaching their full educational potential.

We have had a very full, fun, and busy playgroup year, including arts and craft, cookery, dance programmes, outings, visits from Santa, Easter egg Hunts, Kings Coronation parties, dental team visits, stay and play days, parental workshops all packed into the last 10 months.

We send out parental questionnaires every year to gain feedback from parents about our services and are delighted to report our parents all provided positive feedback praising the staff team and our services.

### Fundraising

We received 1,000 pounds donation this year from the Deans sit out and the Welders social club donated 250 pounds just last week, for which we are very grateful.

### Staff Training and Development

Staff continue to seek out relevant training for personal development and the promotion of high standards within the playgroup. This year's training included,

Designated Safeguarding Officer

Reporting on your Pathway Grant

Physical play, health, and wellbeing in the early years.

Championing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

### BHSCT Inspection

Our annual BHSCT inspection was due to take place in May 2023, but was postponed due to inspecting social worker sick leave. We have been informed they will be in touch to reschedule.

### Pathway Grant

Sadly, and frustratingly in March of this year we were once again threatened with the risk of closure due to Department of Education budget cuts. Staff were put on protective notice, and prospective parents were reassured we were doing everything within our power to lobby the department for continued funding.

I would like to thank our chairperson, Mrs Deborah Doherty who wrote lengthy and very articulate emails to all our local representatives and arranged face to face meetings with these representatives and along with myself at these meetings put our case very strongly across. Deborah also began to investigate alternative funding streams, and all other areas she could think of, no stone was left unturned, I know all of this takes up so much of your own time Deborah and we are all very grateful for your efforts on our behalf.

I would also like to thank Sam and Alfie our accountant who had to look at projected financial information regarding sustainability and redundancies etc, again all very time-consuming work.

After all these meetings were attended and strategies were implemented, we heard at the beginning of June that the Department of Education would be continuing the pathway fund until March 2024. So, a reprieve for now. Maybe we will get to that 50th-anniversary celebration after all.

Many thanks to all the committee members for your continued support and input over the last year, it is very much appreciated. Thanks also to the community centre staff for their continued hard work, keeping our centre spotlessly clean and providing such a warm welcome to all our playgroup families.

### **Lanas Retirement.**

Lana announced to the committee in January of this year that she would be retiring in June after 20 years' service with the Playgroup. I can't believe she is actually going; we have joked about it so many times, she has been my loyal sidekick for 20 years and we have been through so much together. I personally want to say thank you for being such an important part of the Dee Street Playgroup team, and in all those years of service you have never once let me down. You are a loyal, trustworthy, steadfast, hardworking colleague and friend and I always knew I could depend on you. We have seen it all through the years and rang in many changes. Remember when the inspectors used to come out with their little tick sheet and stay for half an hour, now we spend hours and hours completing their evaluation sheets. Remember when the kids were allowed to run about outside in the concrete yard, now we have to risk assess every minute of their day. Remember when we had to just come in and get on with it, with our sore throats, and bad backs, and headaches, because no one else was available to come in to cover, but we did it, you and me, we kept Dee Street ticking over, for all the kids, over the all years, who benefited

from your warmth and care and knowledge. There are so many children and families out there who I still meet, and they all talk of you so fondly.

I am so grateful that you accepted that little playgroup job 20 years ago, who knew we would still be here today. I will miss working alongside you.

So, here's to you Lana, Congratulations on your retirement. May this next chapter of your life be everything you are hoping for. Whatever comes next, may it bring you, health, happiness, and fulfilment. Wishing you a wonderful future with lots of time to enjoy your, family, friends, interests, and most importantly your

FREEDOM !!!!!!!!!!!

Debbie Weir

Playgroup Manager.