

Annual Report 2024 – 2025

The 2024 – 2025 year saw 12 local children avail of our playgroup services. Of these 12 children, 2 were social service referrals, 2 had acute speech delays, and 2 were presenting with developmental delays, in the form of behavioural issues, and autistic traits. That's half of the class with additional needs. In line with Belfast Health and Social Care Trusts policies and procedures we capped our numbers at 12 to ensure adequate supervision of the children. The playgroup staff worked tirelessly to identify the many and varied needs of the children and to develop a teaching strategy to support the individuality of the children, whilst also supporting and signposting their parents to the appropriate agencies. Throughout the year we worked alongside social services, health visitors and speech therapists, implementing early intervention strategies. Regarding the children from social services referral, we provided reports to their social workers, monthly monitoring to the trust team and attended case conferences, but most importantly, and this is what we do so well at Dee Street, 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 and support is so important for these young children, it is the start of building positive outcomes for these children who are at risk of not reaching their full educational achievement.

We had a very full, fun and busy playgroup year including arts and crafts, Arte faces, cookery, Kimber dance sessions, Sports Topia, Make a sound, Build a bear, Dental team visits, Stay and play days, parental workshops, a visit from Santa, Easter egg hunts, and an End of Year party at Funky Monkeys all packed into the last 10 months!

We send out Parental Questionnaires every year to gain feedback from parents/carers to help us evaluate our service. We are delighted to report our parents all provided positive feedback praising the staff team and our services.

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 Officer training
- Food Hygiene and Safety Training
- Observation, Assessing and Planning
- Data Management Laws (Pathway Training)

Fundraising

We made successful applications and received donations this year from:

Deans Sit Out St. Annes Cathedral
Blackthorn Trust
Halifax

We currently have an application pending with the Spar community fund and are waiting on notification. We are very grateful for the support of all our funders.

Pathway

An application was submitted to Pathway on the 11th of December for our main funding for the 2025/2026 year and I am pleased to report this was successful and we have secured funding for another year.

BHSCT

I attended our annual sponsored daycare contracts meeting with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust on the 29th of April with regards to funding for two referred children. The Trust praised our work in this challenging area and have requested we continue to provide this service for 2025/26. The contract team will provide funding this year to the value of £4068.40.

The annual inspection of the playgroup took place on Monday the 9th of June 2025, eight months after it was scheduled to take place.

The inspecting social worker was Leanne Savage. We were inspected under the heading Quality of Staffing, Management and Leadership.

The social worker praised the quality of our staff, our interactions with the children, our efficient paperwork, and commented the children were very well settled and happy at their play. She advised that the trust now require safeguarding policies to state that Female Genital mutilation must be reported to the trust. I have added this to our safeguarding policy and the committee can look over this today and sign it off. There were no outstanding requirements to be met. A full written report will follow in due course.

Staff, Committee, and Council Workers

Finally, I would like to take a minute to thank our staff, committee, and council workers. We truly have a dedicated team behind this playgroup. Mrs Lindsay Fulton, you continue to be a fantastic assistant, your energy, enthusiasm, patience, artistic flair, are very much appreciated both by myself and all the children, they just adore you, thank you for your support this year. Mrs Lana McCandless, you thought you were retiring 2 years ago, I think I have called on your services more than ever this year, you have helped out with staff cover for sickness, bereavement, hospital appointments, inspections, never once complaining every time I contact you, you say yes, with kindness and good grace, we really couldn't manage without you, Thank you so much its truly appreciated. Mrs Deborah Doherty you came on board as chairperson and have

really been thrown in at the deep end, you have tirelessly applied to funders on our behalf with great success, I know it takes a lot of time and effort to chase the funders up and provide all the documentation they require so thank you very much. Mr Sam Mccready you continue to wear your 2 hats both as secretary and treasurer and keep all the minutes and finance running smoothly, thank you. Mr McAnoy thank you for keeping our accounts in order. Roseann, Gary and William you continue to give of your time to support Dee Street Playgroup, looking out for funding opportunities, keeping us up to date on neighbourhood issues, attending our meetings, thank you.

Belfast city council workers we very much appreciate your support, providing us with programme development opportunities(out of your budget) keeping us in the loop on council issues, keeping the centre immaculately clean , helping with set up and take down of the play equipment , providing such a warm welcome to all the playgroup families we deeply appreciate everything you do for us.

As I finish this year's report and this year's children are ready to move on to nursery school, we have planned an open day for next years children on Wednesday the 25th of June, new children and their families excited to come visit playgroup and see all Dee Street has to offer.

Debbie Weir
Playgroup Manager
11th June 2025