

Cloughmills Early Years Chairperson AGM report 2022/2023 submitted by Abigail Loughridge

Thank you all for coming to our AGM, I know it's often hard to get time to come to these things so I appreciate you taking time to come.

For those of you who don't know me I'm Abigail Loughridge and I have been the Chairperson for Cloughmills Early Years for the past 2 years. I have had two children come through the Playgroup and currently have one attending here. I have been on the committee for the last 6 years.

The AGM is an important part of our school year when we can look back at the previous year of Playgroup but also start looking forward to the year that has just started. Playgroup is run to an extremely high standard and children are taught and looked after with professionalism and care. I want to thank Elaine, Lizzie and Diane for all their hard work this past year, especially given all the changes in staffing and uncertainty that they have dealt with.

Playgroup would not be able to run without the Committee working with them. The Committee is made up of parents and co-opted volunteers and we meet every three months or so to discuss different things, for example, fundraising, staffing, pay and any other issues that need to be dealt with. I would really encourage you to think about joining the committee as it is a really good way to get involved in your child's education and be able to influence how Playgroup is run.

In the last academic year Playgroup had 15 full time preschool children and 5 pre-pre school children. Thankfully we had no complaints or safeguarding issues to be dealt with.

In November, Elaine celebrated 20 years working in Cloughmills Early Years. Elaine did not want any "fuss" made about this so as a committee we marked this with a small gift. We congratulate Elaine again on this milestone and thank her for her commitment to Cloughmills Early Years.

We received further Engage III funding and with it we employed Mrs Barbara Donnelly as a temporary assistant. She worked Wednesday- Friday from November to the end of March. Barbara was able to work alongside children who were having difficulty integrating in class and this was of real benefit to those children. We want to thank Barbara for all her hard work and dedication to Playgroup.

We were also able to use some of this funding and some of our committee fundraising to patio part of the area outdoors, we thank Forsythe's Contractors for their work.

We interviewed for a new Playgroup Leader in September and October with no successful candidates. In November we interviewed again and the job of Playgroup leader was offered to Mrs Pamela Brown, who accepted. Appropriate checks were carried out and Pam started her role on 5th January. I met with Pam at the end of each month for her first 6 months for support and supervision. As issues arose I sought to support Pam through these and encourage her to lead the staff. Pam was encouraged regularly, by myself and Karen Cook, our Early Years Specialist, to apply for external funding for playgroup but despite much encouragement and reassurance of support and help, Pam did not apply for any Early Years funding or have any successful grant applications. This has had a big

impact on our finances this year. This will be explained further in the treasurer's report. On 24th July Mrs Pamela Brown sent an email of resignation as Playgroup leader and her employment ended on 24th August.

At the start of September we again interviewed for Playgroup leader and Ms Jill Hyndman was offered the post. She accepted and we are currently in the process of collecting all the appropriate paperwork to send to Social Services. Jill has 2 months of notice to work in her current playgroup but we are working to 20th November for Jill to start here. It is lovely to have Jill here tonight and I will introduce her later. But we are really looking forward to having her start with us.

As we will see in the Treasurer's report, Playgroup finances have taken a real hit this year due to low numbers of pre school and pre-pre school children attending, and no successful grant applications to balance this out. We have had a few years of low numbers attending playgroup and so we have to think about ways of boosting our numbers or ways of improving our finances in order to maintain the viability of playgroup. I encourage the committee to take up this challenge over the next year.

As a committee we held two big fundraising events last year. In December we held the "Beauty Raffle" with generous donations from local beauticians and hairdressers, and in June we had our signed Northern Ireland football top raffle, "Guess the number of sweets" and our general raffle. We thank the parents, families and community for their generosity as we were able to raise over £3,000 for Playgroup. I encourage the committee to continue with their fundraising efforts.

Thank you again to Elaine, Lizzie and Diane for all their work last year, especially through all the challenges they faced with and without a leader. Your professionalism throughout this was extremely helpful to us me as your chairperson and to the committee, knowing that Playgroup was safe in your hands. I want to say a special thank you to Elaine, for stepping up into Playgroup leader and doing such a great job. Many people have commented to me on the good job you have done and we want to thank you.

Claire Walker, Laura McFall and Lauren Gilpin have all resigned from the Playgroup committee. I want to thank them for all their work for the Playgroup, especially over the last year.

In May I informed the committee that I planned to step down at the AGM from my Chairperson role as my oldest son is starting his transfer years in Primary school and I feel I need time to help him through this. While this last year has been particularly challenging, I have really enjoyed my time on this committee and thank you to the committee and staff for their support and patience over the last 2 years in particular. I look forward to being able to support Playgroup as a parent this year!