



**Kingston Society for Children and
Adults with Learning Disabilities**

KINGSTON MENCAP

**Affiliated to the
Royal Mencap Society**

The voice of learning disability

ANNUAL REPORT

2011

KINGSTON MENCAP Committee 2011

CHAIR

Gill Wood

HON. SECRETARY

Susan Baker

HON. TREASURER

Mary McDonald

GENERAL COMMITTEE

Claire Alexander
Glenna McCulloch
Heather Notermans
John Phillips
Sandy Yorke-Mitchell
Peter Hodges co-opted

LEARNING DISABILITY REP

Kim Bright

SEEKER Leader

Zerrin Izli

XPRESSION Leader

Dave Cafferty

FUTURE FRIENDS Leader

Kirsty Fraser

DROP IN Leaders

Zerrin Izli & Michelle Kitch

Contents

- 04 Kingston Mencap: Aims and Values
- 05 Agenda for AGM
- 06 Minutes from 2010 AGM
- 11 Chair's Report
- 17 Seekers Club
- 19 Xpression Youth Project
- 21 Future Friends

Registered Office

17 Oakway
London SW20 9JE
www.kingstonmencap.co.uk (under construction)
email:gillcwood@blueyonder.co.uk
Tel: 0208540 1399

Auditor

Louise Healy
Chartered Accountant
Sparkes Place
Wonersh
Surrey GU5 0PH

Bank

Lloyds TSB
88 Clarence Street
Kingston upon Thames
KT1 1RE

Registered with Charity Commission Charity No 210583

Kingston Mencap established in 1952

In the beginning a group of parents met up in an old church hall, with no outdoor play space. Their main aim was to put pressure on the local authority to make proper education provision for their children with learning disabilities and to provide adequate services. Kingston Mencap has come a long way since those early days, and we continue to ensure our voice is heard and endeavour to promote a world where people are valued equally, listened to and included.

Kingston Mencap is different from many other larger affiliated groups in that we are a voluntary group run by a Trustee Committee. It is only in recent years that we have funded paid club leaders. We continue to work closely with the learning disability team in Kingston to run and jointly fund projects that will benefit and improve life opportunities for our members.

Vision

Kingston Mencap shares the Royal Mencap vision of an organisation where everyone with a learning disability has an equal right to choice, opportunity and respect. Everything we do is about valuing and supporting people with a learning disability, their families and carers to make sure their voice is heard locally.

Our Aim

- To provide information and support
- To provide leisure clubs and weekend social opportunities
- To develop and support services which enable both children and adults to live full lives in the community
- To provide a support group for Carers and family members
- To help shape local services and ensure people with learning disabilities voices are listened to and not forgotten
- To respond and provide services where they are most needed and to increase our membership numbers locally.

Our Values

- People with learning disabilities must be valued equally, listened to and included
- To have the same opportunities in life like everyone else
- To have choice and control and to achieve the things they want out of life
- To be treated with dignity and respect

KINGSTON MENCAP

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at
Dysart School, 190 Ewell Road, Surbiton, KT6 6HL

Friday 27th April 2012 7 for 7.30pm

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the AGM held on 6th April 2011 and Matters Arising
4. Annual Report and Chair's Remarks
5. To receive and adopt balance sheet and accounts for the year ending 31st December 2011
 - a) Comments by the Treasurer
 - b) Confirmation and appointment of Honorary Auditor
6. Election of Officers and Trustee Committee
 - a) Chair, Vice Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer
 - b) General Committee
7. Any other business (as notified prior to the meeting)

The AGM meeting will be followed by our Guest Speakers

Simon Pearce

Executive Head of Adult Care in Kingston

Lord Brian Rix

Mencap's President

Lord Rix entered the field of learning disability in 1951 when his first child Shelley was born with Down's syndrome. In this our 60th Anniversary year we felt Lord Rix would be able to share his memories - highs and lows over this time.....



Questions from the floor

“Buffet and Drinks”

“Photographs”

“Information”

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 6th April at Dysart School

The Chair Gill Wood welcomed everybody to the Annual General meeting for Kingston Mencap.

There followed general housekeeping, requesting mobile phones to be put on silent.

The Chair offered 'Congratulations' to all the Kingston Mencap members who were recently elected MP's in the recent Kingston Learning Disability Parliament elections

Philip Hitchin; Graeme Green; Warren Day; John Diamond; Caroline Ellis; Stuart Disspain; Greg Rata; Natalie Francis and Diana Todd

And also congratulations to: James, Jo, Katy, Pauline and Paul

Apologies: Glen Mills; Dave Cafferty; Michelle Kitch; Sue Peck; Jill & John Kemp; Jane Din; Kate Tebb; Di Lacey; Catherine Thorogood; Jan Deane; Mark Goldring; Tracy Lazell; Harry Patient; Fiona Burkeman; Maundy Todd; Mark Williams.

Minutes & Matters Arising

The 2010 Annual Report containing the minutes from last year's AGM has been previously circulated to all members and there were 3 matters arising:

Chair thanked Kenny Gibson for coming along to answer the following matters arising after he was unable to attend last year:

a) Mark Goldring reported at last year's AGM that there was £1.3 million in the NHS to understand disability and we all wondered what work and how much was being spent in Kingston?

Response: £1.3 million was across the board, Staff is being scaled up to work with mental health and learning disabled.

b) Home medical review assessment by local pharmacist in the home, how many are CRB checked?

Example of a pharmacist who could not deliver

Response: Direct needs so should have level 1 CRB. Kenny requested name of pharmacist to check why they could not deliver. GP Annual medical use review. Parliament members feedback was for the assessment to be done in the home rather than a chemist setting, seeing the person time consuming and using medication properly.

c) What is the accessibility of health checks for people?

Response: Accessible to anyone over the age of 65. Anyone on the Learning Disabled register is entitled to one. There is a process called the Cardiff Protocol model which all RBK GP's are signed up to.

There is an "easy health" version dentist, optician, podiatry and Kenny is trying to get on the website.

Kenny can refer people to community services

The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of last year's meeting

Proposed: Pat Cox Seconded: Ilze Hopper

Chair Comments

Gill reported that 2010 had been a very busy year for our small trustee board and we have managed to oversee and run a host of activities in 2010

The Chair thanked all the Trustee's for their dedication, time and support and particularly to Roger Wooderson and Fiona Burkeman for the work and time they had put in to Kingston Mencap and asked them to accept a small token of our appreciation as they had now chosen to stand down from committee. Kim presented bottles of wine to each.

At the end of 2010 Zerrin started as a paid leader of Seekers club and Gill welcomed her to the 'first' of many AGM's, thanking her for all her hard work and enthusiasm in her first year.

Kingston Mencap will be celebrating 60 years in 2012 and we invite people to come up with ideas or suggestions to celebrate in style for this very special birthday.

It has been a very uncertain past few months, cuts, changes and many proposals including the increase in care charging, threatened loss of the Taxi card and the Day Service Consultation. Hardest hit are those people who attend the day service at the Causeway including Seekers club.

Gill urged all to complete a Consultation Form to inform the council of their thoughts and ideas. This is a huge opportunity to get an improved modern service that will consider peoples individual needs. It would give people the choice to say what they want and to have funding spent on services that would contribute to their lives, rather than being spent on building repairs. Gill recognised people have been made very anxious and upset by rumours and speculation; parents/carers were understandably worried and concerned about the future. Gill offered to visit with individual families to offer support and answer questions and assured everybody that nothing was certain yet but urged parent/carers to support the service users by completing and returning the consultation form to inform RBK showing any fears, concerns and to let them know what you don't want to lose and what it is you value.

Finally Gill thanked a very important group of people, our wonderful band of volunteers. We value their enthusiasm, wonderful spirit, support for all our projects and events - from volunteering at the clubs, shaking a can, fundraiser, social events and all the other ways they help to make Kingston Mencap what it is.

In recognition of this at the end of 2010 plans were made to sign up to the Volunteer Charter to make sure all our volunteers are not only valued but supported fairly and encouraged

It was agreed unanimously to adopt the Annual Report

Proposed: Ilze Hopper Seconded: Colin Cushing

Treasurers Report

Kingston Mencap accounts and all the clubs had been tabled and Mary McDonald explained the income and expenditure for the year ending 31st December 2010 and the balance sheet as at 31st December 2010 and there were no questions from the audience.

Any future funding for Stud Farm and all clubs would be discussed at Committee.

Independent Examiners Report was circulated - no particular matter had come to Louise Healy's attention (attached). No questions were put to committee

It was agreed to accept the tabled accounts

Proposed en bloc: Kim Bright Seconded: Liz Mayes-Reid

Appointment of Auditor Louise Healy

It was agreed the Chair would send a letter of thanks and a small gift to express our thanks

Proposed: Gill Wood Seconded: John Read

Election of Trustee Officer & Committee and Rep for learning disability

The following people have agreed to stand and nominated asfollowing:

Election of Officers:

Chair Gill Wood
Secretary Sue Baker
Treasurer Mary McDonald

Election of Committee:

Claire Alexander
Glenna McCulloch
Heather Noterman
John Philips
Mark Williams
Sandy York-Mitchell

Rep for learning disability;

Kim Bright

It is noted that Kim's role will change over the next

Proposed en bloc: Sophie Ugle Seconded: Mary Macan

Any Other Business

a) Gill welcomed Preedeepea who can help with working out the correct welfare benefits.

b) Heather Notermans will be organising another day out on the London Eye/boat trip - date to be set

c) Caroline Jones from Royal Mencap was leaving us as local group officer but would still be working in campaigns and welcomed the new officer - Amanda Henman.

Official Business ended at 7.58pm

The Chair introduced:

Simon Pearce - Head of Community Care Services

Simon thanked Kingston Mencap for inviting him to give a general update:

Glen Mills was unable to attend following an operation.

The changes to council over past year, new government – new policy changes and impact on adult services, but no changes to personalisation

2010-2011 in year reduction of £2.3 million (children's projects closed)

In the October 2012 comprehensive spending review there needs to be 26% reduction over 4 years but for RBK it would be 24% over first 2 years 14.3% in 2011/12

For 2010-11 cost pressure of £1.5 million growth in adult services £1 million in PMLD high cost placements

2011/12 Adult Social Care budget £47 million reduction of £1.7 million (3.6%)

Charging consultation: more income taken in to account, capital limit for first time.

RBK will take lowest amount of income across London

Services looked at - saving on staff years 11/12 £778k

Learning Disability Day Services consultation document RBK aims to be open and transparent, series of meetings from 7th March-3rd June

Causeway/Crescent planned savings of £175k. Inspection report in 2007/8 stated the building was old fashioned and costly to refurbish.

Future: nature of services to change and move away from Day Services

Needs of person very important, encouraged people to attend meetings and fill in forms.

RBK want to know what people want and the aim is not to reduce people's services

There has been very positive work with the Learning Disability Parliament.

The biggest area of growth: package of care for young people coming through transition

Transport had to be more flexible and responsive which creates challenges in itself

Smallest cut within council departments for learning disability so far...

Charging: for new users now, and for existing users will come in on 1st October

QUESTION: Consultation does not involve younger people coming through transition.

How do you propose to consult with them/families? from Sophie Ugle

ANSWER: Bethan Clarke and Grace Over are looking in to consulting with 14-19 year olds and those already in colleges 19+

QUESTION: Is there a proposal to abandon services all together although I feel Causeway is no longer appropriate from Sophie Ugle

ANSWER: Personal Budget is the plan so that people can have choice and control

QUESTION: Seekers Club have huge concerns about loss of venue at Causeway

What options will be available as Kingston Mencap cannot afford high rents for a new venue/building?

ANSWER: Assurance that RBK intends to continue working together with KM

The Chair thanked Simon

The Chair introduced Learning Disability Parliament:

Katie

Katie spoke about the recent elections and the 3 new MP's James, Jo and Graeme
The Chair thanked Katie

The Chair introduced Steve Tovey – support broker and service users Suzie and Saddick

Steve Tovey

Steve spoke about Individual Budgets and showed a presentation including information on jargon and changes.

Slides on existing approach “Health Model” people are cared for, grouped together, little or no control/choice and focus is on services.

Evolving approach “Social Care Model” individual is supported, given more choice, control and responsibility. Planning together, accessing local communities and living a life
Kingston change 2007-2015 and beyond “Destination Kingston” Adult Services giving people choice in support, staying independent, safe and well.

This should prove to be a positive outcome for individuals, families and carers.

Individual Budget allocation of council money is not means tested and a separate bank account is required.

Allocation of money is for 1 year and then reviewed. It is based on need and you can take over a percentage to following year if under spent, based on achievement.

It is not a means tested benefit e.g. would not lose DLA

Mary Mc disputed this as RBK have a financial contributions policy based on a person's situation and that was taken in to account

Sue Todd confirmed that RBK wanted to raise the personal contribution from 50 to 100% but settled on 75%

It was noted that at the start of the consultation people with learning disabilities were not included which we found very confusing, as it will affect those on IB

Suzie Skinner

Suzie talked about the good and bad experiences of having an I.B.

Good: new house, sharing with 3 others, more money due to pooling money

Bad: only one staff member when sharing, had to use own savings on one occasion

Question to Simon Pearce from Sophie Ugle: what happens if the money runs out?

Answer Council do have a legal responsibility and obligation to fund a person's care needs. Monitoring and support is an ongoing process, adjustments and reviews in place if not enough.

Saddick

A presentation of his journey - Saddick is the first member of his family to move out of the family home. He now lives in Surbiton with 3 other young people and they use the mobility component of their DLA for a shared vehicle

Steve concluded by saying:

IB is a journey and people are included and take part - it isn't perfect but it gives the individual choices

The Chair thanked Steve, Suzie and Saddick

The Chair introduced Sue Todd to talk about Taxi cards and Alasdair Bowen to explain new care charging

Taxi card scheme comes under Transport for London (TFL) and originally TFL put in £600,00k, RBK subsidise £41,000k and this supported 104 trips per year per holder.

TFL have now changed to a new formula and over 65's must be receiving DLA mobility component, and TFL contribution down to £273,000k

Council's elected members have agreed to put more money in to the scheme during 2011 but there will be a gradual effect in future years as RBK introduce a new assessment.

Sue Todd is planning to set up mobility consultation event which will report back to RBK executive. Current cost to user is £1.50 trip (past 15 years no change) as of 1st April 2011 this will go up to £2.50 trip. RBK is unique because they allow people to swipe a card twice.

Alasdair Bowen

Manager of the team for financial assessment towards cost of care packages

Care charging: All new users will receive a full welfare benefits check and a new financial assessment and for existing service users this will come in October 2011

Presentation of New Contributions Policy:

No flat rate charges, cost of individual care according to individual disability

Big changes: contribution calculation 50-75% of available income

Removing current maximum weekly amount a person contributes towards services

The Chair thanked Sue & Alasdair

The Chair introduced Parliament MP's

Parliament

Update for 2010-2011

Working with PMLD service users

Website info includes accessible toilets

Met with service users who use the Causeway

Worked with Kingston Youth Council and have gone to schools and invited to Head Teachers meeting

Raising awareness of issues in the community and on buses/transport

BIG DAY 2nd March "SPEAK UP" What people want to do during the day, evening and weekends with friends not staff

Living my Life: working with providers to find out barriers people experienced

Contact booklet: meet people and make new friends

Annual health checks

Attended Strategic Partnership meeting, RBK Chief Exec chairs to talk about paid employment

Katy and Stuart spoke up about paid employment to Chamber of Commerce and Kingston University resulted in 1 job opportunity

KEEPING SAFE 7th September (workshops)

First Route: confidence travelling on buses (travel buddy)

The Chair thanked the Parliament

The Chair invited questions from the audience

Question Helena Watson

Who manages IB?

A discussion began around support providers managing IB and problem with many providers complicating the process?

Who should manage/set up finances, would management charge come out of budget?

Answer from Steve Tovey:

It is personal choice - can be providers, advocate or family member.

Management charge would come out of budget

AOB

Royal Mencap: Development of Early campaign. Hate Crime end of June

Hardest Hit rally 11th May Westminster. Cuts affecting Learning Disabled

Meeting closed 9.50pm

Followed by refreshments prepared by project workers from Victoria Cafe

CHAIR'S REPORT 2011

I am pleased to present this annual report on behalf of the Kingston Mencap Trustee Board. This year has been an extremely challenging one for us all and with change comes more focus on what we have done well or to consider what we could have done better.

We want a better outcome for those we aim to support and work on behalf of to ensure a brighter successful future.

After a very successful trustee campaign in early 2011 we managed to attract 3 new trustees, although one had to stand down after a change in circumstances, but we welcomed on board 2 new enthusiastic trustees.

The 'Trustee Committee' has changed enormously since I first joined Kingston Mencap, fewer trustees but much more comprehensive work!

This has proved really difficult for the learning disabled representative as we have so much difficult information to discuss and take on board each month at committee, it was agreed last year that this post would change and the number of meetings would be decreased for this person. The representative has instead met with the Learning Disability Parliament to discuss new social ideas which seem to have worked reasonably well and attended only one or two trustee meetings to report back.

This is an area that I know a lot of local groups find challenging and I am not sure will never be resolved satisfactorily. We want everyone to be involved but it is hard for difficult documents to be understood and the extra time and work involved is too big for our very small committee.

We organised and attended another Saturday 'away day' in January to have time to consider and discuss how we work, the governance and strategic side which proved very useful but as ever created even more work.

We now have to discuss and take on board an even bigger and more important role to make sure we are not only running successfully but with the right policies and procedures in place. We have had to deal with numerous changes, consultations both locally and nationally with a huge array of important reports to not only read but understand the implications of, for you, our members.

The trustees have worked tirelessly on behalf of members, attending numerous meetings both with the council and outside agencies to make sure our voice is not only heard but listened to and have encouraged members to attend and to voice their own comments at the Partnership Board.

New information has been received constantly throughout the year and this has put a tremendous amount of extra work out way, bearing in mind all trustees are volunteers!

POSITIVES

There have been many positives to celebrate and we have maintained successfully running all 3 of our leisure clubs and the very popular Drop-In. The Holiday house is still an important asset and the Carers group we continue to run with varying support each month. Staffing has been constant at all the projects and although there was a change of leader at Future Friends the handover went quite smoothly thanks to the past and new leader.

DOWNSIDE

The downside in 2011 was the closure of the Causeway. This was a big loss but has been an ongoing concern for many years as spending on maintaining this building was increasing

year by year. The saving made we expected to be spent on extra day activities and no other loss of service - how little we knew!

This was a real concern for a small number of families but following the closure people seemed to have settled in well at HFT and now enjoying new day opportunities.

For Kingston Mencap we lost our Seekers club venue, but although sad to leave I know members do not miss the cold draughty hall or the rain coming in.

After visiting and discussing various venues Seekers Members chose and made a successful move to Newent House in Surbiton.

STAFF

We have been really lucky that the staff we appointed have been loyal and consistent for members and really know and do their jobs well for us..

During April we appointed a payroll firm to take on the enormous task of PAYE for us which has freed up some time and responsibility.

VOLUNTEERS

Every year we accept a huge number of volunteers and this year we saw an even bigger increase with many young people coming forward from local schools.. The process to recruit volunteers is hard work, meeting up to interview prospective volunteers, writing for references and finally making sure a CRB disclosure is received - all takes time and commitment.

We offer training to all volunteers and signed up to the Volunteer Charter as we only want the best for our clubs and projects

Some of our volunteers regularly attend projects for several years whilst others for a short time but all contribute to our success and give their time and skills freely to support our members. Local school pupils have been terrific in bringing youth and enthusiasm to the clubs and drop-in.

As ever I take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers for all their hard work, commitment and enthusiasm during 2011.

MEMBERS & MEMBERSHIP

Kingston Mencap membership is open to everyone and we encourage those with a learning disability to become members in their own right. Many family members have supported this as so many individuals are now living independently in their own homes with their own tenancy in 'supported living'.

They need their own copy of the newsletter to make sure they don't miss events or important information. We rely on staff to help spread the word and to make sure members unable to read know what is going on or help with booking events.

We want members to get involved, share ideas and make suggestions and we have continued to attract new members whenever we get the opportunity.

We are forever grateful to the growing number of members paying their subscription by standing order and the generous donations we receive to support the birthday vouchers.

We aim to increase the membership numbers each year so we have a greater and louder voice to influence and change services.

NEWSLETTER & WEBSITE

The newsletter email list grows ever longer each year and is saving both time and funds, so we are very grateful to all members who sent in an email address this past year.

The newsletter is central to how we share information and we try to cover all aspects, including members' news update. We will still send out by post to those members who do not have access to email or the internet and this past year we have increased the

circulation list to those with a learning disability by placing copies at Session House and Libraries around the borough.

The website is still very much under construction, as we still need to add lots of information, but just never seem to find the time. This is very time consuming but something our volunteer webmaster is working on! Go to: www.kingstonmencap.co.uk

REPRESENTATION

The trustees are voted in each year and attend regular meetings on behalf of members to make sure the voices of people with a learning disability, their families and carers are heard. We have always attended meetings with the local council and attend where we can at national level.

We attended what is becoming an annual Transition Event and always try to man a stall whenever we are asked at various events around the borough.

We have maintained some links with both Dysart and St Philips and Moor Lane Centre for disabled children, but we really need younger parents to help with this.

We know and understand young people want something different to their older peers, who had a very different experience of growing up with a learning disability, and we want to find different ways to reach young people but that means younger parents guiding us and joining the trustee board.

SOCIAL EVENTS

We have continued to provide social opportunities in response to member's requests.

There are many more opportunities on offer now so try not to clash with other events being held locally. The regular favourites continued to attract large numbers and I know the live band events are a particularly favourite. The afternoon at the Thames Ditton railway is always popular especially with our younger members as is the visit to Companion Cycling in Bushey Park. Another midweek visit was organised for a small party to visit the London Eye with a boat trip down the Thames and is becoming a firm favourite with members.

Members were very disappointed that the RBK bowling tournament did not take place this year. After very many successful years it changed to an early Sunday morning and did not receive any support.

CLUBS

All the clubs have continued to grow in 2011 and still offer a great range of activities both on site and at various community venues.

Seekers club have settled into Newent House and welcomed lots of new members and volunteers with new interesting day trips which are always enjoyed. A regular 'members committee' - voted in by members - discusses ideas for events and trips.

Future Friends continued to meet on alternative Thursdays with a new leader taking over during the summer at Canbury Park and has continued to attract new members and also moved to Searchlight for the winter months.

Xpression also moved to Searchlight and have continued to enjoy a good programme of events and trips out in the community with a visit to a football match next door.

The age of members is quite high now so it something that we plan to review in 2012

DROP-IN

The number of people attending the Drop-in each Saturday has grown and some weeks there are over 40 people who drop by for a chat or cup of coffee at various time. We have continued to fund with help from RBK and have still managed to run as a free session.

We have been good at attracting volunteer support for the co-ordinators that runs the session on alternative weeks and we now have a rota that works well.

The people who attend are varied in age and ability but all seem to gel well and seem to get something different out of their visit.

There are various activities each week with the Lunch events attracting many, sometimes as many as 50-60 people come along to join in on 'Food' days

CARERS GROUP

The carers group is valued by those who attend and we have continued to fund with an open invitation to all members.

The faithful few who come along each month are joined by others when there is a speaker or a particular topic being discussed.

We know there might be a problem for some carers attending the evening session and will be looking at the cost of setting up an alternative day session during 2012

Once again the group decided to go out for a Christmas meal in December instead of the normal group meeting.

HOLIDAY HOUSE

We still had plenty of visitors in 2011 with the majority being members.

Going by the 'comments books' everyone seem to enjoy their visit and feedback has been very positive, with some already re-booking for 2012

It has always been our intention to keep the house until or if another project became more worthy and considered a safe place for our funds, but will always be ready to evaluate if visits become less popular.

FUNDERS & FUNDRAISING

We have received numerous donations throughout the year from small to large.

Some for a particular ring fenced purpose and others to fund the various activities we put on. We are most grateful for these donations and are able to maintain our current projects. As you will all know we rely on volunteers and have no office expenses but we still have running costs and these still add up.

We have always manage to raise our own funds each year as we do not receive any outside grant, although we have been grateful for the funding from RBK for the Drop-In

Flag Awareness Day

What a great group of volunteer that went out to collect on Flag Awareness day on 22nd October, prepared again by our wonderful organiser, to not only raise funds, but to raise awareness of learning disability and managed to raise an amazing £1690.12

Christmas Fayre & Social

This year we held at the United Reform church and what a wonderful welcome we were given! The church volunteers were so very helpful and even managed to put on a small musical show for us during the afternoon.

This year we wanted more of a 'social get together' with just a few stalls and that worked well, although some made comment that they still wanted to buy things when stocks ran out! The main draw was the hot lunch and the musical entertainment that followed was well received. We managed to raise £1442.38

Christmas Raffle

The Christmas raffle is always well supported by members and we still manage to attract support from a few local businesses each year.

The raffle prizes are all donated and we manage every year to get a good selection and this year raised a staggering £1511.00 thanks to all our members and friends.

DONATIONS we gave...

This year, like last, we have concentrated on spending funds on our own activities and projects. We have continued to fund Stud Farm and supported the two open days during

May and August. The trustees will now be reviewing any new funding year by year rather than agreeing to a fixed term.

The work projects have all moved forward significantly and we are hopeful that all the project workers, including those working at both Victoria Café and Canbury Gardens, will develop and receive more opportunities to gain even more experience and training.

ROYAL MENCAP

We have worked hard to campaign for more 'Changing Places' in Kingston especially on the closing of the Causeway and it is heartening to know the government recognise the need but what we need is real action. It was really good to hear that a new Changing Place was being fitted at HFT in New Malden and will hopefully be open to the public.

In May we took part in the 'march against the cuts' with the Learning Disabled Parliament and marched to Westminster to voice our concerns and to say 'NO' to the cuts in services and benefits. We queued up and met with Kingston MP's Zak Goldsmith and Ed Davey in Parliament which was a great experience for everyone and a chance to voice our concerns.

The main focus of Disability Week during June was 'Stand by Me' which is a 3 year campaign against hate crime and the challenge to persuade the police to take action.

In Kingston the police signed up to the charter on 30th November

There has been so much on the agenda, dealing with cuts and childcare being denied, new rules on housing benefit it has been really difficult keeping up. The SEN green paper on Special Education Needs closed in June which clearly showed how strongly parents feel about their children's needs being met in school and with the majority of people saying the SEN system has to change.

It has been a busy year and we have kept in good contact with the campaign team whenever possible and were horrified to see the Panorama programme exposing the dreadful abuse and bad practice at Winterbourne.

We received the 20:20 Vision local group Agreement and as yet have not signed up. This is something the trustees feel needs to be given proper thought and discussion to see if this is right for Kingston Mencap.

The earlier agreement take us up to 2013 so we have time to decide and will hold off until 2012 to give us more time to understand the implications and to discuss in more detail.

ROYAL BOROUGH OF KINGSTON UPON THAMES

We have continued to work closely and have good links with the Kingston Learning Disability team and have worked alongside the newly elected Parliament MP's that came into office during April. We want to make sure the voice of those with a learning disability are heard and as Chair have represented members at the monthly Action Group meetings and at the Partnership Board.

CUTS & INCREASES

The government is still intent on making dramatic changes to reform the welfare system, with the new 'Personal Independent Payment'.

There was the threat to cut the mobility component of DLA to those living in residential care and then the increase in contributions towards individual budgets that went up to 75% for existing users during October and the increase in taxi card charges.

We have attended 'Big Cuts' meeting in London as we know benefits are crucial to people with a learning disability, some people will never get the opportunity to work and the proposed plans to make the system simpler and more efficient could mean people with a learning disability will not only miss out but get caught up in a system that does not understand their 'special needs'

We remain vigilant that the new proposals will be fair and that no one will be put at risk but we must all be alert that people will remain safe and well supported

THE FUTURE

I seem to finish each annual report with the same worries and concerns and this year is no exception.

We know monies are tight and that cuts are inevitable but we didn't expect at the end of 2011 to hear about the proposed Review of the Learning Disability Service, part of the 'one council' project. The government is encouraging councils to commission rather than run services. A company called Deloitte was given the job of reviewing the learning disability service and what RBK provides now to see if it could be delivered at a cheaper cost by an outside provider. This is a very worrying time for everyone, especially as we have only just got over the closure of the Causeway and I am sure will continue to be a time of uncertainty as we move into 2012.

As we come to the end of 2011 we get ready to celebrate our 60th Anniversary and to look back to the highs and lows of the past 60 years, knowing we must all still work closely together to become 'one strong voice' so we can not only influence but make sure we are listened to and heard.

Everything we do is about making a difference for people with a learning disability, to increase awareness and enable people to not only have a voice but be treated fairly and equally like everyone else.

Gill Wood
Chair

Seekers Club Annual Report

Seekers Club Annual report 2011

The club began back in 1962, when it was run and organised exclusively by volunteers who had family members with learning disabilities and who wanted a fun weekly social event where they could meet and engage with other friends and colleagues. With Mencap's support, Seekers club was born primarily as a club to cater for the learning disability community in our borough. The club has been immensely popular through the years and the most striking characteristic is the consistent turn out of members throughout the years. As numbers grew, word of mouth grew and volunteer numbers grew to cater for the expanding club. The club had seen only a few coordinators as the job was a labour of love and not a chore. Seekers club had become established as the Monday night social club for our borough and numbers steadily grew, as activities became more topical and the club often went on trips and days out as additional activities. When the coordinators decided that after over thirty years of running the club they wanted to retire, Mencap opened the job for a paid co ordinator. The idea was to rejuvenate Seekers club to embrace the varied age bracket and level of disability, and inject a new youth and vibrancy to this amazing club. Seekers club is open to the whole borough regardless of age or disability to join and get involved with the activities and the "family" environment.

In 2010 I took over as leader and with this responsibility took on new volunteers and a new venue, lots of changes proved challenging as did a new face becoming the new leader. I was lucky enough to have the full support of the recently retired leaders June and Shirley, as although they stood down, they continued to volunteer every week at Seekers. This is testimony to the fact that to be part of Seekers is to never want to leave, and after almost two years, I feel exactly the same sense of accomplishment, excitement and pride to work with an amazing group of individuals.

My initial aims were to continue with the traits of the club that worked really well, bring in new ideas and eliminate any outdated presumptions to make sure choice and feedback were always directly from the members and reflective of what the club wanted as a whole. For example as well as continuing with volunteer meetings, we established a members committee to help with decision making and activity/trip planning. The old rigid "tea time" and biscuit dispensing was replaced with a constant and optional drink facility and a snack bar selling small snacks.

I was approached by the outreach coordinator at Kingston Grammar school about volunteer opportunities in our club and I jumped at the chance to include young bright individuals to help out..... 18 months later we have a dedicated alliance with the school and an average weekly turnout of 6-8 students per week mucking in and mingling. Having the 16-18 year olds certainly changed the face of the dance floor and they have grown with the club changing from "students" to volunteers.... They are such a popular bunch of young adults we are celebrating our 50th birthday with a party exclusively supported by the students at their own school hall.... thank you Kingston Grammar School.

No club, with an average weekly attendance of 45+ and overall membership of 65+ can run smoothly and productively without lots of support, I was ecstatic to inherit a hard working and dedicated team of volunteers. From drivers to disco organiser, tea makers to art and craft connoisseurs, each and every volunteer has a pivotal role to play and the fact that many of our volunteers have been supporting the club for many years just shows how infectious Seekers really is.

Thank you to all of the wonderful volunteers who make each week possible.

Our activity programme past and present, I believe is the reason behind our growth and popularity. For years now we have had a monthly birthday disco themed evening. Here we acknowledge and celebrate every member and volunteer birthday in that month with cards, cake, singing and a jumping disco. Recent themes have included, red love tokens for valentines, regal themes, pop star themes, yellow spring themes and a forthcoming circus theme.

We recognise and celebrate all the major events with parties and crafts to enhance the experience. For example we marked Christmas with a sensory story and present giving, Halloween with spooky crafts and a fancy dress party and valentines with love tokens. We also acknowledge the cultural calendar and inject diversity where ever possible, this has included, Chinese New Year, learning to salsa dance, Burns night and St Patrick taste of Ireland, not to mention marking my birthday with a taste of the Mediterranean.

Up and coming themes will embrace the Olympics and the queens jubilee as well as a taste of Australia!

We have a planned an evolving calendar each week, these include the Seekers classics i.e “seekers got talent” karaoke, talent shows and fashion shows, but also have seen outside entertainers come in to wow us. We have had a magician, a dance and exercise entertainer, a dramatic sensory story, a singer song writer. a bring and swap clothes party! Watch this space for chair yoga and a cheese party....All new and practical/inclusive ideas are welcome, we love to keep the club dynamic!

Seekers really does listen to its members and take on board changes and improvements, last year it was fed back that members wanted to see a Pantomime before Christmas and not after, which we did (Peter Pan) However limited wheelchair spaces meant a few members missed out, so this year I have taken the precaution of booking extremely early to avoid any disappointment. Volunteers meeting are also fewer but the planning and process is to embrace the whole season so that I can book and arrange events in plenty of time and listen to any volunteers concerns or feedback.

Fund-raising is a big part of Seekers spending power and this year I set myself a personal goal of making this a priority. Last years pub quiz, went well with fantastic prizes but a poor turnout and this year we are doing it again but hopefully with a far bigger crowd and plenty of notice to raise money for a Wii as asked for by members.

I am personally fund-raising by losing weight (a pound for a pound) to raise money for our summer trip. Last years feedback, after a fantastic but costly trip to an interactive science centre Intech in Winchester, we were asked if we could subsidise a whole trip so that members felt they were being treated to a day out and getting something back from the club. So next year the whole summer trip will be subsidised from the coach to the activities and food on the day. There will be a summer outing called the “Family funfest” in Fleet. The annual Sponsored walk being set apart from other groups to maximise fund-raising potential. This is always our biggest fund-raiser and an absolutely fabulous day out!

Lastly I must thank Gill Wood for the support and supervision over my time with Mencap. Also to Pat Cox aka “money lady” Pat takes on the role as treasurer and keeps a sharp eye on the purse strings, whilst still producing our lovely calendars and hitting the dance floor.....thank you Pat!

Here's to another 50 years of Seekers club - next year we celebrate 50 years.... I dread to think how old I will be but can't imagine leaving, Seekers is an integral part of my life! Regards to members old and new, and many thanks to volunteers and families and carers for their consistent support.

Zerrin Izli
Club Leader



This Report is Split into several Subsections as follows;

1. Members and Volunteers

In 2011, Xpression had 19 members on its books with an average of 16-17 showing up per night. Some of our members are now approaching the upper age limit of Xpression, having been with us at the club since we first opened our doors in 2004, and in 2012, we will be asking our older members to move on to our sister club, Future Friends. This means there will be a drive to recruit new members in the coming months, and with the new premises that we are now in, we could potentially aim for 8-9 new members.

We were very sad to have to say goodbye to many of our dedicated volunteers, who left us to move on to universities around the country and travelling. So we say a fond farewell to Victor Hensel-Coe, Hannah Collins, Alex Santerelli, Mario Jukic and Kathleen Jablonski.

Thankfully, we've had a great bunch of volunteers coming in to take their place. Natasha Faulkner, Laura Sand, Alison McCarthy, Stephen Cheung, Kate Thornily-Walker, and Claire Roberts are just some of the big names.

2 Club House

In June of 2011, we upgraded to our new venue at Searchlight youth club. Now, instead of a dilapidated old community hall, we can boast of a purpose built youth facility. We now have a separate sports hall, kitchen facilities, lounge area, and lots of other facilities that we've all enjoyed.

We were successful in the last year of extending the club opening hours to 7pm until 9pm, adding 30 minutes per week. This has allowed us to do more involved activities, and prepare more elaborate cooking activities.

3. Finances

Xpression's finances remain fairly stable after some very good fundraising from members of Xpression's management committee and from support from the families of our membership. The Kingston Magistrates boaters have once again did Xpression a tremendous service, and we put on a big party for them at the Christmas awards night/party night. We are not sure what the future holds for the Kingston Magistrates Boaters, as the South West London Magistrates are going through a restructuring programme. With any luck, we hope to see their rebirth as the "South West London Magistrates Boaters"....

4. Activities

Since getting a laptop for the club, the members have been able to become more involved in the structure of the programme, with focus groups being able to design and think about the logistics of the club, and we are getting the members to think more about how resources can be used across the course of the term.

This year we have planned out a number off the wall activities, including a I'm a celebrity get me out of here night, where we had members trying to win token by putting their hands through any number of messy substances. Other activities have included the Apprentice

Night, where two teams tested their business might by designing clothing with items they won in previous games.

We have also been able to access tickets to Wimbledon AFC football games, and we were able to take members out to watch a match there on a club night.

We are hoping that in 2012 we will be able to access more games like this, watch this space!

5. Events

This year we have managed a number of great events, it may have been our busiest year yet!

This year we had our first volunteer residential training weekend away. We joined up with another youth project from Merton and had training in Safeguarding, Makaton, Challenging behaviour, communication training and increasing member participation. In May 2012, we intend to do the same, to ensure that all our volunteers are well trained and confident in running activities to a high standard.

In September, Xpression went on its members' weekend away to Hindleap Warren, where we enjoyed zip wires, rafting, rock climbing, swimming, orienteering, party night and much more. It was an exhausting weekend, but well worth it! We hope to start planning our next weekend away for September 2012.

6. Transport

Diane Marlow continues to provide regular, unquestioning, relentless service to Xpression. Our relationship with RAKAT has also continued to be fruitful, and we have again not been let down all year by their service to us.

Many of the new members who have started in the last year, have had to access the minibus service to ensure that they can make it to the club, and we are now nearing capacity for bringing members to and from the club. It is clearly a valued service...

7. Leadership

2011 was my third year as leader of Xpression and feel I have had to make a lot of adjustments to be able to continue to keep up my duties with Xpression while managing my new duties in my career as a social worker.

Some of the main adjustments I have made this year is changing all of Xpression's systems to be available to volunteers online, enabling volunteers to plan activities and share resources with each other more effectively. The new systems also have allowed me to do more remote working, as I can now access all the files wherever I happen to be.

It will be a good challenge to keep this level of work up, but I'm sure that with the support from my fantastic volunteers I can keep things going for the foreseeable future.

I would like also to extend a big thank you to the ongoing support from Kingston Mencap, who have always been around whenever we've needed a bit of guidance.

Finally I'd like to thank our members and their carers, whose continued enthusiasm and sense of fun make all the hard work well worth it for everyone!

'Til the next time...

David Cafferty
Xpression Leader



Future Friends Annual Report 2011

Membership

Future Friends continues to have a regular core membership of 15 – 20 members who attend fortnightly sessions. We have gained 5 new members since September 2011, all of whom have settled in well. Our members all bring enthusiasm and ideas to the group and together create a warm, welcoming and supportive atmosphere to members and volunteers alike.

Staffing

In August 2011, Future Friends club co-ordinator Jill Kemp decided to take a break from the club following an addition to her family. Jill and her husband John had worked with Future Friends since the very beginning and were integral to the success of the club. They are much missed at Future Friends and all our members were sad to see them go, attending their final session which was a good 'send off' with cards and presents all round!

From September 2011, I started as the new club co-ordinator. I first worked with Future Friends in 2008 as a visiting drama tutor and had always really enjoyed my sessions with the club. I was delighted to take on this new role and have been fortunate in my support team of volunteers and staff at Kingston MENCAP as I have settled in. September also brought other changes to staffing as we were sad to see regular volunteer Cat leave to return to her studies but delighted over the course of the year to welcome new volunteers Meneshka, Sahana, Jack, Dan and Andy, who is also the new Future Friends treasurer. We also have the continued support of our wonderful volunteers Ro, Matt, Bethan and Jackie. Future Friends also has links with Kingston Grammar School who send their teacher Izzy and students Soo Rin, Helen, Lauren and Millie to support the club. We are so grateful to all of our volunteers as they support us through our activities and allow the club to keep going.

Activities

Future Friends meet fortnightly on Thursday nights from 7.30 – 9.30 and we do a variety of activities. Regular activities include art, drama, bowling, dance, games and pub nights. Recently we have also tried some new activities including a them night where we learnt Bollywood dancing and tasted some yummy curry, modeling and photography and Singstar night, which is very

likely to become a regular fixture! We have also had a few special activities for Christmas, when we went for a two course Christmas dinner at the Bishop out of Residence pub in Kingston and put on a Christmas show and Art Exhibition. Most activities cost £3 with the occasional additional cost for special activities.

Community Links

We have strong links in the community, especially with the two organisations that provide us with our premises. In the Winter months (September – March), Future Friends meet at Searchlight Youth and Community Centre which we hire from Kingston Council. From April to August, we meet at Canbury Pavilion which is hired to us by the Canbury Community Trust. We are very grateful to these organisations for their continued co-operation.

We have also made new links with Kingston pub Bishop Out of Residence and Ten Pin Bowling in Kingston, who were kind enough to provide bowling vouchers for our Christmas fundraiser.

Fundraising

In December 2011, Future Friends held an Art Exhibition and Christmas Show called “Christmas with Future Friends”. The event was really well attended and all the members and volunteers did themselves proud with their performances. The evening raised £128 with £2 for admission, refreshments and a raffle ticket, although many people put their hands in their pockets for extra raffle tickets!

For more information on Future Friends please contact Kirsty Fraser at futurefriendskingston@gmail.com