

Chair's Annual Report

CHIPS

AGM 2022



Introduction:

CHIPS continues to flourish, with demand for sessions back to pre-pandemic levels although with long waiting list for places at all settings. Some of the policies and procedures, brought in to ensure everyone's safety during the Covid 19 pandemic remain in place, as the Playleaders consider them to be still beneficial to the running of the sessions.

In October 2021; the charity took the plunge and opened a sixth setting based at Holy Trinity School in Waltham Cross. This has been a long-standing ambition of the Trustees, as no comparable provision exists in this area and there was a continuing demand. Families from this part of the county were previously travelling to the Cheshunt scheme.

Recruitment of new playscheme staff continues to be slow and this remains an urgent priority. CHIPS' Trustees are considering increasing rates of pay, which they hope will encourage people to sign up.

Income from donations remains low. However the charity is in a healthy financial position due to the Trustees previous good housekeeping and past success with grant applications to other funders and charities.

Thankyous:

My first duty in this annual report is to thank the many people who make CHIPS the special organisation it is. First, our hardworking office staff who continue to deal with all the challenges which arise and ensure that playscheme sessions and clubs continue to run. We welcomed Lauren Clayden and Kerry Viccars to the admin team and Karen Lavers as our Volunteer Co-ordinator.

I would like to say a particular thank you to:

- ❖ Wendy Tucker who continues to organise the wages for CHIPS staff across all of our settings with such great skill,
- ❖ Matt Cooper who, continues to manage our IT systems and website, interview new staff and sort out many things to ensure that CHIPS keeps going,
- ❖ Teresa Ivison, for her support in many areas and her wise advice,
- ❖ Simon Tatam who continues in the role of Treasurer lending his knowledge and experience,
- ❖ Everyone who has served as a CHIPS' Trustee this year,
- ❖ Our fabulous fundraising team - Hazel Smith, Alison Spagnolletti, Karen Slater and Helen Smith. We welcome Michele Nicholson to the team,

- ❖ Rita Adams and Joanne Edwards for their continuing assistance with the charity's financial management.

My grateful thanks as always go to all the playscheme and club staff, on every level. Our wonderful staff are the face of CHIPS and I hugely appreciate their hard work delivering the sessions. Parents and carers have nothing but praise for all the staff they meet.

Last - *and certainly not least* - can I say a huge CHIPS THANK YOU to the many wonderful volunteers who help at the playschemes. They always bring extra laughter, fun and help make CHIPS' Playschemes even more special.

Goodbyes:

Gill Dowling will be leaving her post as Administrative Assistant at the end of October. Gill has worked for CHIPS for over 7 years. In recent years her knowledge and experience has been invaluable in supporting Anita as she settles into her role as the charity's manager. Gill will continue to run the Cookery Club until the end of 2022.

Joanne Edwards will be stepping down as a Trustee at the AGM. We are very grateful for her many years of service.

New Office:

CHIPS is now very happily settled into a new office back in the heart of Hertford.

New Playscheme:

As previously mentioned, CHIPS has established a sixth playscheme. The sessions are held at Holy Trinity School in Waltham Cross. We are very grateful for the support from the school's Headteacher and Caretaker. Initially, the sessions were run by our Cheshunt Playleader, Billie Plumb, with support from staff who also work at other settings. We have now appointed a new Playleader and are slowly recruiting staff and volunteers.

Christmas Parties:

154 children attended the parties organised by CHIPS in December 2021. As in previous years, an entertainer organised the games and dancing and refreshments were provided. Each child received an individually chosen gift from Father Christmas, who once again took time from his busy schedule to visit each party. CHIPS was fortunate to receive generous support from several local Councillors through their Locality Budgets. Also, from the staff at Sainsbury's Rye Park Depot, who kindly purchased some of the gifts, saving the charity much time and expense.

Christmas Playschemes:

110 children attended the Christmas Playschemes.

Easter Playschemes:

295 sessions were offered to 162 children over the three days.

Summer Playschemes:

As usual the summer playschemes ran for three weeks, Monday – Friday, 10.00am - 3.30pm.

The Hertford scheme moved to new premises at Hollybush School, Hertford which they found worked well. The Playleaders were very grateful for the help of the school's Caretaker who was on hand to sort out any issues relating to the premises. The Playleaders have requested to return to Hollybush School for future holiday schemes.

Our Hoddesdon Playscheme also moved premises this summer, on a permanent basis, to Hailey Hall School. Again, the Playleaders are very happy with the new accommodation, especially the hall which leads directly to the outside space allowing for free flow.

Due to a lack of leaders and staff, the Cheshunt and Waltham Cross schemes combined for the summer. We were able to accommodate all children whose parent's requested places.

One of the Bishop's Stortford Playleaders was on maternity leave over the Summer. Our second Playleader and Deputies stepped up to the challenge, with support from Teresa Ivison, Trustee.

Despite the very hot weather, the staff provided many craft and cooking activities, some outdoors, in addition to the wide variety of toys available. Water fights, ice pops, watermelon and dips in paddling pools were deployed to keep the children (and staff) cool.

Each scheme enjoyed visits from entertainers /workshops sessions – the wonderful Sally Squiggles party entertainer, face painting, Lego Builder, animal experiences to name but a few. A new treat this year was a visit to each scheme by an ice cream van. The Hoddesdon scheme held a silent disco!

All schemes had trips out – to Paradise Wildlife Park, Van Hage's Garden Centre, swimming, Cedars Park, Audley End Miniature Railway, H2O rampage, Old MacDonald's Farm and Wild 'n;' Wacky. Where possible the staff and children walked to activities or travelled by train.

Saturday Schemes:

The Bishop's Stortford scheme has concentrated on introducing new toys that will appeal to the older children – a dart board, swing ball and new scooters – all of which have been well utilised. A new location for the scheme is still being sought as the outdoors space is very limited.

The outside play area at the Ware setting has been refurbished by the school, with a new climbing frame and outdoor seating, which looks great. The school are happy for CHIPS to use the area.

The Cheshunt scheme has also benefited from improved outdoor space available at their setting. New climbing equipment and a grass/shaded area, which the children enjoy as a quiet space. Role play continues to be a main activity with the current favourite being a Costa coffee shop! Arts, crafts, and bug hunts are also popular.

At the Waltham Cross scheme, the children have access to a huge outdoor area. The staff use walkie talkies to communicate and ensure the children's safety. As with all the CHIPS Playschemes, many of the children enjoy sensory play. The setting is lucky to have a small room which can be set up as a sensory room, for the children who need it to have a safe space and some quiet time.

The Hertford scheme continues to have a theme each session, to provide a range of activities and celebrate certain festivals throughout the term (e.g., Valentine's Day and Mother's Day). The children have made heart dipped biscuits and flower portraits. Their amazing deputy, James, was offered a place at university to study Speech and Language Therapy from September. He is much missed.

The children at the Hoddesdon scheme, are very keen on cooking - sausage rolls, bacon and cheese turnovers, pizza which they make and eat at snack time. Icing biscuits is also popular, often making the biscuits in shapes relevant to the session - crown for the Queens jubilee, Halloween, Christmas and Easter. The children are also keen on colouring, arts and crafts. The Wii and iPads have been put aside for more outdoor play- football and basketball and scavenger hunts.

The nice weather over the summer term resulted in much outdoor sensory and water play at all settings. Celebrations to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee were held involving parties, craft and cooking. The children enjoyed receiving their commemorative medals.

CHIPS' Activity Clubs:

CHIPS continues to run activity clubs, mainly for the older children, who have outgrown the playscheme sessions. These clubs enable the children and young people to focus on one activity.

Climbing Club:

The Autumn Term started with approximately five boys who, at their own pace, made incremental progress. With more new additions to the team, by the end of the term, an average seven to eight boys were attending regularly. Unfortunately, the centre was only able to allocate one instructor to the group. This resulted in the boys having long waits for their turn to climb and belay. Top Trumps, paper and pens are provided by the Leader to keep them entertained between turns.

During April and May attendance swelled to 10 boys and the centre was able to provide an additional member of staff for one hour. Two regular volunteers were replaced by a member of staff and her daughter who have proved to be a big hit with the boys bringing, fun, stability and friendship.

Climbing indoors continues to be the lead activity with archery and crate stacking - a new activity, sessions during the summer months.

Notification of cancellations continues to be a problem, with many parents not informing the office in advance. They are continually asked to do so.

The Trustees are very grateful to Vira Denys and Hannah Hibbs for their continuing commitment to the running of the club.

Cookery Club:

The cookery club continues to be very popular and has 10 children attending which is the absolute maximum for the room size. There has been quite a bit of movement this year with a few children leaving, as they had reached the age of 20, which meant that new children could join the group.

Over the year the children have made a huge number of delicious dishes including - mango, apple and almond strudel, sausage and bean casserole, Christmas pudding cookies, sausage rolls, cranberry and sausage meat stuffing, vegan lentil and tomato soup, vegetarian moussaka and chicken and mushroom pie. The group continues to support fundraising events making chocolate and nut biscotti and banana cake for the winter fundraiser, garlic and herb flatbread, focaccia for the CHIPS Souperwalk and cheddar and onion scone rounds for the Methodist Church Coffee Morning.

The young people have continued to develop their skills. They have also learnt to use the liquidiser, practised their icing and decorating skills, used filo and puff pastry and learnt to pan fry fishcakes.

The staff and volunteers continue to be excellent. Although there have been some health issues, and some staff are not available every session, it has been possible to cover all sessions.

Computer Club:

The club is going well with the boys playing computer games together so much more. They have developed friendships and some of them play as a group on the Wii. A couple of the boys need a little extra support to access suitable websites which the staff monitor closely.

There has been a lot of movement during the year with children leaving and new youngsters trying sessions, but not settling. The group has increased to 12.

CHIPS was able to obtain funding for two new laptops last year, and again this year. The club can now offer those games that take up more memory. Two of the old laptops have been reconditioned and are now used by the office staff.

The club has 3 core staff and 3 volunteers.

Craft Club:

Craft Club began in February 2022, based at the Baptist Church in Hoddesdon. It runs every other Wednesday evening from 6.30 – 8.00pm. Each session has a different theme; including, to date, Hearts, Mother's Day, Rainbows, Clay Modelling, Easter, Gardening and transport. Activities have included painting on canvas and

pottery, clay model making, button art, flowerpot painting and planting, and plenty of sticking.

Alongside the planned activities, there is always a colouring table, sand/sensory area, Lego area and sticking table. The children are free to use any materials from a wide selection and can take part in the planned activities or adapt it and create their own ideas. The group is very relaxed with an emphasis on creating rather than the end product.

6 to 8 children regularly attend, with a few new members due to start, bringing the maximum of 12 per session.

Teen Club:

Teen club has been running well this year. Over the last six months they have been to the cinema several times, Trampolining (always a favourite), Climbing, Laser Tag, Escape Rooms, Bowling and even Go Karting! Always ending up with food!

The events are well attended with an average of 8-12 teens attending each time.

The teens have a huge input into the planning of the activities, thus offering activities which they would like to attend.

The group has a great staff team of Rosie Dyball, Stacey Charlton, Scott King and volunteer Bronwyn Evans. They work so well with the Teens and have built up great relationships. This has helped the Teens build confidence on the trips out and aid their independence.

Model Railway Club:

Members of the Hoddesdon Model Railway Club continue to welcome CHIPS' children to their meetings once a month. With the help of a grant, new items have been purchased to develop the activities available. We are very grateful for their continuing support.

Notifiable Event:

On Saturday 14th May 2022, CHIPS received a formal complaint from a parent of a child who attends the Hertford Saturday Club. The child had been able to leave the setting unaccompanied and was found unharmed in the car park behind the building by a member of the public and a visiting CHIPS' staff member.

On investigation, it was found that this incident was due to a series of failures, the front door of the setting had not closed properly and opened automatically when approached. The door alarm was broken and had not been fitted. The Leader and Deputy had been distracted dealing with other incidents and so the lobby/door area was left unobserved.

CHIPS Manager, Chair of Trustees and Safeguarding Lead met to review the incident. Following the meeting, new policy and procedures were established which have been disseminated to all Leaders

A report of the incident was submitted to Hertfordshire County Council and Ofsted. Both were satisfied with the actions taken. CHIPS' Lost Child Policy, has been updated and will be ratified at the AGM in October 2022.

Volunteers:

From November 2021 there has been a constant stream of new volunteers, but with a particular shortage of help at the schemes based in the Broxbourne area. The Volunteer Co-ordinator has concentrated her efforts on targeting the local secondary schools. She has found that once one person volunteers, many of their friends sign up too!

The accreditation program for volunteers has been re-vamped, using feedback from Playscheme Leaders and Deputies.

The Charity currently has 63 volunteers.

Development Officer:

Helen Smith continues in this role within CHIPS. Her main focus has been applying for grants from other charitable bodies. Competition for grants remains extremely high and she works very hard to secure them, with some success.

Fundraising:

The fundraising group continue to arrange regular events: - cake sales, quizzes, raffles, Souper Walk and a Coffee Morning. In the summer they held a stall at the Hertford Castle's 'Teddy Bears Picnic' and this Autumn will be trying a new venture of a Mexican themed evening.

Finances:

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) continue to provide our core funding, with additional income from grants, donations, and fundraising events. Income from donations continues to remain low.

CHIPS needs to raise £120,000 each year to cover the activities which are not supported by HCC: children under 5, siblings without special needs, fun activities at schemes, outings, new equipment and the cost of managing our volunteers.

The charity is in a good financial position and, being aware of the current economic climate, the Trustees have decided to review the CHIP'S Reserves Level Policy. It will be proposed at the AGM in October 2022 to increase the level from six to twelve months running costs.

The reason for the change is because the Trustees feel they have a moral obligation to provide as much support as possible to our young people to help them transition to other services in the event that CHIPS was forced to close. This is of particular importance for the children on the Autistic Spectrum that may struggle a great deal with transitions.

Environmental Sustainability

The Trustees recognise the need for CHIPS to work towards becoming more environmentally sustainable with its activities. The charity will work towards embedding an environmentally sustainable approach into its activities.

Initiatives include:-

- efficient printing,
- reducing the amount of waste produced by the charity,
- ensuring that water/electricity is used responsibly by staff,
- recycling materials as extensively as possible,
- sourcing second hand toys and equipment as appropriate,
- Trustee meetings by Zoom to reduce the need to travel.

Looking to the Future:

- Reducing waiting lists: As additional staffing allows, new children will be invited to attend sessions, with the hope that the waiting lists may reduce.
- Appointing more staff: The appointment of new staff for the playscheme in Waltham Cross and existing playschemes remains a priority.
- Maintaining Income level: CHIPS Trustees, staff and volunteers will continue to work hard to bring in the extra income we need so that we can continue to deliver our playschemes and clubs.

Graham Nickson

Chair, CHIPS Trustees