

"To the world you might be one person, but to one person you might be the world" - Unknown



Special Kids in the UK Annual Report and Accounts

2006-2007

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Trustees

Robyn Carter	Chairperson
Natasha Brown	Vice Chairperson
Alexandra Braithwaite	Secretary
Ashleigh Cookson	Treasurer

Registered Office

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Charity Commission registration

Registered in England
Number 1110533.

2006-2007 Chairpersons foreword

The past year has been a busy and successful one for Special Kids in the UK. As a new charity, many of our activities have been to increase awareness of our services across the UK in order to reach more families and build on the existing services we offer our members.

Our website continues to be a major part of our support services in particular the online discussion board which hosts a number of forums for parents/carers, professionals and our children. In December, we reached our 100,000 post on the forum and in May this year, our 1000 member.

Our subsidised family days have increased in numbers allowing many members to meet each other in a suitable and stimulating setting for their children. As we move into our third year as a charity, we hope these days will occur in other regions especially as our member base grows.

Our Annual Family Day in August last year was a huge success with over 130 present. An ideal opportunity for families from all over the country to spend time together and the supplementary camping proved to be entertaining and invaluable, especially for the children – special needs and siblings.

Working with other organisations and charities to support their objectives has also been a key focus of Special Kids. Campaigns such as Every Disabled Child Matters and Scope's In the Picture touch every one of our members and promotion of these via our website and newsletter ensure their message is highlighted to the families and professionals that we encounter.

We are of course very grateful to our volunteers and glad to report that our volunteer base is steadily growing with some of our members taking a more active role. This includes events co-ordination, administration support and support for our online forum. In addition, fundraising activities are becoming more frequent and more varied! We were delighted to be chosen as the Lady Captain's Charity of the Year at Fulwell Golf Club last October. As a charity who exists solely on volunteer help and fundraising, these relationships are critical to our ongoing success.

As we move into our third year, we will continue to support our members and expand where possible. It is important that whilst we aim to reach as many families of children with special needs as possible, we maintain our "family" spirit which makes us such a success.

In summary, I am pleased to be able to report that the past year has been hugely successful and to all those who have helped with this achievement, I pass on my upmost thanks to all of you on behalf of the Trustees. To our members, we look forward to the year to come.

Robyn Carter
Chairperson

Special Kids in the UK objectives

Special Kids in the UK is a member based charity offering contact, information and support for families of children with special needs.

Main activities undertaken in order to reach our charity objectives:

- Informative website with secure member only section
 - Family days across the United Kingdom
 - Regular newsletter
 - Sharing of disability news
 - Supporting other organisations in their campaigns and raising awareness of their causes
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1. Specialkidsintheuk.org – our website

Our website has two faces: a public section and a member only section. The public section provides informative pages on disability related topics often based on our members own experiences. Our member only section allows our parents/carers members to access additional useful information including fundraising tips and avenues and in particular our online discussion board.

1.1 Public site

In addition to the existing information held on the website, upon request from our members, we have in the past few months added a glossary section in Resources which gives medical acronyms, symptoms and professionals descriptions. We also created a section for special needs exhibitions and events and added a Family Day section on About Us. We are also continually reviewing and adding to our Useful Links pages and encourage our members to use these pages when searching for items or information on the Internet.

1.2 Online discussion board

It never ceases to amaze us how much value can be gained from bringing parents and carers together on an Internet forum. With an average of 1800 posts per week, the main topics of discussion are around the subjects of education, communication, equipment, health and respite. Personal experiences are discussed and issues debated and above all, our children's achievements are shared whilst at the same time tears and fears are listened to and those who are in need comforted.

Earlier this year we tidied up our forum categories and subjects to make it easier for our members to find relevant posts amongst such a huge daily volume. The categories containing several forums are now:

- Welcome and introductions
- Special needs including communication and education forums
- Off topics to share other news or relax!
- Special needs items we have to offer or need
- Kids forum
- Professionals forum
- Forum issues and suggestions

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We encourage all our new members to participate but many are happy to read only. One of our strengths as a charity is that we do not have a posting minimum. This gives the quieter members the ability to get the information they seek without having to actively participate.

In addition to the parents/carers forum, we have a forum for professionals working within the area of special needs and also the children have their own forum where they can chat with others whether they have special needs or are siblings. The latter has proved to be a huge success and many friendships have been forged this way.

2. Family Days

We started our family days in 2005 and have seen a substantial growth in these member meet ups in the past twelve months. The majority of these were subsidised by Special Kids, allowing many members to attend who may have had difficulty attending without our funding. Details of our subsidy criteria are published on the member only section of the website.

2.1 Subsidised Family Days

The family days are a great way for members to meet each other and their children – both special needs and siblings to take part in some fun and stimulating activities. Since last July, twelve family days have taken place which were subsidised by Special Kids and included:

- Cadburys World
- Willows Farm, Hertfordshire
- Ducky's Farm, Cumbria
- Chester Zoo
- Alderham Park, North London
- The Deep, Hull
- Thames Valley Adventure Playground, Bucks



2.2 Fully funded Family Days



This year we started offering fully funded family days at Disability Challengers in Guildford, Surrey for

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those based mainly in the home counties. Four days have been organised with exclusive use of their venue for Special Kids members. Two have already occurred and the June day was complimented by the attendance of Funsense Theatre who did a fabulous space themed workshop for the children.

2.3 . Annual Family Day

Last August, we held our Annual Family Day in Nottingham – the objective of this day is to bring as many of our members together as possible. Around 130 attended the Saturday at White Post Farm and over half this amount decided to camp for a few days also. The whole event was amazing and everyone had lots of fun and it has left many happy memories in a lot of children's (and adults!) minds. This year we will be Derbyshire with a big picnic organised, with activities and over 200 people planned to be present!



3. Newsletter

During 2007, we decided to change the frequency of our online newsletter to 3 times a year instead of quarterly, this is in preparation for printing. This is still making slow progress, with a grant given by the Barbara Ward Children's Foundation to allow us to train a volunteer on Desktop publishing in due course. We are now looking for funding for the actual printing. The intention is to do the first print before the end of 2007. Earlier this year, we also decided our newsletter needed a name! We ran a competition with our members and S.M.I.L.E was decided as most appropriate – meaning Special Kids: Memories, Information, Lifeline for Everyone. S.M.I.L.E's key focus is providing useful and practical information for parents and carers. Therefore a proportion of each issue is made up of member contribution.

4. Increasing Awareness

4.1 Literature

We continue to distribute our business postcards and posters to establishments across the UK and in addition, are ensuring that wherever possible our website is listed on other disability or support websites. This year we were intending on producing an information leaflet. This is still the case and it is in design stage at present. Our checklist given to new members has proven to be a big hit in helping many to realise what information and/or benefits are out there for them and their children.

4.2 Marketing and Merchandise

We are now in possession of two banners which can be used at exhibitions or charity days. We also had some very colourful balloons made and some ballpoint pens. Our pound for life keyrings, designed to raise awareness but also replace the need for a £1 coin in shopping trolleys and gym lockers, have proven very popular. Darwin – meaning dear friend - our mascot bear, was born earlier this year, with the vision he would be attached to members bags, children's wheelchairs or buggies and members to recognise each other.

4. Presence

Last November we took a voluntary organisation stand at Kidz up North, one of the only two UK paediatric special needs exhibitions. In addition, our postcards were handed out at Kidz South, the southern equivalent, in March 2007. We were also able to send a member to Scope's In the Picture conference in order to gather information on behalf of Special kids members. We are always pleased to be able to support other organisations campaigns and where possible, we promote these via our online discussion board, newsletters and the public website.

5. Recognising others

Being a parent or carer of a child with special needs is often very stressful. Finding those who make your life just a little bit easier is invaluable. In 2006, we decided to run a competition called Nominate a Professional – for "**Outstanding Service by a Professional working within the area of Special Needs**". The idea was that members could nominate someone who worked with them and/or their special needs child. We had many entries and the decision was very difficult but we finally chose a winner and runner up. Each were presented with a bouquet of flowers and a framed letter of the award. Tears of gratitude were flowing!



6. How do we do it?

With the help of some wonderful people! Special Kids in the UK is run entirely by volunteers. The four Trustees are all parents of children with special needs and play an active role in the daily operation of the charity. In addition, we have a number of volunteers who help us to reach our objectives.

6.1 Our Volunteers

During the past year, some of our members have become more actively involved with the charity. I am pleased to say that in addition to the Trustees we now have 12 volunteers as follows:

- 2 Fundraising Co-ordinators (who also assist with major event organisation)
- 3 Regional Events Co-ordinators.
- 1 Collection Box Co-ordinator
- 5 Administration Volunteers (including online)
- 1 IT (Web/Forum) Support

They all lead busy lives so their time and effort is truly appreciated. Thank you.

6.2 Fundraising

The last year has demonstrated outstanding fundraising efforts by our supporters and we are pleased to advise that through donations and fundraising events, over £9000 was raised. This includes a grant from the Barbara Ward Children's Foundation for our future newsletter production and funding of our Annual Get Together 2005 by Daytrippers.

It is impossible to list all donations received and fundraising events here but they included:

- Premier Rental E-Auction – July 2006
- Britannia Fun Day – August 2006
- Womens 5k Hydroactive – Sept 2007
- Carol Singing London Victoria Station – Dec 2006
- Gowrings Mobility Xmas Raffle – Dec 2006
- Cumbria House Xmas Raffle – Dec 2006
- Dress down day – Dec 2006
- Swimathon – March 2007
- Edinburgh Marathon – May 2007
- Fulwell Golf Club Charity Day – May 2007
- Youngmans Close Summer Fete – June 2007
- Enfield Floral Club Teas/Coffees – June 2007

3 go Skydiving – June 2007



Thank you to all those who also have purchased items via our online shopping links in How You can Help on the website as every sale generates a commission or cash back to Special Kids.

Some of our children have expressed a wish to raise some money themselves for Special Kids, so in August we will have a 1km Plod for Pounds in which they can take part and get their own sponsors.

7. Our key objectives for 2007-8

As well as the areas already mentioned, our key objectives for the next year are:

- Annual Family Day in Derbyshire
- Printed newsletter and children's own newsletter
- Production of an information leaflet
- Promotion of Family days in other regions of the UK as well as existing.
- Ongoing fundraising to support our family days and other activities
- Continuation of all services that benefit our members and the general public.

8. Financial Summary

As Special Kids in the UK has an income of less than £10,000 we do not have to have our accounts audited (as per the Charity Commission).

Below is a summary of our incoming and outgoing resources for the past 12 months.

01 July 2006 – 30 June 2007

Incoming resources	£s
Fundraising activities	4865.56
Donations	4461.58
Merchandise	244.22
Total	9571.36
Outgoing resources	
Administration	1934.92
Marketing	1411.73
Member services	2658.01
Merchandise	492.33
Fundraising activities	211.44
Total	6708.43
Balance brought forward	3097.85
+ Bank Interest	28.03
+ Incoming resources	9571.36
- Outgoing resources	6708.43
Current balance	5988.81

* Administration costs include stationary, postage, website maintenance and volunteer expenses

On behalf of the Trustees

End of report