

Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of what may become a regular volunteer newsletter. The aim is to provide volunteers with information on events the charity is running, funding and development opportunities, equipment purchases and our policies.

Sessions

We are currently running two morning sessions per week at Tudor Grange, weather and grass slope permitting. Our Monday evening sessions will start again on 31st March. Additionally, we are doing one 'offsite' day per month during which we visit Merstone School and North Solihull leisure centre. Typically, we have 20-30 children at Merstone and 29 service users at North Solihull. The full session schedule is available on our shared Google drive (see below). If you're interested in volunteering at any of these sessions please add your name on Team up.

We were invited to quote for providing off-site sessions by Bromsgrove and Redditch councils. Unfortunately, a lack of available volunteers and the costs meant that we were not able to give a quote by the deadline. Should the councils be able to give additional funding and if we recruit extra volunteers, however, this would fit well with the charity's aims of expanding our services. To that end we have tried to leave the situation open so that the councils can come back to us if they feel we can assist.



Ordinary Magic



Other charities

Joe has contacted other local charities to see if we have opportunities to work together. These include Ordinary Magic (<https://ordinarymagic.co.uk/>), Family Care Trust (<https://www.familycaretrust.co.uk/>) and Solihull Downs Syndrome support group (<https://sdssg.online/>) all of whom do great work in the local area. We hope that their clients will attend either open or private sessions and will update you as things progress.

Equipment

As you'll be aware we have recently taken delivery of a second Tomcat dragonfly to add to our ever-growing fleet of Tomcat machines. Alan is also investigating the purchase of an electronically assisted wheel chair carrier, designed to accommodate heavier powered wheelchairs. Currently the best price we have been quoted is around £9300 but Alan is continuing to work with the potential suppliers.

A related issue is storage which we hope to resolve by adding a third container. Arthur arranged a site survey during January and now we are waiting for the ground to dry out before purchasing and arranging delivery of the new container. Hopefully we will get some more settled weather at some point. We intend to sell the trailer which is currently parked in the same area.

Graham has been working with Cyclists Fighting Cancer to replace our helmets, many of which are showing signs of wear and tear. An order has been placed for 40 new helmets across a mix of sizes.



Volunteers

Firstly, we always need new volunteers so if you know anyone who is interested, please bring them along to a session so that they can see what we do. They don't have to be committed cyclists, there are various roles they could perform, from the front desk to pedalling service users round and fund raising. This is particularly true if we add sessions, off-site or on additional days at Tudor Grange. We now have almost all volunteers with a current DBS certificate and are addressing any gaps in safeguarding training. Going forward these will be a requirement for all volunteers and Joe will speak to individual volunteers about their training needs.

Shared Google drive

We now have a volunteer section on the shared drive which holds Informatics such as policies, forms, minutes of meetings, user guides and contact details. At the moment the information is rather sparse but we intend to add more documents as they become available. Hopefully you will have received a link which gives you access to the drive. If not, or you need help setting up Google Drive, please let us know. Denise is working on an update safeguarding policy which will be posted on the drive as soon as it is finalised.

Socials & fund raising

Various ideas are being considered including a bingo evening, another quiz and a volunteer social. If any of these appeal to you, or if you have ideas for other events, please let Joe know.

We expect the cream team run and mince pie run to take place on the first Sunday of August and December respectively but they will be confirmed in due course. Also, we are hoping to support the Ride for James event again this year.



Charity governance

At January's AGM Rob Cull stood down as a trustee and Gary Crump was elected. We would like to thank Rob for all his hard work as a trustee and hopefully he will continue to be involved with the charity. Also welcome to Gary.

The 2024 Charity Commission reports have been agreed by the trustees. Once the accounts have been studied by an external auditor the reports will be posted to the Charity Commission web site. Previous reports are available on the website <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>



Sense

We have a meeting with Matt Rickard of Sense to try to clarify which service users are covered by the Sense 'concession'. Hopefully this will simplify registration at the front desk



Finally...

Thank you for all you do to support the charity and the service users. Last year we had over 4,600 people attend the sessions, made up of 2,628 service users and 1,945 carers/family members. Without your hard work none of this could happen.

If you have any comments or feedback on this newsletter, please let Joe know? Is it worth doing? Are there other topics you would like to see covered? How frequently should it be produced?

Also, does anyone fancy the job of newsletter editor?