



ANNUAL REPORT 2009 / 2010

IMPROVING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY



Background

Partners in Play (PIP) is an independent, parent / carer led, charity, established in 1996 which offers direct support and information to families of children / young people with disabilities. PIP is based in Motherwell and operates throughout North Lanarkshire. Funded by North Lanarkshire Council, we aim to signpost families to the range of opportunities and support available to them; and to promote the development of a wide range of opportunities for children to be involved in their local communities, helping local clubs and organisations to become confident and open to children of all abilities.

We do this by:

- **Helping to build the whole family's confidence through our support workers' help and information.**
- **Supporting organisations to develop skills, abilities and confidence to include the child.**
- **Promoting equality.**
- **Developing relationships with local organisations so that they can confidently include children with additional support needs into local community activities.**
- **Engaging with local clubs and services to ensure that they are able to include disabled children, helping children to pursue their interests and to achieve their full potential.**

What we offer:

The four main services we provide are:

- **A new service of short term, Inclusion Support to clubs and mainstream organisations, where such support is required to enable a child / young person with a disability to attend the club or activity. Families can contact PIP directly for this support which is free of charge.**
- **A new service known as, Point of Diagnosis (POD): Support & Guidance to families at the point where their child has been diagnosed with a disability or additional support need. Providing an information resource and signposting families to sources of support and services as required, in response to the changing needs of the child and family. This is also a free service that families can access.**
- **"Route 13" is an existing group that provides respite for carers and social / group activities for young people aged 13 -18 years. Friday evenings fortnightly and Saturdays monthly. Meeting bases in Airdrie and Motherwell, no charge except for child's activities.**
- **PIP Out of School Care is also an existing service for working parents of children ages 10-18yrs with additional support needs. Based in Motherwell, capacity of 8 places, fees apply.**

Key Activities in 2009 - 2010

Inclusive Childcare Project

With the award of the tender from North Lanarkshire Education Department Childcare Partnership we continued to work with mainstream child care providers. We also provided resources to childminders, private nurseries and partnership nurseries, supporting them to build their practice in working with children of all abilities. The support offered included mentoring, training, resources or advice. Parents have through this initiative been able to sustain employment or take up education confident that their children are being supported by trained and skilled staff. This service ceased in June 2010 and was part of the realignment of PIP's services.

Advocacy and Children's Participation

Advocacy was provided to children and young people with additional support needs and to parents through the FBS project based in Coatbridge. The project ensures that children can be involved in decisions which affect their lives and contribute to policy developments. Group and individual advocacy is offered. The staff team are members of the Children's Advocacy Network which works throughout North Lanarkshire to ensure that we give a voice to children of all abilities and promote their rights. This project was established in 2005 and became independent of PIP at the end of June 2009 a new management board has been set up taking this forward.

Training

The project has developed training for staff groups to support the inclusion of children of all abilities. This includes consultation and advice on good practice. PIP staff also contributed to various workshops and conferences.

School holiday support

This valued flexible service provided families with day breaks. A range of opportunities were on offer including away days, visits to local sports centres, swimming and bowling. This specific direct provision has ended as PIP is focusing on supporting families and organisations to help children and young people access existing services (inclusive) rather than separate service provision for children with disabilities.

Activity weekends

These weekends were very popular with young people and carers, offering young people a range of experiences from para-gliding, hill walking and team sports. This service ceased to be offered in June 2009 but, PIP will consider partnership options with other organisations in the coming years.

Youth Provision (Route13):

The work with young people (13 – 18 year olds) has widened disabled teenagers' experience of leisure, developing their friendships and relationships, sharing mutual experiences and building their self confidence and self esteem. Approximately 75 young people have accessed this provision which runs monthly in Airdrie and Motherwell. Summer 2010 saw twelve young people reaching the age of 18 and leaving the service, many of whom had attended the group for 7 years or more. Six new young people have joined and a new group for 10-14 year olds is being run as a result. PIP is also working in conjunction with schools and parents to ensure better outcomes for the young people by sharing information on Individual Learning Plans for example.

PIP Out of School Care

This group was established due to lack of resources to support working parents and offers a range of activities to support young people's development using local community resources. Carers and employment issues remain high on our agenda as parents continue to access this service to enable them to sustain their employment. PIP works closely with Routes to Work and a local network 'Carers into Work' to progress these issues.

Befriending Service

Saturday support to some children and young people has continued with Locality Teams within Social Work have continuing to need and request this service for a handful of families.

Partnership Working

PIP works closely with other local agencies to ensure that families are directed to the most appropriate services for their needs. PIP staff represented families, carers and young people at several local groups including Children & Young People's Engagement Network, Carer's Into Work, Carer's Strategy Group, Out of School Care Network and voluntary sector GIRFEC network.

Evaluation

We continue to evaluate PIP regularly against yearly targets. Our evaluation show the main benefits for parents / carers as well as the children / young people are:-

- The young people have greater access to recreational opportunities.
- Parents / carers enjoy a break where they can spend time with other siblings, in the knowledge that their child / young person is well looked after and having fun.
- Support and information about accessing local services.
- Contact with other families giving peer support.
- Age appropriate out of school care provision, allowing parents / carer's to access employment and education opportunities.

Board of Directors

Our Board has a mixture of parents, carers and professionals from across North Lanarkshire. As always, the Board has worked hard to support PIP's development throughout the year. As well as regular Board meetings and interviewing for new staff, the Board are offered training to develop their skills.

Our current Board composes:

Chair: Rhona Wallace (parent)

Secretary: Claire McAteer

Treasurer:

Board members: Helena Kelman (Parent & Professional), Margaret Smith (Carer), Ann Douglas (Relative)

Treasurer's Report

We are grateful to PIP's principle funders:-

- North Lanarkshire Council (Social Work & Learning & Leisure Services) who have agreed a new, joint contract for funding PIP's core services beginning April 2010.
- North Lanarkshire Carer's Strategy Fund which has supported the work of Route 13 over many years.
- North Lanarkshire Council (Learning & Leisure Services) who support PIP Out of School Care Service for working parents.
- To ensure the sustainability of the organisation we have continued to generate other sources of income. This offers more long term stability for the organisation and enables us to look at innovate ways to develop services.

Priorities 2010/11

- A new business plan is being developed consolidating the work of PIP and to ensure we can continue our work with parents and families and explore innovate new ways of working.
- Develop, market and promote the new family & community based support services alongside parents and other partners agencies.
- Partnership working with childcare, leisure and youth providers to ensure that all children can access community support.
- Review the work of the Route 13 and PIP Out of School Care and identify alternative funding.
- Work with parents and young people to enable them to be involved in service delivery.
- Monitor & evaluate new services.

What they say about PIP

- "It is great for my child, the staff are tremendous and I don't know what we would do without it".
- "My child has benefitted greatly. I cannot praise the staff enough for their patience and understanding of my child".
- "The service is a very valuable resource for young people".
- "Fantastic".
- "I enjoy coming to the group. Route 13 is fun because we do different activities every day and I usually talk to my mates".