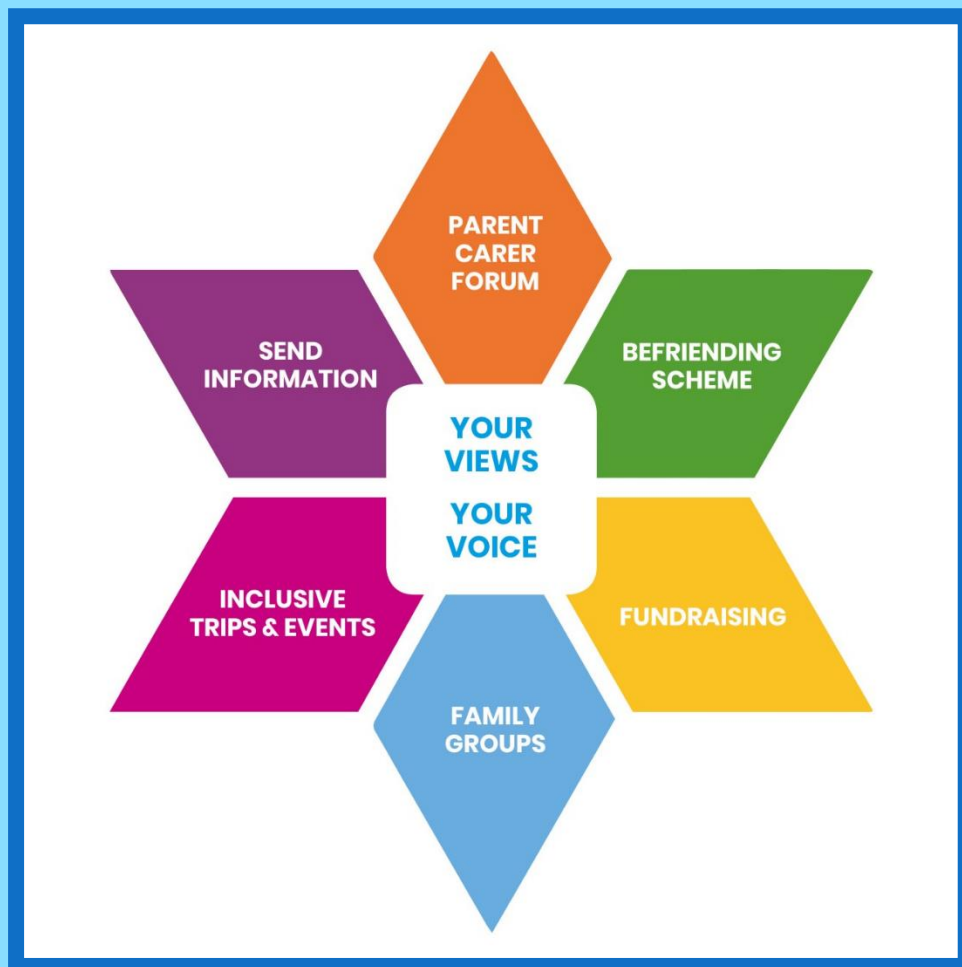


PODS

(Parents Opening Doors 1150871)

Annual Report July 2020



Involving and Supporting Families who have a child or young person with a Disability or Additional Need (age 0 – 25)



COMMUNITY
FUND

PARENTS
OPENING
DOORS
PARENT CARER FORUM



PODS
BEFRIENDING
SCHEME



Introduction

Welcome to our Annual report which contains the reporting period April 2019-March 2020. PODS is a well-established Charity supporting parents and carers with a child or young person aged 0-25 with a disability or additional need living within Telford and Wrekin.

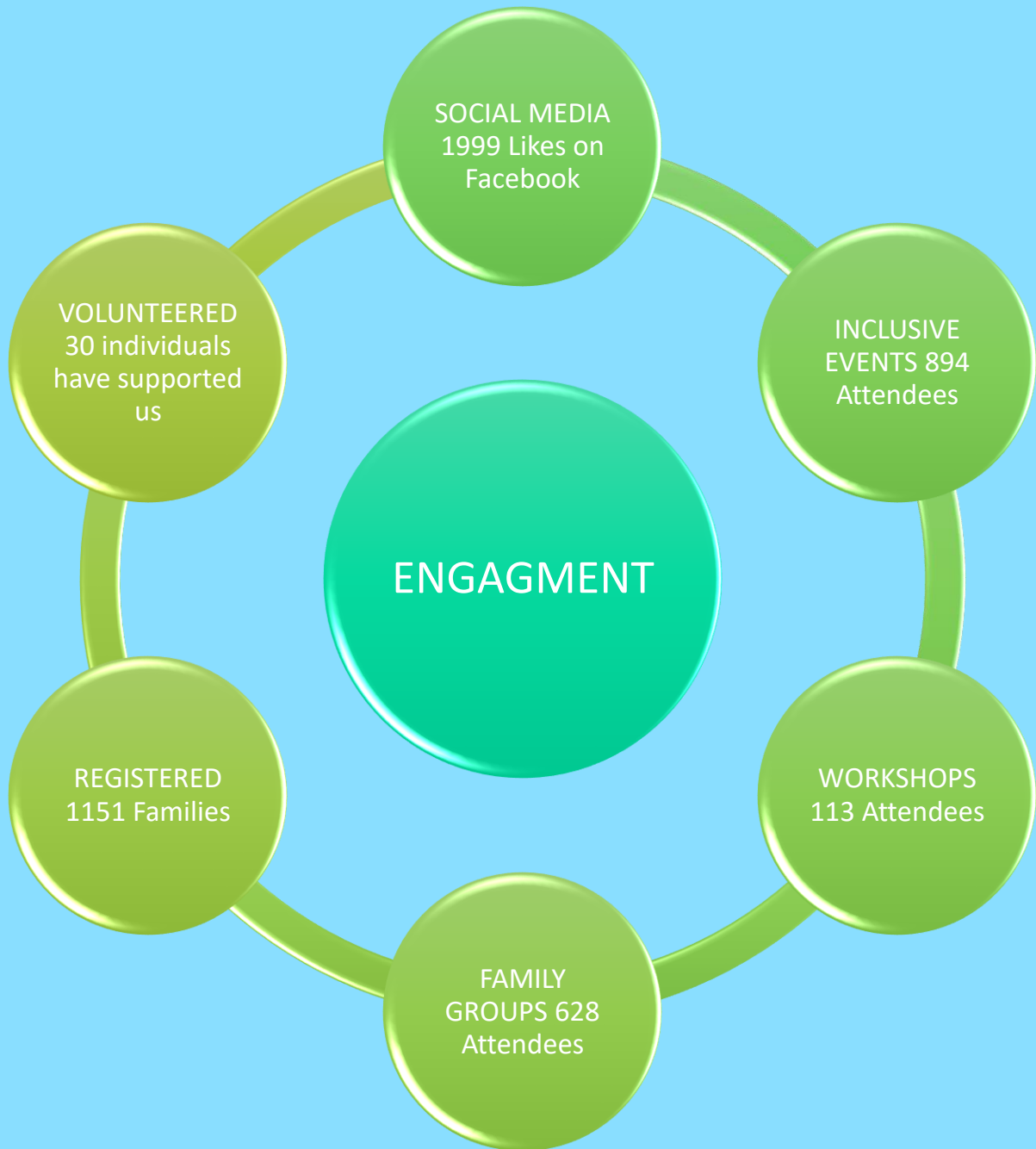
At its core is a parent carer forum which enables families to have their input into the shaping and delivery of the services they use. This ensures the services are as affective as possible and meet the needs of those using them. Families are represented by a team of volunteer parent representatives who are led by the Strategic Coordinator, together they work with the Local Authority, NHS, Commissioning group and other partner services. They collate the views of our members through a variety of means and feed these back via strategic meetings.

To ensure the health and wellbeing of our members we deliver a peer lead befriending service which is carried out by a team of volunteer befrienders who have real lived experience. All our befrienders are initially trained by us on our bespoke course, on completion they are fully supported by the befriender team lead. Befriending takes on many forms depending on the individual requirements of the family, each befriender is matched to the family to ensure they have the most suitable experience and knowledge.

Throughout the year our fundraising and events team meet on a monthly basis to plan and organise both fundraising activities and inclusive events. Our inclusive events are a fantastic way of bringing the community together and reducing the social isolation many of our members feel. It offers the opportunity for families to make memories in a non-judgemental and supportive environment.

In the last 12 months we have managed to secure further funding to continue delivering our vital services and create an office space. This allows us to connect with our team, volunteers and partner services more effectively. It also gives us a base, so members know where we are and how to contact us.

HOW THE COMMUNITY HAS ENGAGED WITH US



Participation

I've shared some highlights and key work areas from the strategic world of 'Parent Carer Participation'. For those who may be new to PODS (Parents Opening Doors) Charity this is where our key work started and is funded partly through a Department for Education Parent Participation Grant:

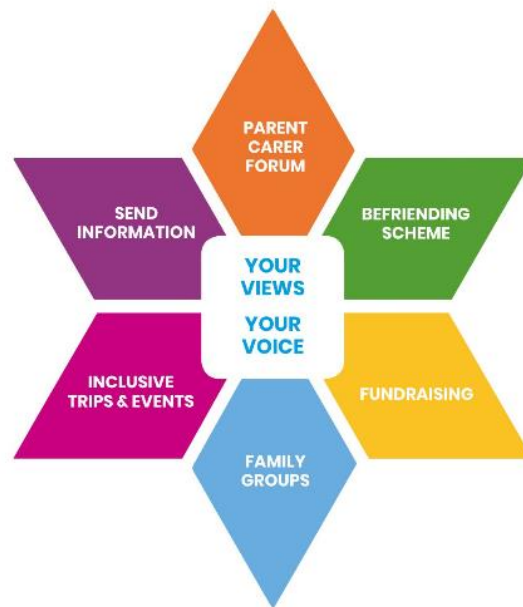
As an introduction: "Parent carers can often pinpoint problems frequently experienced by families with disabled children. This knowledge is useful to professionals as they plan services to meet disabled children's needs. Parent carer participation is when parents and professionals work together, recognising each other's expert knowledge, to design, develop and improve services for disabled children in the local area" Contact, National Charity

Some of highlights for 2019/2020:

- Invitation to a reception for NCVO 100th year celebrations in presence of HM The Queen at Windsor Castle.
- Transition Event: attended by key stakeholders and parent carers - bringing together messages from key professionals and also experiences of young people who had been through transition processes.
- JSNA - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - information gathered over the last 3 years including CAMHS, Autism Services, Short Breaks, 'State of Telford for Carers', Parent carer experiences, social care, education and wider health including mental health of parent carers to develop local services and truly understand the needs here in Telford & Wrekin;
- Dean Beadle - National speaker joined us for a workshop/conference event focussing on Autism Spectrum. Whilst condition specific this has been a key area of concern for our families, and mirrors national anxieties regarding the autism pathway and processes.
- Social Care Transformation Plan - we are fully embedded with this work with key themes around short breaks, workforce, training, service development and we are leading on the 'isolation and acceptance' workstream along with community participation teams.
- Healthy Child contract award and involvement in SEND element of the process for this.
- VOICES project acknowledgment and agreement for it to be joint funded across Health, Social Care and Education.
- New Office - excited to have our own office space after 10+ years of working remotely.

Reaching Families and Core Project Areas

Our 'star' demonstrates the reach of PODS (Parents Opening Doors) Charity and feeds into the Parent Carer Forum and the wider voice of our families:



We're able to keep in touch with our members and wider family through email, phone, text, mobile phone, social media (Facebook and twitter). Our new office at the Glebe Centre, has made a difference in being able to meet with families face to face and hold workshops and discussions there, alongside our drop-in office at Stepping Stones. We are based with many other voluntary sector organisations and have joined the larger network of Chief Officers Group - bringing key third sector organisations together, where we have developed closer working links.

We are pleased that we can continue to provide printed newsletters in an accessible format – we are continuously told the importance of these and they are shared to our members and wider community, schools, libraries, etc. To strengthen our contact with families an ebulletin goes out once a week, a mini weekly update of what meetings we have attended is also included, alongside wider information and opportunities for involvement.

The Strategic Work

Our strategic presence focuses on Aiming High for SEND and working groups/task and finish teams under each area across Health, Social Care, Education. We have been part of a wider piece of work led by Council for Disabled Children around Joint Commissioning (part of the SEND OFSTED report that outlined this is a need to be developed) and this has highlighted the need for a strong 'Co-production' model. We have been successful in demonstrating the initiative of the VOICES project and are supporting this moving forward with a contribution made to start the process. Another big piece of work is around Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and we have been very engaged with this, ensuring that the feedback from our annual survey has been used in reporting and representing views of families. The social care transformation project will cover 5 key areas and the most pertinent one for us is 'inclusion and acceptance' that we are leading on. A key social care discussion around respite services has been held in an open forum with clear consultation and discussion led with parent carers, in a number of different ways, with key messages shared and heard.

The information below demonstrates some of our key strategic and operational workstreams and we are also acknowledging the work of our parent reps who have specific areas of interest:

Key Strategic and Operational Meetings we have attended	Our Parent Rep involvement and Leads on key areas:
Autism Working Group Aiming High Board Child Development Centre Early Years work, Transition and Preparing for Adulthood Short breaks Local Offer and Communications groups Carers Partnership Board Healthy Child Programme 'Pause for Progress' network meetings Strengthening Families/Early Help Social Care Transformation Programme (Inclusion and Acceptance, Market Development, Workforce, Training, Commissioning) Joint Strategic Needs Assessment workstream Health (BeeU and NHS Long Term Plan) Transition in schools (primary-secondary) Mental Health in Schools (Anna Freud) Transport	Sarah R: Local Offer and Comms, School Coffee Mornings Tina L: Local Offer & Comms, Shining Stars, Early Years Karen E: Parent carers transition to adults, Housing Keiron W: Commissioning (social care), Carers Board Simon B-R: Short Breaks, Social Care Deb S: Mental Health, MIND Liz B-S: Inclusion and Acceptance, community activities Uma B: Family groups and Haughton School Elaine P: Autism and Core Comms

We have continued to support our team of Parent Reps, using models based on local experiences and also taking on board national led project and ideas. Our core participation works is led by Jayne Stevens and all elements of PODS workstream and projects feed into the collective parent carer voice. One of our parent reps is also the local rep for SWAN (Syndromes without a name).

Strengthening our core team (Participation Steering Group) has been a key factor, in bringing together a stronger team and joint working. We have also held an open day/evening as a 'meet the team' where we were able to invite professionals and parent carers. This strengthened the core message of a participation led organisation and demonstrated how the links are made between parent carer experiences and how they are fed into the strategic meetings.

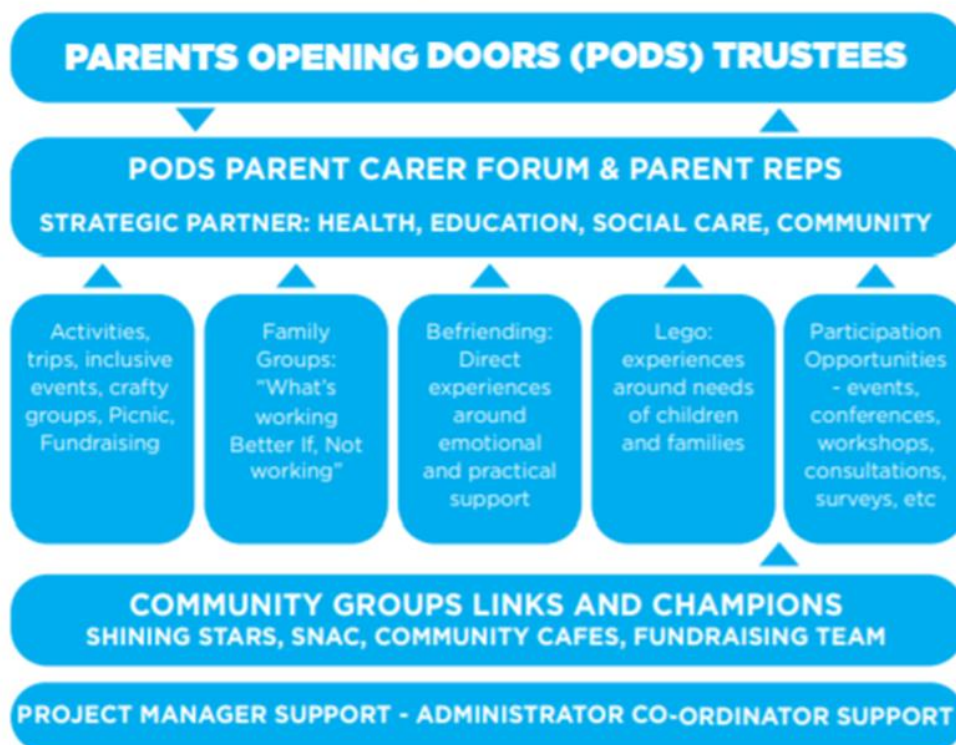
Key pieces of formal consultation work this year have been around Transport, SEN support, Post 16, NHS Long Term Plan, Early Help Strategy – alongside ongoing workstreams indicated in the table above.

Feedback from our families demonstrates that they value the parent carer forum and that their voices are being heard and considered in development of services, and acknowledgement from council that this is to be strengthened is welcomed. It is important for us as a forum to ensure that we are sharing appropriate and relevant links to information and we do this with due care and consideration and an understanding of the local picture.

We work with wider third sector and voluntary partners to extend the sharing of knowledge and information between ourselves.

How Participation Works

STRATEGIC VOICE AND PARTICIPATION RUNS THROUGHOUT FOR IMPROVED SERVICES DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTIFYING GAPS AND SHARING PARENT CARER VOICES





Family Groups

Our family groups, where we gather parent carer views are a way to bring families together and through these there is an element of natural 'support' that brings about conversations that we can have regarding local services. We also do this through our inclusive events, activities and trips in the holidays (funded through a different source) but they all go towards strengthening the parent carer voice that is the core element of our charity. Attending our events, conferences and team meetings gives confidence in own abilities and builds resilience through knowledge. We have also attended social events organised through council (Balloon Festival, Craft and Fun days, special school coffee mornings, SNAC (Special Needs Activity Centre), parish council meetings) - gathering feedback and ensuring the needs of our families are considered.

Moving Forward

Moving forward into 2020/2021 there are newer workstreams around Continence and Sleep are developing with a strong message and joint working from a range of professionals and parent carer voices including in all of this. Weekly 'communication' meetings are attended and these feed into a FAQ process which is shared on the Local Offer.

Majority of strategic work is continuing and we are finding new ways to capture the parent carer voice through online meetings and groups, through our COVID survey and through closer engagement and wellbeing calls.

Thank you for your involvement, for sharing your voice, for sharing your experiences, and believing that

"Together We Can Make A Difference"

Jayne



Befriender Support

Part way through the year and thanks to the continued support from the Reaching Communities grant, we reinvigorated our Befriending program, this brought about many positive changes.

We have a new Befriender Team Lead who has developed a bespoke training package for those wishing to join our team, this encompasses an 8 week in-house training course, DBS checks, new/updated policies and procedures and an ongoing team/individual support program.

The training for the new volunteers is already underway, these will join and complement our existing Befrienders. Over the last 6 months we have gained a long list of those wishing to access our peer support program, this means the demand for our service currently outweighs our capacity. We are working hard to address this by recruiting and training new befrienders, if you are interested in becoming a Befriender please get in touch with lin@podstelford.org

The Befrienders team deliver practical and emotional support to parents/carers with children or young people aged between 0-25 living in Telford and Wrekin who are registered with PODS. The support can take many forms and will depend on the needs of the parent/carer. All befrienders are carefully matched to the family to ensure that they have the relevant skills, knowledge and lived experience to enable them to support the family as effectively as possible.

The peer support is intended to be a short term, early intervention to aid the wellbeing of families at times of need or crisis. If it is found that families require more specialist support our trained and knowledgeable team will be able to signpost or in some cases refer into those services.

The support and empowerment that can be gained from talking and listening to someone who has been in your shoes who understands your situation is priceless. Many families find this invaluable around times of diagnosis, transition into schools or adult services as well as at other challenging times they may face. All our team are friendly, welcoming, supportive, discreet and most importantly non-judgemental.

If you feel you would benefit from our team of Befrienders please get in touch with lin@podstelford.org

Lego Club



Following on from our successful pilot Lego Club run last year we developed a regular Lego club. This was initially aimed at primary school children with a view to moving to secondary school, young adults and potentially those children accessing home-schooling. Unfortunately, Covid-19 halted the Lego club, however Uma has run an online Lego Bingo session weekly to help keep the children engaged.

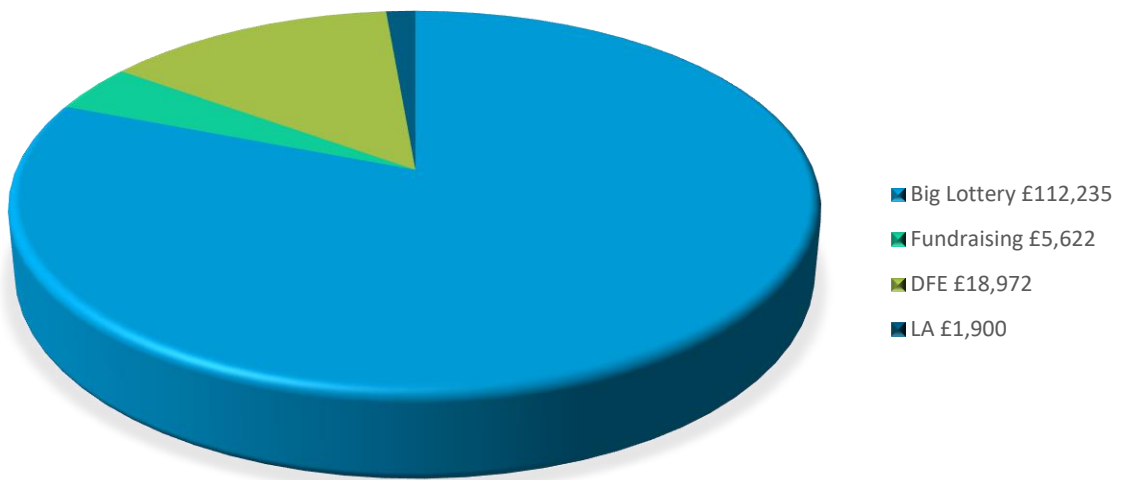
The Lego club got off to a great start and we were very fortunate to be supported by a volunteer who had also completed the Lego Therapy. This enabled us to increase the number of children we could support.

The aim of the sessions is to increase the child's wellbeing whilst developing good communication skills i.e. listening, waiting patiently, talking confidently. The children work in teams of three, with each child taking up the role of Engineer, Supplier and Builder turn by turn. By working in teams they're also forging new friendships by helping each other.

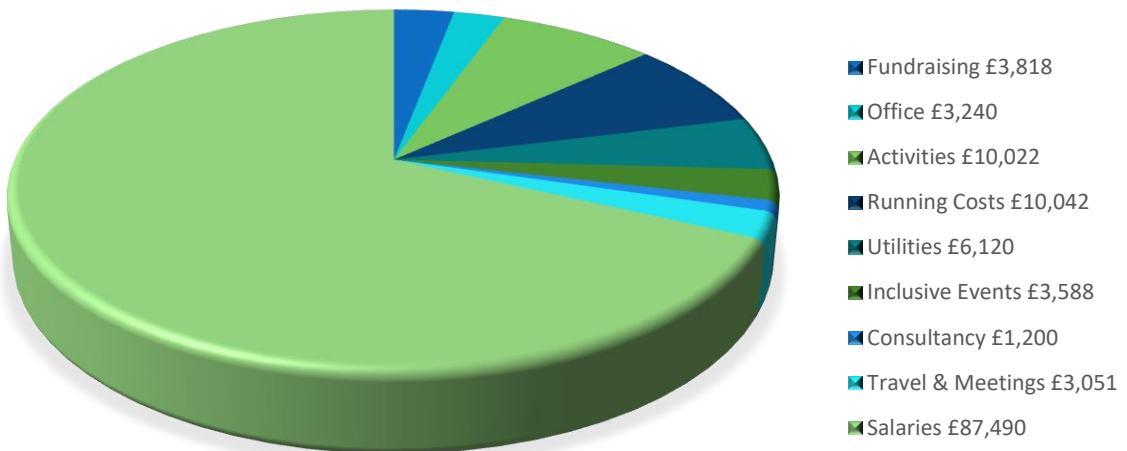
The children look forward to the session each week, it allows them some fun time doing something they enjoy after being in school all day.

OUR FINANCES

TOTAL INCOME £138,729



TOTAL EXPENDITURE £128,571



Funding Update

We were very fortunate to be successful in our grant application and receive further funding for another year from the Big Lottery's Reaching Communities grant. We are very grateful to them for continuing to work with us to assist in providing our members with such a valuable service. This has enabled us to undergo some restructuring to build a strong team with more focused and dedicated roles to deliver the vital support needed. We have rejuvenated our peer to peer support and created a dedicated Lego and family group lead.

We also received a grant from Telford & Wrekin councils community funding which allowed us to hold our biggest ever Picnic in the Park event, it was attended by around 500 people. For the first time ever, we actively encouraged members of the public to join our event, this went extremely well and was a great step forward in acceptance and inclusion.

The Department of Education continues to fund our participation element, this is imperative to the continued co-production of the forum alongside the Local Authority, NHS, Social care and many other partner services. In this year's grant they have put funding in towards a project known as "The Voices" this is a recognised Charter of co-production and strengthens the relationships around all the services our family's access. In addition, they also gave us additional funding in order to create our own office space to make co-production easier and a base for our steering group to meet. This has shown us to be more professional and enhanced the relationship within the services we operate with.

As time passes on this current grant, we are aware of the uncertainty around receiving further funding from the reaching communities grant program. We continue to look at ways in which we can become more sustainable and less reliant on large funding grants. All of us at PODS want to be here to support all of our members for the long term, we have several ideas in the pipeline and will update you all when we have further info.

Many thanks to those that have supported us this year, be it through giving up your time to volunteer for us or by way of small grants or donations, without you all we could not be the success we are.

Elaine Pearce Project Manager





What our Families say



"Spending time with my boys and not feeling judged"



"Knowing PODS was there for support and the children making friends with other PODS children"



"Families understanding as you're in the same boat. Speaking with other parents. Kids having a relaxed affordable trip. Feeling safe"

"Make our family confident to meet other families who have special children"



"Everything was planned really well. The team members were very helpful and supported"



"Great activities enabling us to make friends and trips we wouldn't otherwise be able to access"

GET IN TOUCH

We'd love to hear from you!

Find us on social media too



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