



## **PALS' AGM Minutes – Thur 10<sup>th</sup> Oct 2019**

1. Present – Paula Elsley, Helen Picken, Helen Randall, Gill Waite, Jo West, Lisa Cullum, Emma Potter, Barry Eldred and Faye Snook.

Apologies – Henry Bankes and Jane West.

2. Minutes from last AGM – These were approved and signed by the Chair.

3. Chair's report – Paula presented her report (see below).

4. Manager's report – Helen presented her report (see below).

5. Financial report – Helen presented a summary of the finances. Helen to investigate a new email provider.

6. Election of Officers – Chair - Paula, proposed by Helen P and seconded by Gill.

Vice-Chair – Jane, proposed by Paula and seconded by Helen.

Treasurer – Helen P, proposed by Paula and seconded by Jo.

Secretary – Henry, proposed by Paula and seconded by Helen P.

All Officers accepted their positions.

7. AOB – Our new logo was shown and this was discussed. Helen to investigate a possible new link for a Saturday morning activity in a local school. Lisa shared that the West Berks Parent Carer forum were holding a Christmas party on 30<sup>th</sup> Nov. Discussion also took place about our thoughts on entering the Crafty Craft raft event in 2020.

8. Date of next AGM meeting – This will be confirmed.

## PALS Chair's Report

It's been another great year for PALS. Helen put together an amazing programme of activities for all age groups, as well as residentials at Ufton Court and PGL. Helen received great support from our co-ordinators in making sure that all age groups had great experiences. We wouldn't be able to make this happen without our team of volunteers who give so much of their time for which we are very grateful.

In order for our provision to remain relevant we've regularly reviewed our programme so that we can offer the best possible service to our users. It's very important that PALS members are able to give feedback to Helen on what they would like to see on the programmes. We also welcome feedback from parents on anything ranging from possible improvements to our website, newsletter content, ideas for activities or anything else. We've continued an important area of our work in building links with the local community through networking with other organisations and groups, and joint working with West Berkshire Mencap, Swings and Smiles, Dingley's Promise and Friends of Castle School.

Our management committee have continued to focus on several key areas which included governance, review of training for trustees, staff and volunteers, raising the charity's profile in the local media and an ongoing programme to recruit new trustees and fundraising. Helen and I will complete the review of policies and procedures at our meeting this month.

We have a small but very active fundraising committee, Steph, Emma and Faye who meet with Helen regularly. I'd like to thank them for giving up their time and for their continued commitment.

In the last year we've received donations totalling £68,290.93. This figure includes donations from ROC, Sainsbury's, Greenham Common, West Berkshire Council and a sizeable donation on behalf of Anne Richardson. We are extremely grateful for all of these donations.

It's hard to pick highlights from the last year, but for me it has to be the live links we did with Kennet Radio during a Rockets session and during the Mayor's coffee morning in Newbury.

I would like to thank Helen for her continued commitment, energy and enthusiasm that she brings to her role. She gives so much to everything she does on behalf of PALS and is a real asset to the charity. The charity would not be where it is today without her hard work. A special mention goes to Emma and Steph and their families for everything that they've done on behalf of PALS.

I would also like to thank Elstree, Cheam and St Gabriel's for their continued support.

Thanks also to Sue, our bookkeeper, for giving her time to do our payroll.

I would also like to thank our committee members and trustees for giving up their time and for all of their hard work on behalf of PALS.

I got married last month and my partner and I picked two charities for guests to donate to on the day. PALS was one of the charities chosen, and I'm really pleased to say that the donations total £271.

Paula Elsley, PALS Chair, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2019

## PALS Manager's Report

PALS has continued to run three sessions, the Fun Factory for the younger ones, The Rockets for 11 to 16 year olds and the 18+ group. Numbers attending Fun Factory have been a regular seven children each week since the start of the new academic year. Our fortnightly Rockets, six to seven members attend, although we are expecting this to increase as a couple of the older children have progressed on from our Fun Factory group.

In the last year the activities for Fun Factory have included drama, messy play, crafts, cooking, themed sessions, and going out and about in the summer term. Trips this year have included a pizza making party at Pizza Express, a trip to Victoria Park and a personal highlight for me, three sessions at Willow's Edge Care Home in Newbury, where we visit and join the residents for tea. This really is a new special relationship between PALS and Willow's Edge, and watching the interactions between our children and the residents is truly amazing.

We always enjoy having visitors and we welcomed back Newbury and District Agricultural Society who ran a brilliant sausage making session for us.

The Rockets have enjoyed a new venue for the last year at the PDR in Kennet School and we thank Kennet School for allowing us to use this, as it provides us with all the facilities that we could ever need. We have had some sport sessions, lots of food, played board games, which is surprisingly popular, as is just popping to the park and chilling with an ice cream.

Our 18+ group continues to meet monthly. The needs of the group have changed this year as three members have moved on due to their ages, so we have been able to offer a more varied programme, which has included sno-tubing, Laserquest, a visit to the local escape room and a day trip to Harry Potter World which was amazing. We have six regular members in this group.

Our holiday sessions are very popular and we often have up to twelve children attending. This summer the PALS enjoyed a very wet day at PGL, zip wiring, abseiling, orienteering and zero ball. We had a return trip to the Five a Day market garden and a session at Theale sailing lake, to use their speedboat, as well as sailing. In the other school holidays, we have enjoyed a chocolate making workshop, bowling, pottery painting, as well as further joint stay and play sessions with West Berkshire Mencap, Swings and Smiles and Dingley's Promise.

We had the biggest team at the Kennet Games this year with twelve children representing PALS and there were another eight PALS taking part but representing their schools. Yet again we had a great day!

Our younger children had a very chilled trip to Ufton Court back in May. We had a great time and enjoyed playing games, a movie and archery. Again for some of our younger ones, this was their first opportunity to be away from family, a big step for them and their parents!

We held our second overnight experience at Ufton Court at the end of June for the older children. Both weekends had good numbers of attendance.

We were able to facilitate a two night trip to PGL in the summer holidays for the older PALS, and five attended this year. We enjoyed many activities, including boating, a new experience that PGL were able to offer us this year.

All the above has already been booked for 2020! And I am hoping to be able to offer the older PALS an additional trip to Euro Disney!!!

Our links with Cheam School and Elstree School continue, for which we are extremely grateful. We enjoy half termly sessions at both schools, and activities have included drama, golf, badminton, cooking, using Elstree's pizza oven, crafts as well as lots of snacks! Each school provides a small team of helpers at each session and it's great to see these children grow in their confidence with helping children who may be different from them in some ways. These sessions are very popular, and we often have up to thirteen of our members attending.

We have welcomed five new members to PALS in the last year.

We have run nearly eighty sessions in the last financial year, which is an increase of 18% on the previous year, over a thousand hours of support for families!

I must thank all our volunteers, without them, the sessions for the children would not be able to run. Our link with the local Lions Club continues, as they organise a scheme which recognises service completed by young leaders under the age of eighteen. Back in January, we were thrilled to see Kieren being presented with his gold award for completing over a hundred hours of service to PALS. We have another two volunteers who will receive their bronze awards at our next awards event and I have just signed two more youngsters up to the scheme.

Another highlight for PALS, was our nomination to the West Berkshire Community Champion Awards, where Kieren was also the very worthy winner of the Pat Eastop Junior Citizen award. We also nominated Kieren for Radio One's Teen Awards, but sadly this wasn't meant to be!

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Steph for all her help for the last four years, and we wish her well as she prepares for her new family life. Emma and Faye have both been fantastic in helping to fundraise for PALS and all of us meet on a regular basis to look at ways that we can do this. Also, a big thank you to Sue, who continues to volunteer quietly behind the scene completing our payroll each month, despite now living in Devon.

Recruiting of volunteers is always on our agenda, and I have attended a couple of events organised by the Volunteer Centre and have had some success. We have signed up six new volunteers since this time last year. But sadly, we have also had to say goodbye to some of our younger volunteers as they have gone off to university.

Training is important for our volunteers and we have offered first aid and safeguarding of children facilitated by Daisy First Aid and Berkshire Youth. We have also re-enrolled with

our online training provider and there are numerous courses available for staff, volunteers and our trustees.

Behind the scenes, Paula and I have spent a lot of time reviewing our policies and procedures including health and safety, staffing, volunteer recruitment and retention, and we hope to have this task completed by the end of the month. We are in the process of updating parent and member's handbooks.

Raising our awareness continues to be very important. Our Facebook page is regularly updated. Our little PALS bears are being seen out and about, with one PAL, Faye, regularly sending photos of what she has been up to! We have had several press releases over the year and a couple of interviews on Kennet Radio and Radio Berkshire.

We are very excited that we have been shortlisted for Newbury Weekly News' Business Awards and Paula and I are attending the awards evening in November, where we will find out if we are the lucky winners.

We have been to several events lately hoping to raise our profile, including Carer's week at Sainsbury's, local Christmas and summer fetes and Thatcham Funday, and hosted the Newbury Mayor's coffee morning for the first time, as well as our usual annual St Nicolas' church coffee morning.

We have been busy fundraising in the last few months, and have been successful again with a small grant from West Berkshire Council and Greenham Common Trust Ltd have been extremely supportive with their grant and match funding. We have had an amazing year with Co-Op, but sadly our partnership ends at the end of this month with the Thatcham stores, but I think that this could be the start of a long term relationship in some form. I believe a first for Co-Op, they encouraged staff to volunteer with us, and they came to two of our summer activities to help, we even had the area manager swinging from the zip line! We continue to have a fantastic relationship with Sainsbury's Newbury and we have been invited back regularly to take part in opportunities where we can. We nominated the store and Carol for an award and we are thrilled that Carol's nomination has been short listed and Paula and I are off to another dinner next week, where they will announce the winner.

The highlight in fundraising this year has to be the clay pigeon shoot, kindly organised by Francesca and a team of supporters. What an incredible day and what an amazing amount of money raised!

The next year will be a busy one for PALS I'm sure. We will be continuing to review the programme to ensure that we remain relevant, and provide the best service possible, plans include scuba diving after my taster session earlier in the year, and a trip to Chessington for the older PALS. We will continue to build on our links in the local community and we are very excited about our rebranding, which will start in November.

I would like to take a moment to thank the committee, especially Paula, who spends many hours each month, supporting myself and the charity, and also to welcome Jo to our committee.

As I enter the start of my fifth year with PALS, I just wanted to end with how much I enjoy working for PALS, and I think that we have continued to make great progress over the last year, and I'm looking forward to the next year!

Helen Randall, PALS Manager

10<sup>th</sup> October 2019