

PALS AGM 30th September 2021 at 7pm

1. Present - Paula Elsley, Helen Randall, Jane West, Tim and Faye Snook.
Apologies - Helen Picken, Henry Bankes, Jo West, Gill Waite, Emma Potter, Barry Eldred, Amber and Susan Haines, Elly Hase and Louise Argyle.

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

3. Chairman'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.

6. Election of Officers -

Chair Paula proposed by Jane and seconded by Tim.

Vice-Chair Jane proposed by Paula and seconded by Tim.

Treasurer Helen P proposed by Paula and seconded by Jane.

Secretary Jane proposed by Paula and seconded by Tim.

All Officers accepted their positions.

7. AOB - Paula shared that this would be her last year as Chair.

Helen to ask Gemma to provide us with a case study for the website of her volunteering experience and her career change.

We have a possible new Trustee, who Paula and Helen will meet to discuss this further. This person has no conflicts of interest with PALS and is a manual handling instructor which could prove to be very useful.

Discussion took place on any local celebrities that might be interested in being a patron for PALS. To continue to explore this.

As things return to some sort of normality, we will refocus on fundraising in the new year.

8. Date of next meeting - October 2022

PALS Chairman's AGM report 2021

(Covering April 2020 - March 2021)

Due to the pandemic it's been a very different and challenging year for PALS. Helen put together an incredible programme of activities for all age groups, both on Zoom and face to face. Helen received great support from Jess, our support worker, in making sure that all age groups had the best possible time. None of this happen could happen without our incredible team of volunteers.

During the lockdowns PALS has looked very different and has offered Zoom sessions, outdoor activities over the summer and some one-to-one sessions. It's been challenging working around government guidance which has regularly changed. Helen's done a fantastic job and handled the complex planning required with great professionalism.

In order for what we offer to remain relevant we've regularly reviewed our programme so that we can offer the best possible service to our members. It's very important that PALS members are able to give feedback to Helen on what they would like to see on our programmes. Feedback is also welcome from parents on anything ranging from possible improvements to our website, ideas for activities or fundraising ideas.

We've continued an important area of our work in building links with the local community through networking and joint working with other charities and groups. This has been especially important during the lockdown.

As well as dealing with the difficulties that Covid 19 presented our management committee have continued to focus on key areas which included governance, training and raising the charity's profile in the local media and on our social media platforms.

We have also made some changes to our website and will be adding more pages shortly.

We have a fantastic fundraising committee, Steph, Emma and Faye who meet with Helen regularly and have some very creative fundraising ideas! I'd like to thank them for giving up their time and for their continued commitment.

As you can imagine the Covid 19 pandemic has had a huge impact on our fundraising over the last year. Total donations received amounted to £14,000, which is a large decrease from the previous year. However, we are very grateful for the donations received which included The Good Exchange £1,500, Lambert Trust £2,000, and TK Maxx £500. We also received a £5,000 grant from West Berkshire Council. Louise's parents have raised over £1,600 from running car boot sales. This is an amazing amount and we're so very grateful for their hard work.

Covid 19 has also meant that we've not been able to attend or run all of our usual events. Attendance at events is important; not only for fundraising and increasing the charity's profile, but it can open doors for other things too.

Highlights include the amazing activity sessions on zoom, especially the seated yoga, which was very popular. Also the link that PALS has with Willow's Edge Care Home is very special.

I would like to thank Helen for her continued commitment, energy and enthusiasm that she brings to her role. She is a great ambassador for PALS and is a real asset to the charity. PALS would not be where it is today without her hard work. I've enjoyed working with Helen as we have such a great working relationship and are definitely on the same page! We are in contact most days by either phone, text, email, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. Quite often all of them!

I'd like to thank Kennet School for allowing us to use the PDR. I would also like to thank Elstree for their continued support.

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

Thanks to Jacob for his help with our website and IT support.

I'd 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. There's a huge amount of work that goes on behind the scenes in order to keep the charity running.

PALS is a great charity to be a part of and although the last year has been a very challenging and different one we have continued to move the charity forward. PALS is in a good place and will continue to offer a great programme for all of our members.

I look forward to seeing what the next year will bring.

Paula Elsley
PALS Chairman
26th September 2021

PALS Manager's AGM Report 2021

Well what an interesting year we have had. As Paula has already said this AGM reflects on our last financial year, so from April of last year to March this year. Due to the national lockdown, for the first time ever our face to face services were shut, but then we discovered 'Zoom.' Who knew what fun we could have with this!! We delivered over 130 Zoom calls during the year, running our usual programme online, plus more!!

Tuesday afternoons would bring Fun Factory as usual. We did all sorts of things, armpit fudge, made lava lamps, dressed up, quizzes, and always a favourite - a scavenger hunt, where the PALS' parents or sidekicks as we liked to call them had to run off and find whatever object we asked for. We had Karen and Dave doing their own little version of Wonky Donkey, we cooked, had a teddy bear's picnic, the list just goes on. We would see up to eight PALS during these sessions, as changes to the children's usual routines meant that they were able to attend our sessions.

Fridays brought Rockets and we decided to run this every week during the lockdowns, instead of fortnightly. These sessions were more of a chat and a catch up with the older PALS. I certainly have fond memories of these sessions with Emma and Faye, although I think we often needed a lay down afterwards as they were fast moving sessions, but great fun! We would usually have about five PALS attend each week.

The Young Adults group was held fortnightly and enjoyed many a quiz and a chat, with Rufus and Haddon providing much of the entertainment for the group.

There were a few children that this format of groups on Zoom was not something they felt comfortable in accessing, so we ran a number of smaller sessions for some of our members.

After much planning and risk assessing we decided that we could return to face to face sessions last summer. Over the six weeks of summer PALS offered 27 respite sessions, which 25 families accessed and we were able to provide 96 hours of respite, quite an achievement for a small charity. Jess and I spent a lot of time at Henwick Farm and probably know every inch of that farm, but we loved it!

We also offered family sessions, not something that we do normally and 18 PALS and their parents joined us in visits to the Five a Day Market Garden and sailing. It was quite a strange feeling to just sit on the bank and watch the boats go off, without me!

Last Autumn saw us return to face to face activities for the term, as we are classed as an essential service. It was great to be back to some sort of normal, despite the face masks, much cleaning and changing venues on a couple of occasions with our Fun Factory sessions, but we managed it and enjoyed our usual activities for Halloween, bonfire night and Christmas to name a few. The Youth Group also returned, but in two separate bubbles meeting fortnightly and this

worked really well, with us seeing up to nine PALS across the fortnight. And we are extremely grateful for the PDR's continued support of PALS.

Our Young Adults group returned face to face when we could, although we had to follow more restrictions with this group. We enjoyed picnics, walks and just being together, something that we had all missed over the lockdown.

In October half term we were able to offer an alpaca session in Mortimer, more sessions at the Five a Day Market Garden and sailing in our usual fashion of drop and go for the parents. We also had a day at Shaw House, enjoying the Gingerbread trail and an evening with two of the PALS at the Festival of Light, although we all got soaked!

Last Christmas saw another lockdown and the decision was made to again stop face to face sessions and return to Zoom, which we did.

During this lockdown we put on fortnightly Sunday afternoon Zoom sessions where I invited guests along. These were amazing and so well attended, often we saw more of the PALS on Zoom than we did face to face! We enjoyed all sorts of things, magic shows, a guinea pig show, African drumming, yoga, learnt about owls and reptiles, painted pottery, enjoyed panto and covered our faces in egg, which was meant to be good for the skin! For me, these were one of my year's highlights and something that we can certainly offer again in the winter months.

The easing of restrictions at the end of February saw us return to Henwick Farm and over six weekends 12 families accessed us and we provided 90 hours of respite!

We are now almost back to our usual sessions and long may this continue, but we always know that Zoom and Henwick Farm are never too far away should we need them!

Our link with Elstree School continues, for which we are extremely grateful. During lockdown the school continued to stay in touch with us and we had our first session back with the school two weeks ago. The school provides a small team of helpers at each session and it's great to see these children grow in confidence with helping children who may be different from them in some ways. The head of Cheam School, Mark and his wife Catherine have moved to Portugal, so we hope to re-establish our link once the new team have settled in.

We have welcomed four new members to PALS.

I must thank all of our volunteers as without them none of this would be possible. We weren't able to use our volunteers during the first half of last year, but as we return to a more normal we are slowly welcoming back our amazing volunteers and I have to give a special mention to Faye, who I think did nearly every Zoom session we had!

Steph, Emma and Faye have continued to help with fundraising and to raise the profile of PALS. We 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 scenes completing our payroll each month, despite being in Devon!

Recruiting of volunteers is always on our agenda and I attended this year's local volunteer fair online and we were successful with a new recruit! The Volunteer Centre has always been good to us and has helped us to sign up another volunteer this year. Sadly we have said goodbye to Gemma, Toby and Harry as they venture off to university. I am thrilled to say that Toby and Harry have gone off to start their doctor training and Gemma is commencing a degree in speech and language therapy. I think it's great that PALS has played a part in their journeys.

Behind the scenes Paula and I have spent a lot of time on Zoom doing all the good governance and admin needed to run the charity.

Raising our awareness continues to be very important. Our social media platforms are regularly updated and the number of followers is growing. Despite the difficult year we have had, I was on the local radio twice and we got some press coverage of our awards party. We have also got a little blog up and running where we have asked a couple of different people to write things for us.

Fundraising has been extremely difficult during the last year and our income has been reduced, however we have been successful again with a small grant from West Berkshire Council. Greenham Trust has been extremely supportive with their grant and match funding. We continue to have a fantastic relationship with Sainsbury's Newbury and look forward to a time when we can return to the store. Louise's parents have been busy organising stalls at Thatcham car boot sale, and this has raised over £1,600 over the last year, for which we are very grateful.

It was no longer possible to continue to use a staff's personal car to carry out the business of PALS, and it was decided after very careful consideration that the Trustees felt that it was necessary to purchase a vehicle for the charity.

Since the pandemic the charity has had to work very differently as we weren't able to meet but we've been able to offer a service online and over the summer a great outdoors programme. Our groups are now meeting inside again. We will do everything that we can do to carry on our work with the ever changing situation.

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

As I enter the start of my seventh year with PALS, I just wanted to end with how much I enjoy working for PALS. I think that we have continued to make great progress over the last year despite the many challenges that we have all faced, and firmly believe that we have made and continue to make a positive difference to the young people that we support.

Helen Randall
PALS Manager
29th September 2021