

# Trustees' Annual Report for the period

From 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020

## Reference and Administrative Information

**Charity Name:** Takiwatanga Support Services

**Charity registration number:** 1184723

**Registered Office:** 57a Highcliffe Road, Wickford, Essex SS11 8JP

### Trustees:-

Paula Farrow - Chair

Karen Cogger - Vice Chair

Nicholas Lowery - Treasurer (resigned March 2020)

Marie Findlay – Vice Treasurer

Samantha Read - Secretary

Denise Lowery (resigned March 2020)

Paul Strange (resigned December 2019)

Jenne Seibolt

Maria Denton – Treasurer (appointed June 2020)

Danny Ireland (appointed August 2020)

## Objectives

Our charity's aims, as set out in our governing document (constitution), are to relieve the needs of children affected by autism or social anxiety and their families within Essex by:

- 1) providing information, signposting to relevant professional agencies and running emotional support groups to enable parents to help their children achieve their academic potential and minimise their child's social anxiety;
- 2) providing social activities and opportunities for autistic children, tailored to their particular needs, to boost their self-esteem and improve their social skills, whilst enabling them to mix socially with neurotypical peers and siblings;
- 3) providing educational activities, in small groups, for children who are home-schooled and/or school refusers, as a result of their autism and/or social anxiety issues;
- 4) providing training to education and health professionals, parents and the wider public regarding the autistic spectrum, the benefits, the challenges and the best methods to support and communicate with autistic children;
- 5) raising public awareness of autism.

## Ensuring our work delivers our aims

We review our aims, objectives and activities each year. This review looks at what we achieved and the outcomes of our work in the previous 12 months. The review looks at the success of each key activity and the benefits they have brought to those groups of people we are set up to help. The review also helps us ensure our aim, objectives and activities remained focused on our stated purposes. We have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aim and objectives and in planning our future activities. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives they have set.

## The focus of our work

Our main objectives for the year continued to be supporting the mental health and wellbeing of autistic children and providing support for their parents, within the county of Essex. The strategies we used to meet these objectives included:

Providing a range of activities to promote social interaction, self-regulation and build confidence.

Organising support groups and informative talks for parents and other professionals who engage with autistic children, i.e. child-minders, teachers and NHS staff

Focussing upon providing a calm environment, with small groups and promoting a positive view of autism and its many unique gifts, whilst providing a non-judgemental attitude towards the distressed behaviours that can be displayed when a child is overwhelmed.

Working in partnership with other agencies to secure the widest range of services is available that best matches the needs of autistic children and their families.

## Activities

### Woodland Warriors

We ran a pilot scheme of 28 sessions, with up to 15 children at a time. Sessions were kept small, so as not to overwhelm the children. 34 children attended in total. Woodland Warriors is an outdoor activity programme run by Tiffany Belford-Fry, or as we like to call her 'Tiffers'. The outdoor setting helps to relax the body and mind, enhancing endorphins within the brain to relax and relieve anxiety and stress. This provides a foundation from which to learn and enhance life skills such as: mindfulness, self-confidence, appreciation for the natural world and making and maintaining friendships.

Amazing feedback has been received from children and parents and we even had an email from a Headteacher commenting on how Woodland Warriors had improved a child's behaviour at school.



'She hasn't stopped talking about it'

'He was really enthusiastic about attending Woodland Warriors'

'So welcoming and non-judgemental'



"I want to let you know how much J enjoys the Woodland Warrior sessions on a Tuesday. He has really grown in confidence since first coming along in June and now really looks forward to his Tuesdays. He spent the first number of weeks sat in a tree, just watching what was happening and then gradually started getting a bit more involved. Two weeks ago he actually sat around the fire toasting marshmallows with the others, before he would just stand and watch, and this week he was playing and interacting with another boy. This is a big achievement for J, as he finds social situations difficult. It is so nice to watch all the children in the group grow in confidence. The group allows everyone to just be themselves, which takes the pressure off of them. All of the adults are an amazing source of support for each other and it is a really friendly and welcoming group. We look forward to continuing on the Woodland Warriors and Takiwatanga journey." V - Pitsea

## Overnight camping at Wat Tyler for 4 children

Due to the popularity of Woodland Warriors we decided to try an overnight stay at Wat Tyler Residential Centre in Pitsea, to ascertain whether we could offer this as an additional activity going forward. Four children from Woodland Warriors attended, together with their parents. The children had a great time and lessons were learnt in terms of the sensory needs of the children when away from home, their complex dietary needs and managing their fears.



'I enjoyed seeing the children relaxed and happy. The relaxed environment and small group size allowed them to manage their worries'

## Happy Little Minds

A programme teaching mindfulness to children. Takiwatanga arranged 2 sessions, with small groups of children so as not to overwhelm them. There were 11 attendees in total, with positive feedback received from both children and parents. The cost at £8 per session was prohibitive to many parents and thus we are investigating the viability of training our own mindfulness teacher, to be able to meet the proven demand, at an accessible cost.

## Family Board Game Club

We secured a grant from the National Lottery to set up a free Family Board Game Club within Wickford, aimed at autistic children and their families, but ultimately open to any families who enjoy board games.

Board games are a fantastic way to learn social skills, taking turns, strategy planning, being a good winner/loser and making friends. Our first meet up was due to be 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020, but unfortunately this had to be cancelled due to Coronavirus. As soon as government guidelines allow the club will be up and running.



## Parent Support Group

Our Parent Support Groups were held on the first Tuesday of every month. The number of parents attending each month varied from 4 to 10. The April 2020 group was held via Zoom, due to the Covid19 crisis. These sessions have been described as a lifeline by attendees: for one single parent the group was the only adult company she had had for the whole of the 6 week summer holiday period in 2019; and other parents have found the contact with other parents similarly vital during the lockdown period.



'The parent support group has been a real help to me. I found out about Takiwatanga just after my son got his diagnosis, I obviously had lots of questions and all of the volunteers are really knowledgeable and everyone is so welcoming. A big Thank You to everyone at Takiwatanga especially Karen Cogger, as without her knowledge and support we wouldn't have got our EHCP.'

## On-line Parent Support and Social Media Presence

In total 274 emails were sent to parents answering their queries and we responded to 32 Facebook messages

Facebook Support Group has 378 members (April 2020)

Facebook Page has 369 followers with the biggest post reach being 2,531 people

21 events were advertised via Facebook and reached 38K people

Instagram has 103 followers

Twitter has 62 followers inc. Jack Ferguson (Labour Cllr for Pitsea NW), Cllr Craig Rimmer, Cllr Jeff Henry (Laindon/Fryerns), Dean Beadle, Essex Family Forum, The Autistic Advocate, Essex YMCA, Louise McKinlay (Brentwood Council leader), Danny Lawrence (Dir. Gateway Radio)

## 1:1 Meetings with parents

Our volunteers met privately with parents to discuss their concerns. Topics ranged from seeking diagnosis, advice after getting diagnosis, help with EHCP process and school refusal. 12 parents were seen from August to February. With our help 3 parents successfully secured an EHCP, where they had previously been told by their child's school, or the LEA that they would not qualify.

"Thank you so much for the info. I can't begin to tell you how helpful it was to meet Jane and discuss things. She really helped. Priceless. I'm so pleased I came across this group. Thank you for all your hard work."



## SEN 1:1 Legal Advice Day with Tanya Williams

6 sessions were booked with SEN Advice specialist Tanya Williams for parents to discuss concerns over EHCP process, legal challenge to education provision and various other issues. Parents reported back that the meetings were very informative and helped them to gain support for their children.

## Raising Awareness of Autism and Comorbid Conditions

**Sensory Processing Issues in Children** - a talk given by Occupational Therapist (and Takiwatanga Trustee) Jenne Seibolt. 111 attendees including parents, teachers, NHS staff and childminders.



Some of the feedback received:- "As a childminder it is good to have face to face training with someone so passionate about a very common subject that we come across so much now and to learn different ways to help children in our care."

"So easy to listen to and so knowledgeable. I would love for our whole school to have the opportunity to hear Jenne talk."

"It gave me a better understanding of sensory processing difficulties and what they feel like for a child. The information on vestibular and proprioception was very helpful."

"How passionate the talk was, it was full of knowledge which will impact how I handle certain situations in future."

## Special Yoga (designed for children with SEND)



Takiwatanga helped facilitate this 3 day training event in conjunction with Special Yoga. The course was designed to illustrate the ways in which yoga can help children with special educational needs to regulate their emotions and learn to recognise the signals their bodies send them. 15 people took part including teachers, teaching assistants, NHS staff and parents. Some of the wonderful children from our Woodland Warriors sessions went along to help demonstrate the techniques. We expect to build on this relationship and increase the special yoga provision through Takiwatanga over the coming months.

## Girls & Autism Talk by Nicola Durrant (Specialist Autism Teacher) of ACE SEN Consultancy

92 attendees including parents, teachers, NHS staff and childminders. Lots of positive feedback received from attendees, including:-



“The talk was given with understanding and passion. Very honest, very approachable. All very good. Well organised. A successful evening.” PW

“The talk was from the heart. Helped me understand what to look for at work and to listen to the child/parent. Thank you for arranging this.” HB

## Volunteers

Special thanks must be given to our amazing volunteers and trustees, all of whom worked tremendously hard to set up the charity and see us through our first year. The trustees would particularly like to thank Jane Morgan and Lyn Godfrey for helping to set up and run the Parent Support Groups; their empathy and wealth of experience in caring for children with additional needs was a great asset to the charity.

## Plans for the Future

The charity plans continuing the activities outlined above in the forthcoming years subject to satisfactory funding arrangements. Plans are also being developed to provide the following additional services, subject to Covid-19 restrictions and available funding:-

- Exploring group tutoring to promote a love of learning and assist school-refusers to get back into the classroom
- Woodland Warriors sessions to be held during the day for school-refusers and home-schooled children and further overnight camping trips
- Lego workshops – to promote teamwork, communication and executive function skills
- SEN Yoga classes for children
- Educational Talks and Q&A Sessions from Carmel Lawless (Clinical Psychologist), Mike Kelly (Educational Psychologist), Jenne Seibolt (Occupational Therapist), Nicola Durrant (Autism Specialist Teacher) and Tanya Williams (SEND Law Expert)

## Financial Review

This was our first year of operations, which ended against the backdrop of limited resources and insecurities over funding due to Covid-19. Nevertheless, the charity, with the aid of sound financial management and the support of both its staff and volunteers generated a positive financial outcome for the period.

## Principal Funding Sources

The principal funding sources for the charity are currently by way of fundraising events. We received one small grant from the National Lottery Community Fund to run the Family Board Game Club. Our total income in money terms was £5,169. However, although not included in our Receipts & Payments Accounts, we have calculated that the donations of services, equipment, office/storage space amounted to over £6,000. The involvement of the charity with Basildon, Billericay & Wickford CVS is proving particularly useful in identifying possible opportunities for a much wider range of funding for the future and we have recently secured grants to sustain the charity during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Particular thanks should be given to:-

Wickford Town Football Club who very generously donated us the free use of the kitchen facilities and storage rooms at the club and allowed us to run Woodland Warriors from their clubhouse when winter set in.

Miracle House for the free use of their rooms to hold our Parent Support Groups

J.R. & Sons who donated £300 of equipment for our Woodland Warriors activities

Gary Godfrey for his hard work in setting up the charity's website and email system

## Investment Policy

Aside from retaining a prudent amount in reserves each year most of the charity's funds are to be spent in the short term so there are few funds for long term investment. A review of investment policies will be taken if our income stream significantly increases.

## Reserves Policy

The Management Committee has examined the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the organisation. It has established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed or invested in tangible fixed assets held by the charity should be between 3 and 6 months of the expenditure. Budgeted expenditure for 2020/21 is £17,000 and therefore the target is £6,000 in general funds. The reserves are needed to meet the working capital requirements of the charity and the Management Committee are confident that at this level they would be able to continue the current activities of the charity in the event of a significant drop in funding. The present level of reserves available to the charity of £2,500 therefore falls significantly short of this target level. Although the strategy is to continue to build reserves through planned operating surpluses, the Management Committee is well aware that it is unlikely that the target range can be reached for at least five years. In the short term the Management Committee has also considered the extent to which existing activities and expenditure could be curtailed, should such circumstances arise.

## Structure, Governance and Management Governing Document

The organisation is a foundation CIO and was set up in May 2019 and was formally registered as a charity in August 2019. The charity was established under a Constitution which established the objects and powers of the charitable. In the event of the charity being wound up trustees are not required to financially contribute.

## Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

The trustees of the charity for the purposes of charity law and under the charity's Constitution are known as members of the Management Committee. Under the requirements of the Constitution the members of the Management Committee are elected to serve for a period of three years after which they must be re-elected at the next Annual General Meeting. All members of the Management Committee give their time voluntarily and received no benefits from the charity. Due to the nature of autism support much of the charity's work inevitably focuses upon parents and children. The Management Committee seeks to ensure that the needs of this group are appropriately reflected through the diversity of the trustee body. The more traditional business, educational and medical skills are well represented on the Management Committee. In an effort to maintain this broad skill mix, members of the Management Committee are requested to provide a list of their skills (and update it each year) and in the event of particular skills being lost due to retirements, individuals are approached to offer themselves for election to the Management Committee.

## Trustee Induction and Training

Most trustees are already familiar with the practical work of the charity having been encouraged to attend some of our activities. Additionally, new trustees are invited and encouraged to watch a series of short training videos to familiarise themselves with the charity, the context within which it operates and most importantly provide them with an overview of autism and its comorbid conditions. Trustees are also provided with the following documents:-

Takiwatanga's governing document (Constitution), the latest published accounts, Future plans and objectives, Code of Conduct for Trustees/Volunteers/Staff and the Charity Commission's guide "the

Essential Trustee". Trustees are also signposted to review all of the charity's current policies, including GDPR, Health & Safety, Financial Management, etc.

Some of the training courses attended by trustees and volunteers this year include:-

Thinking Outside the Box – Fundraising Workshop	Autistic Special Interests – Tony Attwood
Youth Mental Health First Aid - Interact	and Autistic Adolescent Issues
Family Champions Training – Essex Family Forum	ADHD – Steve Challen
Teaching Social Skills through Lego Therapy	IPSEA – SEN Law for Parents
Autism and Anxiety – Dean Beadle	Social Stories – Dr Suzanne Timmins
Girls & Autism – ACE SEN Consultancy	

## Risk Management

The Management Committee has conducted a review of the major risks to which the charity is exposed. A risk register has been established and is updated at least annually. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces. Significant external risks to funding have led to the development of a strategic plan which will allow for the diversification of funding and activities. Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures for authorisation of all transactions and projects. Procedures are in place to ensure compliance with health and safety of volunteers and service users. The charity follows the Institute of Fundraising Practise guidelines. All procedures are periodically reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the charity. We ensure that all trustees/volunteers have the relevant DBS checks and safe-guarding training.

## Organisational Structure

Takiwatanga Support Services has a Management Committee of up to 12 members who meet quarterly and are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the charity. At present the Committee has seven members from a variety of professional backgrounds relevant to the work of the charity. A scheme of delegation is in place and day to day responsibility for the provision of the services rest with the Chair along with the rest of the committee. The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the charity delivers the services specified and that key performance indicators are met. The Secretary has responsibility for the day to day operational management of the charity, individual supervision of the team and also ensuring that the team continue to develop their skills and working practices in line with good practice.

## Related Parties

In so far as it is complimentary to the charity's objects, the charity is guided by both local and national policy. Three of the current trustees are also Family Champions for Essex Family Forum. This is a multi-agency group with Essex SEND as its focus. The representation of local organisations within this group has proved invaluable to the charity in establishing improved links within the community and identifying relevant gaps in support, policy developments and prospective funding.