



# Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2011

*Providing assisted childcare places for children and families in need in our local community*

## Dear Friends of St George's,

The warmer weather is here and there is most definitely a buoyant mood in the air, as the children get to enjoy more time in our fabulous outside play areas.

### *Inside this issue:*

#### **Our children**

Read how we are supporting local families

#### **Our news**

New chairman  
New lease of life for the Den

#### **Fundraising**

Read how our supporters are helping St George's

#### **Events**

Summer Fair – Fri 15<sup>th</sup> July  
Boot Fair – Sat 17<sup>th</sup> Sept

### ***Recognition of the value of positive early intervention...***

We welcome the national and local focus on the positive impact of early intervention in childhood, as here at St George's we have been making this a practical reality for local families for the past 20 years.

Our experience has shown that many families go through tough times and how well they cope with these problems can make a huge difference as to whether or not they stay together and the parents and their children flourish. Perhaps more worryingly, we see at first hand how quickly a family's circumstances can change.

A new survey shows that serious challenges to 'normal' family life are widespread. The research by 4Children found that 80 per cent of families in the UK are suffering from serious problems such as redundancy, divorce or mental illness, and found that out of 2,000 families, only 17 per cent were not experiencing any major difficulties within their family.

Most frequently cited problems were divorce or separation, which was affecting 43 per cent of respondents, followed by redundancy or long-term unemployment, which was cited by 40 per cent of those polled.

***Continued overleaf...***

### ***Our News***

#### **A word from our new chairman, Lois Browning:**

'Firstly, I would like to thank Kate Milne, who has steered St George's so well for the last three years, and along with the management team, has overseen a period of expansion culminating with the successful opening of our additional baby room.'



'I am looking forward to developing the future strategic direction of St George's.'

'The dedication and commitment shown by the staff to the children at St George's is to be admired and I relish the challenge of continuing the great work accomplished by the staff to ensure St George's continues to meet its charitable objectives.'

**The Den reinvigorated:** Many of you will remember our Den, which is a large outdoor building in the rear garden. It has now taken on a new lease of life, from being a storage area to an interactive learning environment, accessible to all the children when they are outdoors and especially when it rains. This enables us to provide a wider variety of outdoor activities, including block play, outdoor art and crafts and simply gives us more play space.

Other problems included serious debt, alcohol or drug addiction, caring for a dependant with a disability or serious illness, terminal or critical illness, death of an immediate family member, domestic violence and homelessness.

Of the families we support currently, they all fit into one of the above categories.

We actively support the need to stop 'crisis managing' families and instead provide more support earlier on so that families have the strength they need to overcome problems. Perhaps a bigger concern is stigmatisation? Some families may not ask for help because they fear being branded a failure.

In response to increased demand, we are increasing the number of places available on our assisted-places scheme. At the time of writing, 15 per cent of our families are receiving our support, and we are working with these families to help ensure the best outcomes for the children. We hope that this research and these discussions will help everyone to be more honest about the challenges faced by many families in our community, and that those families will be supported when they seek help.

A big thank you to all those who help us raise the much-needed funds to support our assisted-places scheme. Much of our fundraising would be impossible without the active involvement of parents, friends of St George's, and the local community.

But we do need your continued help to provide this support and we are delighted to say that we can now accept donations over the telephone on 01892 543982 and on-line through Virgin Money Giving via a link on our website [www.stgeorgesproject.co.uk](http://www.stgeorgesproject.co.uk)

*Thank you for your help*

**Vegetable growers:** This year is year two for our new vegetable beds. Following much enthusiasm, gluts of courgettes and lessons learned, we are approaching this year with more planning but just as much excitement. Each age group within St George's has its own area. This is a wonderful learning opportunity, as the children are planting, tending, watering and eating the produce. They are learning about recycling, composting and capturing as much rainwater as possible!



Children watering in their newly planted seeds

**Royal wedding street party:** The children took part in our very own street party to celebrate the Royal wedding. Many of the children came dressed up in prince, princess and knight costumes and the staff dressed up in red, white and blue. Our chef and assistant prepared a 'traditional' daytime menu which included:

- Teacakes and dates for mid morning snack
- Sausages and mash with peas and onion gravy for lunch, followed by syrup sponge and custard
- Royal cupcakes for afternoon snack

Craft activities included making crowns, but party tea in the garden or in their room was most definitely the highlight. In the afternoon, all of our children sat together outside and had a wonderful time.



Little Dragons' morning group's street party

**After school and holiday club:** Earlier this year, we were successful in obtaining a grant which allowed us to purchase new play equipment, toys, soft furnishings and blinds to enhance the home-from-home feeling of the rooms. The children can choose what activities they do and have the option of playing inside or outside.



Picture by one of our Out of School Club children

'Children are excited by activities where they can imagine, create, build, play and share with others. Exploration through fun and play lead to discovery, enjoyment and achievement', said Teresa, our Out of School Learning Manager. 'Our view is that play and learning is the same thing and that child's play should be interesting, investigative and fun.'

### ***Forthcoming plans***

**New website and prospectus:** We are currently in the final stages of updating our prospectus and website, which we are planning to be ready for the summer. We would like to thank Tunbridge Wells Round Table for their donation toward our website design costs, Eonic for their help in building the site, and Footprint Innovations for their time and expertise in the design of our prospectus.



Innovations for their time and expertise in the

**Volunteers:** Now that our expansion is complete, we are turning our attention to our internal décor. We welcome volunteers and we are currently looking for a volunteer to work alongside our caretaker. The work involved will be light interior repairs and maintenance, decorating and some gardening.



If you can help us, please ring Christine on 01892 543982.

### ***Fundraising news***

**A huge thank you to everyone who has helped us over the past few months, including:**

- CooperBurnett for their donation,  which we used to buy new play equipment.
- Bel Foundation for their grant towards our assisted places scheme. 
- Parents and friends who donated toys, books, children's furniture, baby equipment and games for use within the Project or to sell to raise funds.
- The church and congregation of King Charles the Martyr for nominating us as their charity of the month and for inviting our fundraiser to give a short presentation outlining our work.
- The Parish of St Peter and Christchurch Southborough for their kind donation towards our assisted-places scheme.
- Ed Miller, who ran the Tunbridge Wells Half Marathon for us again this year.
- Ed Hopkins, who ran both the Tunbridge Wells Half Marathon and the Brighton Marathon on our behalf.
- All local businesses that have our collecting cans.
- Treework for the use of their cherry picker. 
- To EVERYONE who is collecting **Sainsburys** and **Tesco** vouchers for us. These will enable us to obtain lots of new equipment.

And finally thank you to everyone who donated and bought plants from our plant sale, which once again has been very successful. Funds raised from this sale are used to purchase materials such as compost for the children's vegetable growing areas.

**Curry and quiz night:** Just before Easter, we held a fundraising curry and quiz night. Big thanks to our very own Poonam Christian who made fabulous authentic Indian curries and to local quiz master Keith Neale, who not only compèred a great quiz, but also donated prizes for the event as well as a complete set of *Children's Britannica*, which we plan to include as a prize in our winter raffle.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this event such a success. We raised over £300.



Poonam serving naan breads and curries at our curry and quiz night

## ***Forthcoming Events***

### **Summer Fair 2011**



We would like to take this opportunity to invite you to our **Summer Fair** which will be held on

**Date:** Friday 15<sup>th</sup> July

**From:** 5.30 to 8pm

**Venue:** St George's, 7 Chilston Road, Tunbridge Wells.

Please come and join us for an evening of fun, games and activities along with refreshments and a BBQ.

In preparation we would be most grateful for donations of:

- Unwanted gifts suitable for tombola or raffle prizes
- Any books, toys and games your children no longer play with

We regret that we cannot accept clothes, cuddly toys, videos, damaged or incomplete items.

Please bring donations to St George's, between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday.

### **St George's Boot Fair and Table Top Sale**

Come and sell your unwanted items. We are planning a **Boot Fair** in our front car park and a table top sale in our garden.

**Date:** Saturday 17th September

**Set up:** From 8am

**Open:** 9am until 12 noon

**Venue:** St George's, 7 Chilston Road, Tunbridge Wells.

If you are interested in booking a pitch please contact us [islay@stgeorgesproject.co.uk](mailto:islay@stgeorgesproject.co.uk) or 01892 543982.

Pitches will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

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