

# Happy Christmas!

## December Newsletter 2022

Hello everyone, welcome to our December newsletter. We do hope you have had a good year.

We have certainly had a very busy and productive year. After the easing of Covid restrictions we were able to open our Family Drop-in Session at Larchfield Community Centre from 10am to 2pm every Tuesday. Many of the families we had supported during lockdowns were really eager to get back to meeting face to face in the way we have always done. Gradually as everyone got more confident about going out and about the numbers at the session increased.

Due to the numbers increasing at Larchfield we thought it was important to offer a drop-in session in another area of Maidenhead and thus gradually increase Re:Charge's reach and support. After a bit of very fast footwork, we opened another Family Drop-in Session at High Street Methodist Church (HSMC) on a Thursday from 10am to 2pm on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2022.

Being in the centre of Maidenhead does have its advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are that many families are in town shopping or out and about and are able to call in and spend some time with us, and we have several families drop in after seeing the sign outside the church. The disadvantage is the cost of parking if families are driving in from further away.

We have seen this session grow and grow over the year so much so that we often have as many families in as at Larchfield. HSMC have been very kind to us, and we have the loan of the toys they already have.

This has been an amazing help and we have been able to supplement these with toys from our own stock.

This year we have seen many families move on as their youngest children are now going to preschool but we have had a big influx of new families. Since the beginning of the year, we have had 87 new families come through our doors. We have had visits from an increasing number of nationalities such as Polish, Czech, Columbian, Ukrainian, Portuguese, South African, German, Ghanaian, Romanian, Hungarian. It has been a real pleasure to be able to support a wide variety of people and to see the children all gradually get used to each other and play together.

### Staffing

As many of you know one of our administrative team, Rebecca Carboo has been on maternity leave. She has welcomed a beautiful baby daughter, Eloise. We wish Rebecca and her family all the best as they enjoy being a family of five. Rebecca will be back with us in January 2023. We look forward to her return.

Annie Bullen moved to Bristol earlier this summer but has been wonderful in keeping up her support and fundraising for Re:Charge from that distance. However, Annie has decided that now is the time to move on and help her local community in Bristol from January 2023. We are very grateful for all Annie has done for us and the support she has given us. We do wish her well for the future.

In our last newsletter we told you that our Operations Manager, Amy, was on maternity leave. Amy has decided not to return but to take on a term time only

role elsewhere which better fits to her family's need. We thank Amy for all she has done for us and we wish her well for the future too.

We would like to welcome Tamsin Phipps to the staff team as Operation Manager. Tamsin has been covering both Amy and Rebecca's roles.

Tamsin has had a varied career, but her passion has always been working with and supporting people of all ages. Tamsin is a qualified SEN Teacher but decided to become an Army Officer and after the army Tamsin worked in Sport as a Government & Public Affairs Manager and latterly working as the Services Manager for a local charity.



Tamsin has always had people at heart in both her working and voluntary lives and for the last 20 years plus she has been Guide Leader in Wargrave and today runs Guides and Rangers as well as being the Maidenhead Division Commissioner. When time allows, apart from jogging at the Parkruns, Tamsin's hobby is long distance endurance kayaking with her favourite race being the 125 mile Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race. Tamsin has also recently been awarded an MBE for her very considerable volunteer work for young people and waterways.

Shelly Calvert and Lee Jones, two of our session workers have also decided to spread their wings and have both started new roles elsewhere. We thank Shelly and Lee for everything they have done for Re:Charge as both volunteers and staff. We are currently recruiting for new session staff and hope to have news early in the New Year.

## Family Drop in Sessions

We have had a really busy year and much to celebrate.

It has been wonderful to welcome the families back to our sessions. The effects of the Covid Pandemic are very present not only in the financial situation of the families, but sadly also domestic abuse with the children. Many of the children were born during the lockdowns and some haven't even seen a Health Visitor. The children were not used to socialisation and to start with they were unable to play. They would snatch toys away from other children and play on their own or next to their parent/carer.

After several months this has changed and now the children are really keen to see each other and to play together. They have made friends with each other.

It has also been wonderful to see the friendship blossoming between the parents and carers. We now have quite a few grandparents come in who are looking after their grandchildren and they enjoy the company too.

We have had a very busy year at our Family Drop-in Sessions and it has been our sheer pleasure to welcome in so many new families.

### **With grateful thanks to Foodshare Maidenhead.**

Foodshare have once again been amazing this year supporting us with things for our sensory tray as well as coming in the holidays as part of the Holiday Hunger project to provide fresh highly delicious and nutritious meals for our clients.



They have also provided the children with Easter eggs and prizes.

It is a real pleasure to once again partner with Foodshare, Maidenhead, who were as excited as us to be back and helping to provide free meals. If there is any food left at the end of the meal it is packed up and handed to the families to take home thus ensuring the other children and the families have food for another meal.



The food is always delicious and served with a smile. We have had children eating fresh food they have never tasted. One young girl had peas for the first time and absolutely loved them. Another young boy ate a whole plate of spaghetti bolognese and then came up for seconds!! He has never eaten bolognese before!



Foodshare Maidenhead make a huge difference to the lives of our clients at a time when money is very tight and during the holidays there are more mouths to feed. During the holidays we have children in up to the age of 11 years so it is super that they can be accommodated by Foodshare Maidenhead too. They also helped us out by providing food for the Christmas party which was enjoyed by everyone.



## How, Where and Why we operate:

Most readers of this newsletter will be local residents and as such, you will be aware that behind the wealthy image that Maidenhead has, there are areas of deprivation that can be hidden behind the overall statistics for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. ‘Children in Poverty’ states 17.9% of children in Maidenhead were living in poverty in 20/21, equal to 3753 children. Meanwhile our council face ‘a significant financial challenge’ (RBWM Budget 22/23), planning to cut services by £11.7m in this and the last financial year. Their commitment to continue to protect the vulnerable despite this predicament relies heavily on organisations like ours to address the wellbeing needs of those most impacted by the current cost-of-living crisis and Covid.

On 1st September 2022, a report was released by the UCL Institute of Health Equity stating that "A



generation of Britons face long-term illness from being cold and poor this winter”, and “cold and poor will be the reality facing 66% of the population”. As well as the immediate and longer term physical and mental health impact of this, fuel poverty and cold

homes can significantly impact children’s education. Whilst missing days at school due to illness – often related to dampness – is an obvious result of homes being poorly heated, the ability to do homework and study in a cold house, where all the family are squeezed into one or two heated rooms is also a problem. Whilst we realise we cannot be the whole answer to this situation, Re:Charge R&R are committed to working in partnership with other local agencies to provide support to make a difference to



deprived areas in Maidenhead where families are facing an extremely hard winter.

As detailed above, we run our two weekly sessions for families with pre-school children in Larchfield and Central Maidenhead to help facilitate our vision.

Many of our staff, past and present, have come through our meetings and found employment with us, which means we can have our finger on the pulse of what is going on in our community and has created empowerment.



In terms of education as part of our plans to make a difference to our local community, we recognise that a child's preschool years are a time of critical growth in all developmental areas: adaptive, cognitive, language, physical and social. Re:Charge can provide their developing

minds and muscles with the opportunity for creative play, socialisation and fine manipulative skills using a wide variety of creative toys, crafts and books. We develop activities around a theme each week and design crafts and creative play around this theme. Toys are changed each week to enable the children's imagination to develop in different areas. Recent themes include numbers, colours, dinosaurs, nature, and harvest and we have many more ideas we will introduce.

We also provide toys and games which can be played as a pair or small group thus helping with social skills and interaction.



We held our lovely Christmas party on 13 December where we had lots of party games and fun. With help from Foodshare, we provided a cooked lunch and had a visit from Santa Claus. Many of the presents we were able to give out to the children were generously donated, including some beautiful Chad Valley toys.



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### Re:Focus

Our Re:Focus adult supportive group, who would describe themselves as a family, continued to meet online for weekly zoom sessions for the first part of the year but in September this year we moved to the Quaker Meeting House to meet face to face. It is a smaller room and more conducive to open conversations.

We had a few successful weeks with some different clients coming through but that changed, and we were running the session for 1 or 2 people. We sadly had to make the very difficult discussion to close Refocus at the end of October 2022 and focus our efforts onto families.

We are still supporting some clients via telephone calls and WhatsApp

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## Promoting the Charity and our Work

As things have opened up again this year we have been out and about promoting Re:Charge and the work we do.

We went to the Maidenhead Lions Duck Derby and had a wide variety of people to talk to us.



We had a teddy stall and a Treasure Hunt map with adorable Wind in The Willows characters as prizes.

On Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2022 we held an October Rendezvous concert in aid of Re:Charge at St Peter's in Furze Platt. There were a variety of acts including the High Voltage Singers. Our very own Chair, Sarah France, played the flute delightfully accompanied by her husband, Dave France.

The choir entertained beautifully, and we had singing and dancing in the aisles. In addition, we were fueled by delicious cakes made by Sarah.

We all had a super evening. Thank you for the support of all who were able to join us.

### **A very big THANK YOU!**

As a charity we can not function and support the vulnerable families and adults we do without financial support through donations and grants.

We would like to say a very big thank you to our regular monthly givers who continue to support us so faithfully! As well as all those who have generously given individual one-off donations in the past few months.

Thank you so much to the following organisations who have helped us continue with our important work.

Berkshire Community Foundation  
St Peter's Church  
Maidenhead Magpies  
Maidenhead Lions  
Heathrow Community Trust  
The Louis Baylis Christmas Cracker Appeal  
The Louis Baylis Trust  
People Postcode Lottery  
Arnold Clark Community Fund  
Garfield Weston Foundation  
Woodward Charitable Trust  
National Lottery  
Spoore Merry Rixman  
Prince Philip Trust

### **Opportunities to get Involved Volunteers**

As we continue to take steps forward and gradually look to extend our support, we are actively looking for more volunteers to get involved, specifically with our family sessions. If this is something you could consider doing, please get in touch and we can pass on more information.

If you'd like to support us by becoming a regular giver, a copy of our standing order gift aid form is attached to this email.

Any queries, please contact us on [info.rechargerandr@gmail.com](mailto:info.rechargerandr@gmail.com)

Finally, everyone at Re:Charge would like to wish you a very Happy Christmas. We thought you might enjoy seeing the smiling faces we have the pleasure of supporting.



**Thank you for reading our newsletter**