

Grove Cottage

The home of Bishop's Stortford Mencap



A YEAR IN REVIEW

September 2019 – September 2020

FOREWORD



Hi I'm Ben!

I was diagnosed with Autism at the age of 7 years and also have learning difficulties. I struggle to read and write and rely heavily on friends, family and Grove Cottage services to help me day-to-day. I am an approachable and social young man but can feel vulnerable.

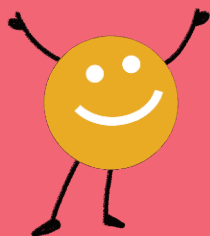
Grove Cottage has given me a purpose in life and has been a lifeline particularly during these very challenging times (Covid-19).

The staff know how isolating it has been and have been in regular contact with me, which also supports my

family. I really enjoy the sessions provided by Grove Cottage, mixing with the staff and children while I am volunteering in the nursery. But because of Covid, we can't mix as much. I would be lost without Grove Cottage and I can't wait until things go back to normal.

I hope you enjoy reading more about Grove Cottage.

Ben



About Learning Disability

There are 1.5 million people in the UK with a learning disability.

People with a learning disability have a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities which affect them for their whole life.



A learning disability can be caused by brain damage suffered before, during or shortly after birth or due to genetic conditions.

People with learning disabilities need different kinds of support. It is important to remember that by encouraging their strengths and helping them to overcome the things they find difficult, people with a learning disability can lead independent and fulfilling lives.

About Grove Cottage

Our Mission: to provide social and educational activities for people of all ages with a learning disability to develop their potential, help them to avoid social isolation by supporting lifelong friendships and to provide respite to their families and carers.

Our Vision: a world in which every individual with a learning disability has the opportunity to learn and develop, integrate into society and exercise choices, and where their families can have a regular family life.

In a 'normal year' Grove Cottage helps around 180 people of all ages from Bishop's Stortford and the surrounding areas.



We provide:

- An Ofsted-regulated Special Needs Nursery
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Saturday Clubs
- School Holiday Clubs
- Performing Arts Club
- Youth Club
- Adult Social Clubs
- Get Active Club
- Grove Cottage Café at Thirst

It goes without saying that this has been a very unusual year. Although Grove Cottage was forced to temporarily close its doors in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we continued to offer support in alternative ways. As the pandemic continues, we are making decisions on which clubs and services we can provide on a case-by-case basis, depending on whether we are able to adapt them and adhere to ongoing government guidelines.

50 YEARS OF MILESTONES



1966

Grove Cottage began in 1966 with a forward-looking group of parents who found a gap in services for children who had additional needs.

In the early years activities for members were held in church halls with the support of many volunteers including teachers, speech therapists and nurses.



1972

Grove Cottage was officially opened, and was able to extend its services and other facilities with the aim of helping each child to be as independent as possible and encouraging learning at an early age.

The nursery provided trips into the country, picnics, visits to the farm and zoo.



The youth club became a weekly session and activities increased to include pool and snooker. A social club for the 15+ age group was started with a bias towards art, craft and cookery.





1980s

Makaton signing training was provided to staff and families.

This was the precursor to our Speech and Language Programme which continues today.



1990s

The house adjacent to our building was purchased and Grove Cottage was able to expand further.

In the following years the Charity has been able to offer many more groups and sessions,



building on the foundations carefully laid over 50 years ago, through ongoing donations on which we rely to survive.

2016

Grove Cottage Celebrated it's 50-year anniversary.



2020

We obtained planning permission to redevelop our building, meaning we will be able to improve our activities, provide new services and support more people with a learning disability.

Today Grove Cottage serves some 200 members and their families. Primarily focused on Bishop's Stortford, we also provide facilities for people throughout Hertfordshire, Essex and surrounding villages.



MEET OUR MEMBERS



Mina

I started going to the Wednesday club when I was 15. A year later when I was 16 I was old enough to join the Thursday club.

Through the years I have very much enjoyed both the clubs and the last few years also the Performing Arts on a Monday night.

I get on very well with the other club members and the staff, many of them are good friends that I have known for years. I live in a flat on my own during the week and without the clubs to go to in the evening I would be lonely as I find watching TV boring.

Another good thing about Grove Cottage is the cafe in the town called Thirst where I visit on a Thursday morning and meet up with friends.

We are very lucky to have Grove Cottage in Bishop's Stortford

Mina Turfkruyer



Jiexi

Jiexi has Downs Syndrome with learning difficulties and her speech and language are well delayed. She joined Grove Cottage five years ago when our family moved to Bishop's Stortford and since then she has met friends, learnt new skills, and got the help required from the amazing staff and volunteers.

Joyce
Mum



Linda

Whilst being a full time primary school teacher I saw how children with learning disabilities struggled to get the support they needed and I wanted to use my skills to give something back. I applied to volunteer at Grove Cottage in 2018 and haven't looked back!



Sometimes members can take a little while to adjust and accept new people but when they do, it feels amazing when the bond is made. I have a newfound respect, understanding and appreciation for people with learning disabilities.

Linda Matthews

Volunteer



Abbey

Abbey loves Grove Cottage, meeting with friends and all the staff who are always supportive and full of fun. She celebrated her 21st birthday during the first Covid-19 lockdown and I was worried about making this a special day to remember.

Yet again Grove Cottage staff stepped in to bring some friends together on a video call to make her day.

Corrine

Mum



WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT US



VOLUNTEER

Our volunteers are extremely important to us, generously giving their time as club support workers, minibus drivers, office-based roles, event volunteers and Trustees.

If you would like to volunteer for us please email volunteer@mencapgrovecottage.org. We will help you find the right volunteer role and will support you every step of the way.

TRUSTS AND FOUNDATIONS

We are incredibly grateful for the support we receive from grant-making organisations. If you are connected with a charitable organisation, please contact our Grants Manager on natalie.p@mencapgrovecottage.org.

DONATE

Every donation makes a HUGE difference to Grove Cottage.

We provide a lifeline to our members and their families – please help us to help them achieve more! Our website has details of how you can make a one-off or regular donation and keep our members smiling.



ATTEND ONE OF OUR EVENTS

Grove Cottage is at the heart of Bishop's Stortford and each year we organise an exciting calendar of events, including our Food and Drink Festival and Black Tie Ball.

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic meant we had to cancel most of our events over the past year but do keep an eye on our website and social media to see what we have planned going forward!

ORGANISE YOUR OWN EVENT

You don't have to be an event planner extraordinaire to organise a successful fundraising event, there are so many simple and effective ways to support us. Whether it's showing off your baking skills, washing cars or testing your general knowledge in a quiz there are endless ways to have fun and raise funds for us.

TAKE ON A CHALLENGE

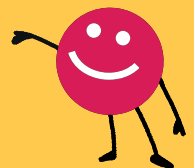
People with learning disabilities and their families face huge challenges every day, so why not challenge yourself to take part in a sponsored venture. Whether or not you're an adrenaline junkie we can find the perfect challenge event for you.



PARTNER WITH US

We work with companies in a variety of ways that benefit both organisations. If you are a local business, we would love to work with you as a valuable partner to fulfil your corporate social responsibility, have fun and give something special back to the community. Together

we can make a difference to local people with learning disabilities and their families.

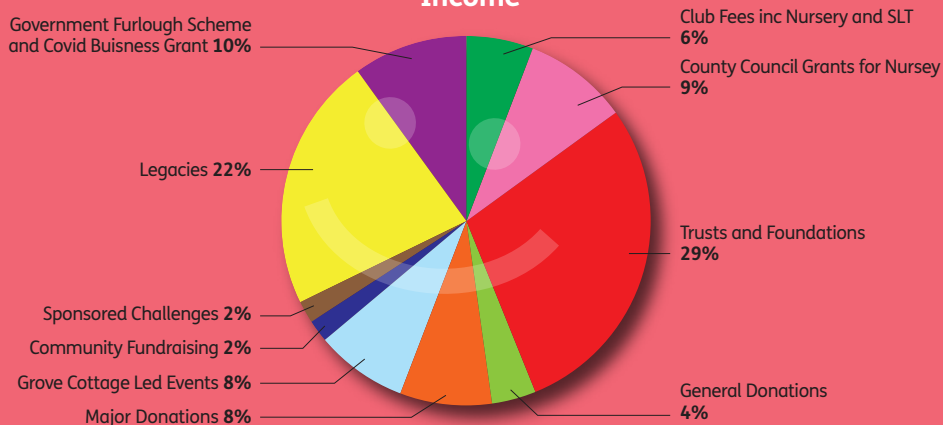


FINANCIAL REVIEW

With two significant legacy donations, we finished the 2019/2020 financial year in a far better position than expected, with a total income of £601,110. Our total expenditure, split between providing our vital services and raising awareness and fundraising was £419,320.

We saw a shortfall of £22,000 under our Grove Cottage led events income stream and a £10,000 deficit from our community fundraising. We predict the effects of the pandemic will still be felt in the upcoming years and we will revise our fundraising strategy to mitigate this.

Income



Expenditure



MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Like many, Grove Cottage has faced difficulties over the past year and I would firstly like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Board of Trustees to thank everyone who supported us as we navigated the complications caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Quite simply we couldn't continue without you.

The year got off to a great start and as we rolled out our services and fundraising events calendar we felt excited about what was to come. Then in March 2020 we sadly had to temporarily close our facility and halt many of our services and fundraising activities. Thankfully, innovative technology such as Zoom and Teams enabled us to stay connected.

Our members, and their families and carers, are at the heart of everything we do. We are so grateful to the community and charitable organisations whose endless support ensures we continue to be there for them. We are challenged with an uncertain future — there is reduced local and central government support, and although we are affiliated with The Royal Mencap Society we receive no funding from the national body. Despite this we remain optimistic and know with such amazing backing from all those who support us, our future is bright!

Thank you.

Kevin Davis
Chair of Trustees





THANK YOU FROM
EVERYONE AT



Grove
Cottage

The home of Bishop's Stortford Mencap


151 London Road, Bishop's Stortford,
Hertfordshire, CM23 3JX

Operations: 01279 656085

Fundraising: 01279 651908

info@mencapgrovecottage.org

www.mencapgrovecottage.org

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Registered Charity Number: 1122298

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