



Staines, Ashford & Egham branch (number 467)

Annual Report as at 30 September 2010

for the Annual Members Meeting on 9 November 2010

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### **Branch Co-ordinator's Summary: Paula Downey Jones**

We started the year with almost all the committee roles filled, and as people stepped down we have been able to replace them throughout the year. This has meant that the branch's activities have been maintained and some have been revamped. In summary, the branch has achieved the following this year:

- Bumps and Babes is now self-sustaining and a new schedule of activities has brought in many new parents. NCTeenies started the year self-funded but in recent weeks attendance has dropped, however plans are now in place to rectify this, similar to actions that were taken with Bumps and Babes
- The newsletter was revamped giving it a coloured cover and including regular pages for volunteer vacancies, branch news and UK wide parent news among other topics. We have received £1,965 in advertising revenue during the year, although we have seen the economic climate negatively affecting repeat adverts.
- Both our Nearly New Sales were popular and despite the September sale having to compete against 4 other sales in the area on the same day, we raised £2,235 from both sales this year.
- A new branch factsheet was launched taking tips from existing parents for new parents and people new to the area. It is intended that this factsheet is updated from members/ non members comments so that it develops into a guide for parents in Staines, Ashford and Egham. The factsheet is accessible on our website.
- We ran a Breastfeeding/ Branch awareness day at the Elmsleigh Centre, Staines on 23 June and met many people interested in both breast feeding and the branch itself.
- We launched a new facebook page and twitter site, utilising our web manager's skills in taking the branch to the next level of e-publicity.
- Mum's Nights Out were ran every 2 months throughout the year until August. However, low levels of attendance led the committee to make the decision to stop running the nights out.
- The one committee role we were unable to attract this year was the Events Co-ordinator. As a result we were unable to organise a summer fundraising event and our Teddy Bears Picnic was a non-fundraising meet up in the park on a very hot day!
- We have contributed £4,088 to the main NCT charity to support helplines, campaigns and the general running of the charity

Volunteer recruitment, although successful, proved and will continue to prove challenging. We now have permanent slots in our newsletter and on our website, which list current vacancies and these have proved helpful in attracting new volunteers in. Bumps and Babes continues to be a good recruiting ground. However despite the numerous outlets for publicising vacancies, we unfortunately needed to result to a couple of red letters/ emails in the last few weeks in order to get replacements for the committee members who step down at the AMM. Pleased to report, however that the red letter/email was successful and the branch starts the next year with an almost complete committee.

### **Treasurer's Report : Andi Burnham**

The branch has successfully achieved self-funding of its postnatal support groups, held two Nearly New Sales and contributed a healthy balance to the NCT charity as well as continued to deliver 4 quarterly newsletters.

Our two Nearly New Sales this year have produced a net surplus of £2,235, this is despite takings being 29% below the previous year.

Our postnatal support groups (Bumps and Babes and NCTeenies) produced a net surplus for the year of £375 (an increase of £226). This includes a grant of £180 received from Runnymede Association of Voluntary Services for the running of Bumps and Babes.

The quarterly newsletter produced a surplus for the year of £855 with income similar to the previous year.

It is a requirement of NCT branches that 70% of the net surpluses achieved from our individual activities go to head office for the central support facilities (helplines, campaigns, etc). This year we have contributed £4,088 to the NCT charity. This compares with £4,685 in the previous year.

The deficit seen this year is due to trainee expenditure incurred in this year where, for most of it, a grant was received in the previous year.

Our closing reserves position is:

	<i>Closing balance on reserves</i>
Restricted (grant funding)	£154.15 (Bumps and Babes)
General	£704.43
Total Branch Reserves carried forward into 2010/11	£858.58

Many thanks to Sam Walker who held the role of Treasurer from November 2009 until July 2010. As I depart this role at the AMM I would like to thank the committee for their support over the last few months.

### **Membership Co-ordinator's Report: Emma Draper**

The current total number of members stands at 361 including all Partners and, within that there are 198 households. This is a small increase on last year's membership.

Our volunteer turnover has been similar to previous years and we continue to recruit volunteers on an on-going basis. Although it is usual for the committee to be made up of members with babies recent efforts have attracted new members pre-babies and it is hoped that this will maintain continuity of the committee for longer. However, it is also important to continue to encourage members to renew their membership at the end of each year.

An important recruiting ground for both membership and volunteers are our weekly postnatal groups (Bumps and Babes and NCTeenies), although it is not a requirement that families are members to attend these sessions.

The outgoing committee have been in place for most of the year, however we have had to send out a couple of “red” letters/emails to members asking them to come forward to replace these committee members, as happened last year. It will be important going forward to highlight the need for members to get more actively involved in the branch, and this could be helped by more of the active members renewing their membership.

My thanks goes to Jen Dougherty and Andrea Greer who have also held the role of Membership Co-ordinator during the year.

### **Postnatal Support Groups Report: Sarah McAndrew**

#### **Bumps & Babes**

In the last year we have continued to run a popular weekly Bumps & Babes session, supporting on average 15 mums per week over 43 sessions in the last year.

From November 09 to March 10 the group was supported financially by the branch. This was through the profit made at NCTeenies paying for the £10 loss per session over and above donations from attending mums. In April 10 there was a considerable increase in the hall hire and the decision was taken to change the suggested donation from £1.00 to £2.00 and make Gift Aiding available.

Between May and August the group suffered from dwindling attendances and the decision was taken to increase the publicity for the group via email updates and the Newsletter as well as the existing branch leaflets, flyers and posters in all the GP's & Health centres in our main branch area. This was combined with the introduction of a new schedule of activities and taster sessions provided by local businesses which started in September. This has included; baby signing, baby Massage, 3D casting workshop and pottery workshop. The result has been a sharp increase in attendances to around 15 – 25 and a constant stream of new mums and occasional Dads and Grandparents. The group is now sustainable via donations, gift aid and the commissions from the visiting businesses.

Kathye King who set up the group handed over leadership to Sarah McAndrew in May 2010. Our thanks goes to Kathye for her vision and dedication to the group. Both Sarah and Kathye have been reliant on the willing team of Mums who have acted as peer supporters over the year. Our thanks goes to; Vanessa, Theresa, Judy, Kim, Cath, Liz, Lizanne, Ollie, Jo, Paula, and Julie for their help in welcoming Mums, making drinks, setting out and clearing away.

For the coming year we plan to continue to develop the activities on offer at the group and with any funds raised improve the service to local parents.

#### **NCTeenies**

NCTeenies has continued to run successfully through this year as a vibrant and friendly drop in toddler group run by parents for parents with around 15 – 20 parents attending each week.

We regularly have external sellers attending the group. Fran Kennedy has run a photo session and there is now a hairdresser available to cut the children's hair every few weeks. All these activities contribute to the funds of the branch in some way, either cash or products for the Christmas raffle.

NCTeenies provided a successful Christmas party providing plenty of fun and also raising funds.

There have however been some challenges this year;

- Kathye King who set up the group, Jen Dougherty and Sarah McAndrew who had been supporting her all moved on this year. Since September Ali Walker has taken on the leadership of the group supported by Vanessa Cox and Judith Drake.
- The hall hire charge increased considerably in April, in order to offset this slightly the £2 charge is being changed to a donation which can then be available to Gift Aid, which provides the group with an additional 25%.
- The launch of the Buckland Children's Centre in November 2009 has provided a well equipped and low cost resource to parents in Staines, whilst we welcome any new services for parents it has emphasised the challenges a voluntary group has in providing comparable facilities at a comparable cost.
- The attendance since September has reduced to between 6 – 12 families, which is not sustainable in the long term. Ali and the committee are working hard to increase the publicity of the group through the Newsletter, email updates and Bumps & Babes. Ali is also introducing some craft activity sessions, with the first one in November. We are confident that there is still a need for a community group like this and we look forward to increased attendances.

Looking forward to the coming year we will continue to find ways to raise funds encourage volunteers to join the team in running the group and of course support parents.

Many thanks to all our volunteers who have helped make this group a success this year, we would also like to offer our congratulations to Kathye on the birth of Charlie and Jen on the arrival of Issac.

### **Newsletter Report: Jennie Conway, Sonja Napier, Joanne Ferguson**

In 2009-10 we produced four newsletters, printing approx 350 per issue. The themes were: Christmas, Back to Work, Holidays and Eco Babies. According the branch survey, the newsletter is one of the most enjoyed aspects of membership (after antenatal classes and Bumps & Babes).

The key changes to the newsletter this year have been:

- Introducing a colour cover which required approx 9p additional investment per copy. Whilst the external look of the newsletter changed considerably, we aimed to retain continuity with previous editions, therefore the inside pages had a similar style and the main sections were retained. With the colour cover, we were able to offer premium rate/premium positioning

colour advertising on the inside front and back covers for £50 and £60 respectively, ensuring profitability.

- Having a coloured pull-out pages section to increase the visibility of the SAE events & activities, the NCT helplines, and also local events, all of which are highly valued aspects of the newsletter.
- Changing our printers to Top Print who offered a more efficient and reliable service at a similar rate to South Bucks Press.

Key challenges include:

- Getting enough authors to write articles to minimise the reliance on the Yahoo Editors archive, or time impact on the Editor/Publisher.
- Obtaining birth announcements from all consenting antenatal class attendees in a consistent manner.
- Maintaining a large enough pool of distributors so that each person is not overly burdened and that newsletters reach members promptly.

### **Web Manager's Report: Andrea Greer**

The web manager's role has been expanded during the year to include the branch website as a sub site within the NCT charity's website, the branch's facebook page, twitter account and updates to the new branch factsheet.

#### **Branch Pages & Factsheet**

The branch's web pages have been updated continually throughout the year and we have added pages added for NCTeenies and Bumps & Babes. In addition we have included information for sellers for our Nearly New Sales and a newsletter taster page added, as well as information on advertising with us, thus recognising the increased use of the internet for members, potential members and other interested parties. Other pages have been added to highlight events (e.g. Teddy Bear's Picnic) and specific NCT initiatives (e.g. Breastfeeding Peer Supporters).

During the year we have created and added the Branch Factsheet which contains useful information for new mums, new members and people new to the area. It is the intention that members and others contribute to this factsheet so that over time it expands and provides more complete information for new parents.

We have also launched Internet advertising for £20 per year and so far have 3 paying advertisers shown on the branch pages.

Web statistics are collected monthly and collated to aid with future decisions on what pages are most viewed / useful to our audience. These statistics are shared at the monthly committee meetings.

## Facebook

A Facebook "fan" page has been created which includes advertising for all events (such as NCTeenies, Bumps & Babes, Photo shoot, NNS etc). We currently have 54 "fans" who get updates posted to this page.

The Facebook page is linked to Twitter so all wall posts made by administrator are also posted on Twitter too.

## Twitter

The branch moved a step further into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with its Twitter account setup. We currently have 83 "followers". Twitter is used for brief reminders of upcoming events, to highlight information passed on from HO etc.

I leave this role at the AMM and hand over to a new Web Manager, Lynn Oliver.

## **Nearly New Sales Report: Lizanne Jakobs**

Another two sales were held during the year and proved to be the usual success. Over the year in total we received income to the branch of £3,809, with a profit of £2,235 (before contribution to NCT HQ). Our sales are still very popular and we have already had early enquiries for the next year. Dates have been booked with the venue for the upcoming sales in 2011.

Louise Bishop organised the March sale and has now stepped down. We have a mixed team of experienced and new members and are mostly running with the tried and tested way the sales have been organised until now, whilst still looking to make minor improvements every time. September was the last time where we took 25% commission, this will go up to 30% as of March. Entrance fees were already raised to £1.50 and there has been no negative feedback to this.

## **Home Birth Support Group – Lorna Bonelli**

The local home birth support group met ten times over the last year in the Children's Centre in Shepperton. It is run by an antenatal teacher and an independent midwife with assistance from three trainee ANTs (including me) & a few enthusiastic mums! The group exists to provide practical information & support to those expectant parents who would like to consider home birth & it covers most of North Surrey.

In comparison to last year's report, the number of people attending the group has steadily decreased during the year. We're unsure quite why this has happened as the majority of parents continue to find out about the group through antenatal classes & via their midwives. November 2010 sees a move to hold the meetings back in our respective homes to see if this is more welcoming. We also intend to check with the Community Midwifery team to see if all local midwives are aware of the group.

In contrast to the above, the feedback about the group remains positive & people appear to appreciate the opportunity to consider the option of homebirth in a relaxed, open & accepting

environment. We have no problems in finding volunteers to come back to the group to tell their stories about their births.

### **Valley Cushion Agent's report – Lorna Bonelli**

I have two Valley Cushions available for hire. The cushions have been hired out 7 times over the last year, with good feedback each time. Valley Cushion leaflets are handed out at local antenatal classes and left at GPs surgeries in the local area.

### **Student report – Lorna Bonelli Oct 09- Sept 10**

During the NCT financial year, I have continued to attend tutorials with tutor Jackie Dutton. As part of my development as a student antenatal teacher, I have attended my compulsory linked obstetric training days & CASP research study day, began to make contacts with our local maternity units, got to grips with reflective practice, observed three antenatal courses and attended the Telford Conference including a study day with Ina May Gaskin. My academic work progressed slowly during this time as I revised some practical experience of parenthood with the birth of my third child in March 2010.

I am currently organising some time out from studying to allow me to focus on the needs of three small children but intend to return to studying before the Denis Walsh study day in April 2011.

### **Student report – Jen Dougherty Jan 2010 – Sept 10**

My Antenatal Teacher Training began in January as I joined Jackie Dutton's tutorial group and attended my first tutorial. This has been a stimulating and informative group to be a part of and we have covered topics such as home birth, 'making labour real', evaluating a course and breathing techniques as well as looking at various assignments.

In July, I observed an antenatal course in the local PSA (in Chertsey) and found this to be both inspiring and extremely helpful for reflecting on my own future approach to teaching. I was also 8 months pregnant at the time, so it was also personally useful!

I have completed a couple of assignments (although not entered these for marking yet) and greatly benefited from the Awards for All grant and branch gift for resourcing my home 'library' and teaching aids box.

I am intending to take a few months out from training having just had another baby to ensure that I am able to devote the time I need to my studies, probably returning to official study again around Easter time. I would like to thank the local branch for their support and encouragement in beginning my training, the last 9 months have proved both interesting and enjoyable.

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