**Ashford Branch Annual Members Meeting 2017 – 20th May, 3pm**

** Dobbies Garden Centre Café, Eureka Park, Ashford, TN25 4BN**

Attendees: Emily Baker, Saira Gendek, Becky Harradine, Carly Millgate.

Apologies: Alison Bampton, Nicola Bennett, Leah Carter, Paula Cowperthwaite, Jennie Crate, Louisa Jones, Lindsay Storer.

Review of the Branch’s performance during the past 12 months (up to end April 2017) including financial performance.

The Branch Co-ordinator would like to thank all those who have volunteered and helped out in the last year. It has been a year of change and cutting back on activities for the branch. However, I am extremely proud to say that the branch is once again fully self-sufficient. This would not have been possible without the dedication of our existing and new committee members.

We have managed to keep our every popular Bumps and Babes group running due to many dedicated and helpful volunteers, trialled a Toddler Group, ran a Nearly New Sale and published several newsletters. We also hosted two lovely events; the Christmas Party and the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway Santa Special event. Both were extremely popular and enjoyable.

I am stepping down and handing over to the very enthusiastic Carly Millgate, who I have every confidence in to keep our branch running and expand its reach within the local community. I have loved my time in this role – thank you to everyone who has made this possible.

* Emily Baker

**Membership Report – Becky Harradine**

Membership data as of 18th May 2017 shows the Branch as having a total of 140 members, made up of 82 households.

The membership data at the last Annual Members Meeting showed 97 households. Therefore we have seen a decrease of 15 households in the last 12 months.

Membership renewal rates are low for the branch. Analysis of the data shows that where members are paying by Direct Debit, their membership renews, however for members who made an initial one off payment do not in the main renew on expiry. Our current membership data shows we have 51 households with a membership paid by Direct Debit and 31 households who made a one off cash payment.

The NCT Members Club offering provides a range of additional benefits which we hope our Branch Members are taking advantage of. We have promoted this offering via our Branch Newsletter to raise awareness.

**Treasurer's report - Paula Cowperthwaite**

After a rather dire year financially in 2015/16, we have had a much, much better year in 2016/17. We started the year with just £7.25 in the bank and ended it with £487.63. This is all down to the commitment of the volunteers who have generously given up their free time to run the many events we have held in the past 12 months.

Our Bumps and Babes group managed to meet all costs and make £33.23 profit. It remains a popular group amongst new parents and one I hope the new committee members will continue to support. We also ran a Toddler Group for part of the year which made a £73.70 profit, thanks mainly to having no costs to pay. Unfortunately, turnout did not increase and this was ceased in December.

The Sling Library grew in popularity throughout the year. The Library purchased two new slings and still generated a profit of £89.38. Unfortunately, new sling library guidance issued by NCT Head Office made it very difficult for us to continue to run the library so activity was ceased in January. The sale of the library to East Kent Slings was completed on 31/03/2017 with £100 of the sale being accounted for in the 16/17 year and the remaining £300 to be accounted for in the 17/18 year.

We held one Nearly New Sale in September 2016. This saw 172 people through the door with an average spend of £23.11 per basket. Expenses totalled £692.96 of which the majority was the increased hall hire fee, and we took £3974.95 in sales. A profit of £800.79 gave us £240.24 to keep in branch after transfer of funds.

We also continued to run the highly successful First Aid courses. We ran a double course in October, and a double course in February. All four were sell outs, making £1,298.97 profit of which £389.70 was retained in branch. From a treasurer point of view the amount of money generated versus volunteer input required, makes the First Aid courses the most profitable activity for the branch.

Other fundraising events included our Christmas Party, and the RHDR Santa Special train trip. These made a profit of £74.46 between them, leaving £22.34 for branch. But these events are more about providing a fun and enjoyable family activity and raising awareness of the branch, than to generate funds.

We stopped production of the newsletter part way through the year. Despite getting a handle on costs and recruiting more advertising, the money generated was not worth the volunteer time needed to produce it. Advertising refunds were made to those affected and a small profit of £42.99 was made, of which £12.90 was retained in branch. One of the advertising refunds kindly became a £45.00 donation to NCT.

Elsewhere, we spent £256.52 on committee expenditure. This included the storage unit costs and travel costs for Babble 2016 Annual Conference. We received a £105.00 grant from the Waitrose Green Token Scheme, and this was spent on several months of practitioner attendance for our Bumps and Babes group.

Through transfer of funds the branch sent £1,733.34 to NCT Head Office for use in national campaigns. We retained £480.38 in branch which I hope will go some way to setting the new committee members up for the next financial year.

**Newsletter and Advertising Report – Becky Harradine**

The Branch has continued to produce the Branch Newsletter for three editions in the calendar year, with the last edition being Autumn 2016.

The branch took the decision in early 2017 to cease production of the newsletter for a variety of reasons including no permanent Editor in post to coordinate content and production, alongside rising production costs and falling circulation numbers.

The Newsletter provided our Branch members with local and national NCT news, details of our regular branch activities and one off events such as the Christmas Party, a ‘spotlight on’ article in each edition, messy pages & recipes for littles ones alongside local advertisers.

It is hoped that some form of newsletter either in print or digitally produced will be resurrected in the future if volunteers are recruited.

The Branch would like to thank all contributors and advertisers for their contributions over the past year.

**Parent Support Co-ordinator Report – Nicola Bennett**

In August 2016 we were given the chance to start a toddler group in a church in Ashford town centre. We ran the group weekly, on a Wednesday morning, offering a place for parents and carers to bring their children to play for a small donation to our branch.  
  
Unfortunately, due to competition from another very successful group running in the area at the same time, along with a lack of volunteers to assist with running the group, we were forced to take the decision not to continue in 2017. We very much enjoyed running this group and think it has potential to be resurrected on a more suitable day of the week.  
  
On November 10th 2016, we arranged a parents' drinks evening at a local pub. We had a lovely evening and got to know a few new parents.

**PSA Link Report – Jennie Crate**

Visits to Signature and Essentials Antenatal Courses in Ashford continued throughout 2016. The purpose of the visits is to promote events, activities, and services offered by NCT Ashford branch to new parents in the area.

New leaflets outlining our offer to parents in the Ashford area were created, and distributed at our groups and via the Parent Services Advisor.

**Sling Library Report – Louisa Jones**

The Sling Library was very busy in the first part of this year. Membership of the Facebook group grew steadily and we have been helping advise via this and directing members to attend meetings. Some meetings were in fact so busy I didn’t get a chance to speak to everybody and had to ask other volunteers to step in. In the second part of the year we did not have meetings booked due to funds not being available for hall hire. We did, however, hire a few slings using the Facebook group, which I believe helped at least 3 families to explore the world of ‘babywearing’ and branch out to other types of slings that they had otherwise no access to try. I will be relocating, and due to lack of volunteers, the Sling Library stock has now been sold to a local sling group that covers the East part of the county. The slings were sold and the Facebook group transferred to their ownership, so the coverage of the local area has not been affected and in fact has been increased as the stock owned by the new library is more varied.

**Breastfeeding Counsellor – Alison Bampton**

Over the past year I have continued to facilitate sessions at antenatal classes; predominantly in the Saltwood/Hythe, Canterbury and Ashford areas. Calls to me directly during the early post-natal period are few. Any calls I receive are predominantly from antenatal classes that I have facilitated. I have noticed that text and email communications for support has risen. I am due to observe a women's only session in June for my CPD which will complete my license to practice for a further year. I haven't been present at Bumps and Babes a lot over the past year but have hosted a few sessions when the need has arisen. I think I need to improve advertising for the breastfeeding services in the year ahead.

**Branch Charter**

All NCT Branches must operate in accordance with the Branch Charter. The following actions are needed:

* To agree the roles and responsibilities required to run the Branch
* To agree the size and composition of the Branch team/committee (all these roles to be filled by NCT members)
* To invite volunteers to join the Branch team.

**Main Committee**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Role** | **Current holder** | **Stepping down** | **Proposed by** | **Seconded by** |
| Co-ordinator | Emily Baker  Carly Millgate | Yes  No | Emily Baker | Becky Harradine |
| Treasurer | Paula Cowperthwaite  Saira Gendek | Yes  No | Paula Cowperthwaite | Emily Baker |
| Parent Support Co-ordinator | Nicola Bennett  Saira Gendek | Yes  No | Emily Baker | Becky Harradine |
| Membership Secretary | Becky Harradine  Alison Bampton | Yes  No | Becky Harradine | Emily Baker |
| PSA Link | Jennie Crate  Carly Millgate | Yes  No | Emily Baker | Becky Harradine |

**Extended Branch Committee**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Fundraising Co-ordinator | Position vacant |  |  |  |
| Deputy Treasurer | Position vacant |  |  |  |
| Newsletter Editor | Becky Harradine | Yes |  |  |
| Nearly New Sale Co-ordinators | Lindsay Storer  Emily Baker | Yes  Yes |  |  |
| Advertising Co-ordinator | Paula Cowperthwaite | Yes |  |  |
| Bumps and Babes Volunteers | Carly Millgate | No |  |  |
| Sling Library/Family Club Co-ordinators | Nicola Bennett  Paula Cowperthwaite  Louisa Jones | Yes  Yes  Yes |  |  |
| MSLC Representative | Alison Bampton | No |  |  |
| Father’s Contact | George Baker | Yes |  |  |
| Website Co-ordinator | George Baker | Yes |  |  |