



Introduction to Markfield

Markfield was set up over 40 years ago by parents of disabled children to create a safe and supportive space for inclusive play. The new Director will be a champion of the rights of disabled and autistic people, recognising and responding to the particular needs of children, adults and families. Autistic children and their families are a key part of the charity's history and form a significant proportion of current service users.

The new Director will build on the momentum to develop and sustain the organisation further, continuing the proactive approach in the context of Covid-19 to adapt services to meet needs of our user community. S/he will lead and motivate staff, and work closely with our Board of Trustees to create future plans and secure the buy-in of service users, local stakeholders and funders. In particular, we are seeking a creative, dynamic and capable Director who will:

- Lead the process to devise a new strategic plan which expands and develops our model of support built during Covid-19 to continue and extend support available to disabled adults, children and their carers and family members
- Work with and support the staff team, and build the organisation's resilience and strengthen its capability to meet the challenges and take the opportunities of the future
- Develop our community business of training and workshops with parents and potentially, professionals, as an area of future income growth

Location and Facilities

Markfield is a charity based in Tottenham, Haringey, from where we run an inclusive community hub where children and families play, socialise and get a wide range of advice, services and support. Our centre is an iconic Grade II listed historic building that was a former Victorian pump house. It is located within the Green Flag award-winning Markfield Park – see this short film showing an aerial view of the Markfield centre and surrounding area: <https://youtu.be/OvscFj58VgI>

Amenities at the Markfield centre include a large hall, training room, kitchen facilities, and a split-level soft play room. We also have a huge adventure playground that was developed in collaboration with our youth participation group and the local community.

Our purpose

We provide a diverse range of services for disabled children, young people and adults, parents, carers and siblings. We work both with people who have a diagnosed disability, and those without a diagnosis – to recognise hidden needs and to include people labelled as ‘challenging.’ We aim:

- To enable disabled people to be themselves, take risks and live life to the full
- To focus on the needs of the whole family and break down isolation
- To promote respect of disabled people and support their full participation in society.

Our vision

A world where disabled people are treated as equals, have a voice and can live the life they want.

Our values

- **Inclusive** We are for disabled and non-disabled people
- **Innovative** We explore new ideas
- **Empowering** We enable participation
- **Connected** We are part of our community

An important part of why we reach over a thousand people annually is our offer of activities during the daytime, evenings, weekends and school holidays in line with the needs of disabled children and families.

Services

- Our afterschool clubs and holiday playschemes for disabled children and siblings, and our play drop-in sessions for families bring together a fantastic range of activities, and include children with a wide range of needs.
- Our daytime and evening social clubs and travel training scheme for adults with learning disabilities with funding from social care personal budgets.
- We offer a wide range of family support services at the Markfield centre, including information, advice and support surgeries, and outreach services from other local venues around Haringey, along with parent support groups, drop-ins and occasional day trips for parents and children
- Our one-day workshops for parents and carers are designed to support parents navigate the many day-to-day challenges of bringing up a disabled, deaf or autistic child.
- We also offer longer, 10 to 13 week courses, focusing on parenting skills, including “Stepping Stones” especially for families with a child under 5 years of age, and the “Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities” course accredited by the Race Equalities Foundation.

The impact of Covid-19

From the start of the pandemic, the staff team at Markfield have actively adapted our delivery model and responded to needs on the ground in several ways. Our approach was to review every service in order to adapt it to take into account the restrictions and challenges that Covid posed, which our service users identified and spoke to us about, and we responded by creating new services too. We enabled online service delivery where possible, whilst supporting people to get familiar with using computers, implemented social distancing and maximised our use of spaces and facilities, as well as sought emergency funding. We were busier than ever!

Keeping in constant communication and dialogue with parents and families has been vital. We provided community e-newsletters for parents and children so they always knew they were not alone, and remained aware of our service offers and we were consistently available to engage, and provide telephone and online advice, support and information.

We have transformed our online training offer so it is interactive and enjoyable for parents and carers, both for one day and lengthier courses. Whilst initially, our clubs and group sessions continued on with supervised social distancing arrangements in place, during the 3rd lockdown, these were temporarily suspended and were much missed by participants. To continue that sense of fun, and having something to look forward to in the week, we have refined and extended our online delivery now to include a 'Dance Along' via zoom for young people and family members.

We also recognised the importance of access to green spaces throughout Covid and have facilitated the use of our adventure playground on a 'one family at a time' basis, and This proved very popular with our service users of all ages, who were really feeling the strains of successive lockdowns, on mental health, well being and relationships. Children in particular struggled with understanding the 'social distancing' behaviour of loved ones and friends. We extended our operating hours for our Special Educational Needs Information Advice and Support Service telephone helpline, and offer surgeries via video conference to help with disability claims and appeals.

We are now re-opening the centre for group sessions with a range of covid-safety measures in place, following relevant government guidance.

Our Strategic Plan

As we look to the future now, it is perfect timing to review our current five year strategic plan, which runs from 2017-2021. This plan was created following a wide-ranging review which involved a wide range of our stakeholders, service users, staff, volunteers, trustees, partner organisations, members of the local community, and funders.

We look forward to the incoming Director to establish a process for consulting with service users, staff, volunteers, external stakeholders, funders and policy makers to inform a new strategy that builds on our achievements to date. It is important too that the strategy is evaluated and that systems and processes in the year establish the full extent of Markfield's own wide ranging social, economic, environment and cultural impacts.

The broad goals of our current strategic plan are to:

- sustain and grow our core services to meet local needs;
- ensure participation of our users in decision making;
- develop our centre as a unique community hub; and
- improve information sharing with our members and partners.

Funding

Part of the strategy is to retain the interest and commitment of commissioners and a diverse range of funders. The Board has expressed a commitment to increasing the level of unrestricted income, especially through earned income from the community hub, sales of training courses and other ideas generated by the new Director.

Our funders during 2020-21 were: Haringey Council, BBC Children In Need, National Lottery Community Fund, Bloomfield Trust, Comic Relief, Henry Smith Charity, Baily Thomas Charitable Fund, Jack Petchey Foundation, Laureus Sport for Good, Leathersellers' Company, Mayor's Fund for London, London Play, Council for Disabled Children, St James's Place Foundation, Tottenham Grammar School Foundation, Mike Davies and other individual donors.