

**dalston
children's
centre
annual
report**

1983

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FUNDING BODIES THIS YEAR

This year we have received money from:

Inner City Partnership, Hackney Borough Council, ILEA, GLAA, GLC Women's Committee, The Jubilee Trust, The National Westminster Bank, Manpower Services Commission and miscellaneous donations from individuals. Thank you very much. We are, by the way, now a charity. All other donations welcome !

Workers

Annette Sylvester, Carol Jones, Dee Adams, Helen Brown, Jenny Gerald, Liz Khan, Manju Mukherjee, Nina Nissen, Anna Clarke.

The following have all helped during the year (and many more, apologies for those missed):-

Elise, Bernadette 1 and Bernadette 2, Flo, Hyacinth, Rebu, Jane, Isabel, Becky, Gerry, Sandy, Judy, Connie, Sue, Dorothy, Merry, Anne, Mel, HCA, HUF, Hackney Play Association, Rosie, Heather, Maureen, Ingrid, Outwrite, Denise, Martin.

And love to Oslyn who shares our building as Hackney Childminder' Association worker and gives us support.

Management Committee

Carol
Sandra
Norma
Sue
Rose
Yvonne
Janet
Anju
Polly
Anna
Lynn
Julie

Resigned:

Jilly
Karen
Lynne
Jo
Brad
Denis

FUNDING

Probably the worst this this year has been the funding of our workers. The CEP scheme ended on 4th May. We had made an application for partnership which we were told would be decided by the end of January. This, we thought, would give us plenty of time to plan what to do if it was/was not successful. By the end of March we still hadn't heard from them. The application still hadn't been processed because we were a new (??) project. At the beginning of April we gave the CEP workers a month's notice of the termination of their employment and we were all very depressed. Most of the activities at the Centre would have to stop; 6 workers would be unemployed (and would all, for different reasons find it almost impossible to get other work.)

We hassled and hassled, eventually Hackney Council agreed to fund the workers until a decision from the DoE came. And to everyone's great relief, with three weeks to go, we heard that funding from Partnership had been agreed. It's difficult to describe how demoralising it was working at the Centre from the end of January until we heard that the workers could stay. 8 weeks of wondering every day if we'd get a phone call or a letter deciding our futures. It just didn't seem fair that we had to go through all that.

Another important thing for us all to remember is that we have only got two years guaranteed funding. What then? How do we use our time in the meantime? The present government believes the best place for women and their children is in the home - the basis of the Children's Centre is an opposition to this ideology. What do we do to challenge these policies which will affect our funding in the future? Discussions are obviously on-going - we would welcome feedback from other groups on the priorities they are setting for themselves.

Working Collectively

One of the important restrictions of the CEP scheme was that collective working was not a practical possibility. Now all the workers are employed on an equal basis. We have spent a lot of time working out how to work collectively in a meaningful way, given all our different experiences and expectations. We feel we have come up with a basis that is satisfactory*. We each have a primary area of responsibility and a secondary area (childcare or administration); we all have equal time spent on outreach/publicity and on cleaning and cooking. We obviously share equal responsibility for everyday decisions. Working collectively links in with our "anti-authoritarian" policies. Only time and experience will show how well we can put it into practice but we are all committed to working in this way and with each other.

REPORT FROM THE PREMISES GROUP

We thought it would be best just to give you a quick run-down on what's been happening.

Right, in July 82, the DCC was offered 112 Greenwood Road. That, after many months and sleepless nights. We were originally offered it for one year. In October of the same year, we started looking again for permanent premises and Shacklewell Lane Baths was submitted as a likely candidate. We then approached HBC to find out if the building was for sale; answer:NO. But we were told that we could lease the building and this we decided to do.

We then formed the premises group which consisted of Rose De Moura, Liz Khan, Nina Nissen, Osslyn Phillips, a rep from Matrix (our architects) and myself (Carol Jones).

*Annette wants to work co-operatively and so is leaving, although we are very pleased she still wants to work on girls nights.

The group first concentrated on getting ideas from as many people as possible as to the way we envisaged the building developing. This was done through a series of public meetings to which people who live nearby were invited. We had exhibitions too. We were able to draw up plans with regards to the way in which the building will eventually look. However, the next problem was when we came to estimate how much the building will cost to do up. We discovered we would not be able to complete the building within the money we have. This is after deciding that only the essentials will be done. We have therefore decided to have two stages: the first one will mean that the Centre would be able to function; the second stage will include the hall so that there will be space for children to play active games, dance etc.

We now have to go to the point of problems: these are mainly in the shape of the lease which because of amendments still needed to be made is still not signed. This however, will soon be sorted out and builders will be on site in October.

We have also discovered that there is ASBESTOS in the building. We asked HBC if they will remove it; they say they will seal it but that is not good enough. We have therefore decided that we will remove the asbestos at our own cost but that we will campaign to get the Council to reimburse us as it is so dangerous to health. (Please don't forget to sign our petition).

Thanks to Matrix for their help.

UNDER FIVES

The most important thing to happen to the under-fives in the last year was the move from 80 Sandringham Road to 112 Greenwood Road. Being in the same house as the other workers and users really has been wonderful.

It's really good having the under-fives playrooms, toilet and garden all on the one level. When we arrived, the garden was a jungle of rose bushes and brambles. After a lot of really hard work, we cleared the garden and burnt all the bushes and wood at a bonfire/fireworks party on November 5th. Everyone enjoyed themselves and apart from one fire-work that seemed to have a mind of its own and rushed around the garden in every direction except upwards, the evening was a great success.

The garden is now turfed with two sandpits, and flower beds which the children get a lot of pleasure out of. It's such an added bonus for those who live in flats and don't have gardens. They do lots of digging and planting seeds and plants in the flower beds. We now have a water sprinkler in the garden which tends to flood the grass but the children love running through it. Other things that the under-fives do are painting, gluing, sticking, playdough, collages, leg, puzzles, cooking, playing in the playhouse and of course free imaginative play which we all encourage.

For me working with the under-fives, it's so nice having the mothers around to chat with and to have their support.

Other things we have done in the past year are outings to the babybounce, swimming, city farms, and to the zoo. Our outings are well attended and although sometimes hectic. We arrive back exhausted but with the feeling that it's all been worth it as the children have always enjoyed it fully.

Dance

On Tuesdays at 1 o'clock there is dance for the under fives. This is quite a difficult time for a lot of under-fives. Some go to morning nursery or playschool and are still getting over the morning at 1 p.m. Some children are at school all day and some start nursery playgroups at 1.30. I think for these reasons the classes have remained quite small. But Hazel is wonderful with the children. The dance is so imaginative and Tuesday lunchtime is now sparked with excitement at the on-coming of dance.

Theatre

Again I feel it is a great success. Many nurseries and under-fives have come from all over Dalston, Hackney and Stoke Newington. The theatre productions have all been wonderful this year and magical, encouraging the children to take part. Both dance and theatre took place at Ferncliffe Nursery who have been so kind to us letting us use their premises and always so helpful.

I look forward to my next year which I hope will be as exciting and as rewarding as the last and would like to say to all the children and women how nice it has been working with them.

Love Liz.

Manju: After moving to our Greenwood Road Centre, along with our various activities, every Monday I started to do Indian cookery demonstrations. Many mothers are interested - we really enjoy our Monday lunch. Children enjoy it as well. Apart from Indian cookery, Rosie did some Kenyan cookery and Flo showed us how to make French crepes.

AFTER SCHOOL CLUB

Jenny:

I started working at the Children's Centre in July 1982. When I first came it was the beginning of the summer playscheme which took place in St Marks Church Colvestone Crescent, Dalston. I was employed as a community worker to work with children from 5 - 12 years which is something I have always loved doing. The Children's Centre provides a radical alternative to existing provision for working mothers - I run an after-school club for the 5-12 year olds. We provide lots of equipment e.g. paint, sandpit, television, video etc to use; we also provide afternoon tea and we also try to take them out as often as possible. During my year with the Centre I have learnt quite a few things that I didn't know before. I've done quite a bit of outreach work, e.g. talking to parents about what they would like to see happen at our Centre; going to different kinds of Community Centres who run after-school clubs to see what kind of things they do. Recently we have taken children with disabilities which was quite a big step. We decided we would take them for 5 weeks to start with and a group called Freeform Arts Project are running these 5 weeks for children with

disabilities and the "normal" over fives.

Annette:

My employment as a full-time worker with the Children's Centre started in June 1982 and will come to an end of July 1983.

While I was helping with the Easter playscheme at the Centre I became familiar with some of its aims. One of the practised aims was the fact that the workers were all women and it wasn't just single women but mothers who are usually discriminated against in employment.

I enjoy working at the Centre doing Youth and Community work with the after-school club because I took part in setting it up along with the others as well as examining all the information together. I work with Jenny on the club and since it started we have a change-over of children every few months.

In the beginning, when the after-school club started we organised the activities the children did, such as painting, dancing, drama, playing, clay-making and photography. But myself and Jenny felt that it was easier to work with the children if they chose what they wanted to do after they were told what choices there was to do. And although a lot of free play goes on between the children, they are directed by myself and Jenny.

Recently we have had a group of new children who come to the after-school club. All the them have disabilities and they enjoy the club along with the children who come regularly. It's hoped that they can become to feel that the after-school club belongs to them too and any obstacles that are in their way would only be there temporarily. For example, it maybe a good iea in the future for all children to get a chance of exchanging places they spend some of their time in e.g . in different schools and clubs.

The after-school club, I need to add, starts at 3.30 when the children are picked up by car and they are taken home by their parents at 6 p.m. The Children's Centre needs its own transport throughout the day for the children and parents who use the Centre. We may get a minibus if our application with the GLC Women's Committee is approved.

PLAYSCHEMES

We now have our playschemes at 112 Greenwood road. These premises are very small especially when the under-fives are around during the mornings. So we limit the numbers to the children who come to the Centre regularly but it is still pretty chaotic if the weather is bad and the children can't go outside. We open playscheme at 8 a.m. and run through till 6 (the workers work shifts) so that we provide a really useful service to working parents. Running a scheme from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. doesn't help many of them. The children get breakfast and an evening meal and bring packed lunch; they do lots of activities and enjoy them a lot. Some children actually feel happier having a smaller scheme, they get more personal attention that in bigger ones. This summer, we hope the children with disabilities will come to summer playscheme but we are worried they will not be able to come unless we pick

them up from home and take them home again which we think will be too much money for us to pay, as they are picked up during the after-school club by cab.

INTEGRATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

We have always said that the Centre was for all children. However, until recently no children with disabilities actually came along so we decided to make this one of our priorities this year. We organised a series of planning meetings with workers, health visitors, representatives from special schools, people generally interested in the issue of integration, Iris from Hackney Play Association and parents. We agreed to plan a special project with Freeform's help, during the after-school club. We then spent a long time trying to encourage parents and schools to introduce us to the children, arranging transport etc. We are at the time of writing half-way through and the project has been very successful. We hope the children with disabilities will want to come back to the Centre on ordinary club-nights. We also plan to encourage integration in other areas of our work, e.g. girls night.

In preparation for the Freeform project, we also organised a Disability Awareness workshop, which extended to 3 x 3 hour sessions. We looked at myths and stereotypes of people with disabilities, explored our own feelings, learnt how to make buildings more accessible etc. It was led by Merry Cross from the Liberation Network and was one of the most exciting courses I have been on. We have also asked Gerry to work as a regular sessional worker. She has a hearing disability and is teaching all the children sign language. We felt it was very important that the children, able-bodied or with disabilities have very positive images of adults with disabilities.

I think it's important to note some of the problems so as to share our experiences with other groups.

One has been that until Gerry started, we were all able-bodied, and sub-consciously all quite scared of working with children with disabilities...so many unknowns, so many stereotypes and social stigmas.. Trying to talk openly about our fears helped; meeting the children and seeing for ourselves that the children were first and foremost children was liberating.

Another problem is one that we can do nothing about it seems. We have been asked to take children who live a long way away because there are no similar facilities near to them. We want only local children to come - integration isn't about bussing children from all over boroughs to one or two integrated schemes. We hope Hackney Council will give more thought to this.

Another problem has been getting the children to the Centre, as their schools are quite a way away, even if the children live locally. They arrive late if we wait till their buses take them home. So now we pick them up from two schools by cab - which is very expensive. It makes us aware again of how children with disabilities are discriminated against - so much extra time spent travelling every day. One question we are all asking is why these children go to special schools at all...

Thanks to: Iris, Patricia Potts, Pat Siddon, and Kathy, Hackney Under-Fives, Sue Jeffreys, Sara Davies, Susie Haslam, Liz and Deb from Freeform.

Gerry writes:

Several disadvantages come up - one is lack of space. So many able-bodied children running around in such a small area, this must be a bit frightening for those who do not move very quickly. I think Freeform have a very good idea - story-telling, craftwork, games etc. Enough time is given to each item so no one gets bored. I think it is very important to have organised activities for the group - they get very bored when left to themselves and start fighting. I think we should ask M. if we can make the evening better for him. I have seen some children rushing past him on the stairs as he tries to get up them. On one occasion, I saw someone push him down on the settee for a joke. He hasn't very much strength in his arms to push them off. So really they have to be watched all the time.

I think it would be a very good idea to have more workshops for the workers who are working with disabled children, on disability. My experience with mentally disabled children is very limited and would like more information on how we can make it interesting for them as well as the physically disabled children.

GIRLS NIGHTS AT THE DCC

Becky writes:

The girls nights have been very successful. We have been doing a variety of activities, drama, ice-skating, showing films, kite-making and flying, meals out etc.

New girls come nearly every week and the numbers are expanding. However the age range is slowly becoming younger. We feel it is important to encourage older girls to come to the evenings. However, because so many younger girls are coming, now older ones are stopping coming. Those that still come say they would like a girls night just for girls over 12.

We feel that this would be very useful as we could cater for the more specific needs of each age range and so allow both groups to expand.

We have applied to ILEA for funding for another girls night.

thank you to the Jubilee Trust for their contribution.

TRAINING AND COURSES

With the financial and moral support of Hackney Adult Education, we have continued to run courses at the Centre.

This year we have done: photography for women, disability awareness, sleep problems and children, a training day for management committee members, the alternative health class, a book-writing class and a long series called "Working with Children in a Voluntary Organisation". This lasted most of the year and covered three main areas - over-fives, under-fives, and administration. Topics included clay-modelling, photography, homeopathic first-aid for children, dance for under-fives, working with girls, welfare rights, sicklecell disease, working with

video, speech therapy, the law and children, transition from home to school, racism in childrens books, scrap materials and lots more.

Sandy writes about the sessions she ran:

Training on Administration in Voluntary Organisations

The purpose of the training was to introduce some of the basic principles of administration in voluntary and community organisations to Children's Centre Workers who had not previously been involved in administration, and to increase the awareness of workers who already had experience in this field.

In twenty one-hour sessions in the period from 6 October 1982- 27 April 1983 we covered:

- Simple book-keeping including income and expenditure accounts, PAYE
- Fund raising
- Publicity, press releases, posters, newsletters, leaflets, including practice using dry transfer lettering
- Office equipment and office systems
- Meetings and communication within/between organisations
- Structures of organisations, how workers work together, how organisations are managed
- Developing strategies and objectives
- Training needs

In many cases there simply was not enough time to cover everything we wanted to but interest was high and many of the discussions which began in training sessions were carried on afterwards.

We hope to continue this course next year, concentrating on some areas such as nutrition, video and modern technology. Other workers with children are very welcome to use this course as part of their training, but we'd particularly like young unemployed women to get involved.

ASIAN YOUNG WOMEN'S BOOK-WRITING PROJECT

Manju:

I think it was a great adventure for me when I was asked to do the Asian young women's book project, funded by GLAA with Anna Sherwin. she is doing the photography side. When we started after a while I became very frustrated because I noticed that most of the young women were frightened to express their true feelings living in between two cultures. I did assure them no names will be published. Now I have got more than 15 women's experiences but it has taken for me many days of talking, visits to parents and lots of phone calls to the young women and their families. I am feeling very happy now. After our collective workers meeting to discuss the project, we want to take the book to Centerprise to help us publish the book. Centerprise is interested in this book project.

EXHIBITIONS AND VIDEOS AND OTHER EVENTS

We plan videos, exhibitions and events in line with our policies. Examples of each are:

The Politics of Lesbian Motherhood: an exhibition. The women whose photographs appeared in the exhibition were prepared to take

the risks of becoming visible. For many others, the risks are too great, both for themselves and for their children.

These are some of the comments from visitors to the exhibitions:

"Very positive exhibition. As a lesbian mother myself, I feel it is good to see the complexities of being a mother and a lesbian dealt with."

"Very interesting - it's nice to hear what the children of the women felt - since my mum is also a lesbian and I've always wanted to know how other kids felt."

Other exhibitions included: "Teeth in the Fowl's Mouth" - a portrait in words and pictures of a small town in Cameroon.

NAC's exhibition about abortion.

Matrix's exhibition about women and housing.

"The Long Shadows of the Plantation": this film is the story of a black working woman, 70 year old Sylv Woods and her long life fighting against racism and women's oppression. We see how this warm, powerful woman fought in her workplaces and in political movements to end the all-pervasive exploitation and oppression of blacks in America from the 1920's to the present day. You should try and see it as it's a very good film. Cinema of Women tel:251 4978. are the distributors.

Other videos included : Mirror Mirror about a young woman whose parents are orthodox Sikhs but who was born and educated in Britain.

Awake from Mourning: a film about and by 6 women who run the Maggie Mugaba trust in South Africa "The more you are oppressed, the more it makes you want to say to your oppressors "I am stronger than you."

Stepping Out: The account of a group of mentally handicapped people preparing for their first public performance at the Sydney Opera house.

Available from Concorde Films tel: 0473 76012.

We have applied to the GLC Women's Committee for funds to continue these seasons of video and exhibitions.

Events

The best one for us this year was International Women's Day. We had a jumble sale and bookstall during the day, as well as an exhibition and visits from the East London Greenham Support Group. In the evening we had videos, dancing and food, there were lots and lots of women from many different backgrounds, ages, cultures, classes etc etc who all seemed to be enjoying themselves. Most of their children came too and had fun as well. The food was delicious, the workers and volunteers all helped to cook it. We always say we should have more events in the evenings, the trouble is that for the workers we are all so tired by the end of the evening and the guests never want to go home! Thanks to Polly and Rose for locking up after the last party.!!

LIBRARY

We received money from the GLC Women's Committee to set up a women's library. Women can borrow books for two weeks and we also have some reference books. We have consulted the users, management committee and workers and have a good selection of novels by and about women's lives, health books, manuals on social security, housing, English as a second language etc. We have lots of books written by black women and women of colour. We now need a larger cupboard to display them all in.

PUBLICITY

Over the last year changes have been made in the format of the Centre's publicity. We have tried different types of leaflet. We have leafleted at local toy libraries, door to door and we have taken exhibitions to The Hackney Show, Hackney Under Fives forum and an all day play workshop that was held locally. We have been interviewed by The Voice, Channel Four and a teachers journal called GEN. We are at present reorganising our publicity and we are in the process of setting up a publicity group who will make slides for the Rio advertising, make contacts with local magazines, newspapers and newsletters. We are looking for local people who would be interested in designing our two monthly leaflets, posters and our general leaflet.

Visits and Enquiries

We are often asked if people can come and visit us and we try to be as welcoming as possible. It seems at times that we are unique, someone has heard of a group in Berlin, are we like them?? We have been asked to talk about our policies "mothering", health, our after-school club etc. Women with problems seen as individuals get put in touch with us. We have done creches for other groups and other groups have used our premises for their discussions/meetings.

Resources

We have a washing machine and drier, iron and sewing machine, gardening and power tools, a (cruddy) photocopier and typewriter that other people, groups and users can borrow.

APPENDIXES

A. POLICY STATEMENTS

The Dalston Children's Centre seeks to provide an open, supportive environment in which women, young women and children are free to grow and develop in their own ways.

The Children's Centre exists within a society in which many people do not have this freedom. Our society is racist and people of colour and other ethnic groups are oppressed by that racism. Our society is sexist and women and girls are oppressed by the patriarchal attitudes which underlie sexism. Lesbians and gay men are oppressed for example, by the pervasive assumption that only heterosexual relationships are acceptable: this is what we call heterosexism, why we believe that society is heterosexist. Our society is profoundly authoritarian and children are oppressed by the authoritarianism of the adults with whom they are daily in contact. In our society people who have disabilities, people who are unemployed, people who do not conform to middle class values, are all considered to be less than full human.

At the Children's Centre, we want to provide positive alternatives to the prevailing attitudes around us. We want to fight oppression in all its forms, and to enable the women, young women and children who use the Centre and the women who work and the Centre to grow without fear. Our basic policies and some ways we try to implement these policies are outlined here.

Anti-Racism

We seek to challenge racism wherever it occurs: in ourselves, in the children, in young women and women who use the Centre and whenever and however we become aware of it in the larger society outside the Centre.

We want to provide a place in which all cultures can be shared and in which white people can become aware of and challenge the historic roots of their racism and how it oppresses people now and also learn to give up their privileges. We do this by providing books, information, toys and films which reflect the multi-cultural nature of British society or which give insight into the cultures from which people come.

We encourage people of all ethnic backgrounds to use the Centre, and in hiring our workers make a special effort to ensure that they come from varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds. We provide food for the children and Centre users which is typical of particular cultures.

We try as centre workers to examine our own attitudes, we discuss racism and its implications with the children and other users and run racism awareness workshops. We support and, where possible, affiliate to anti-racist campaigns and struggles and participate in anti-racist demonstrations and other actions. We provide a space where oppressed groups can meet.

Anti-Sexism

We want to provide a place in which women and girls can develop without oppression and in which boys can become aware of the nature and consequences of male behaviour and especially male violence.

We want to provide a space where boys can be more sensitive and learn to express their (nice) feelings in an open and supported way.

In our work with children and young women, we ensure that girls are treated in a positive way and provide models- in books and real life - which challenge traditional stereotypes about "female" roles and jobs. We ensure that our games and activities do not reinforce these stereotypes. When children play stereotyped games - for example, doctors (male) and nurses (female) - we question what they are doing and encourage them to play in a less sexist way.

With the women who use the Centre, we campaign for the seven demands of the Women's Liberation Movement : equal pay, equal education and job opportunities, free abortion and contraception on demand, free 24 hour child care, legal and financial independence, freedom to determine our own sexuality and an end to discrimination against lesbians, and an end to male violence against women. We have a library and resource centre for women, we provide support for individual women, we have space for women's groups to meet and might run sexism awareness workshops.

Anti-Heterosexism

We want to help children, young women and women become aware of the variety of ways in which people can relate to each other - women and women together, men and men together and women and men together. We challenge heterosexist stereotypes and behaviour whenever we are aware of it and try to ensure that neither we nor Centre users make the heterosexist assumption that all people are or have to be heterosexual.

We try to provide a better understanding of women who have made choices other than the conventional one of school/marriage/family. We are constantly looking for books and other materials which provide positive non-heterosexist models but these are still difficult to find so when we have to use materials which do not reflect our policies we comment on them critically. We may begin to develop our own materials for children, young women and women.

We provide a space where lesbians can meet and provide support for lesbian mothers. We encourage an open, sensitive sharing between lesbian and heterosexual women and between heterosexual women who want to fight their own heterosexism perhaps through heterosexism awareness workshops.

In choosing our workers, we deliberately hire both lesbian and heterosexual women.

Anti-Authoritarianism

We believe that children and adults can work and play together without constantly being told what to do, that they can be given choices and can be fully trusted with the responsibility of making choices for themselves. We accept that this is sometimes difficult but believe it can be done.

We discourage competitiveness and bossiness. We never under any circumstances hit the children or use other physical violence against them. We do our best not to shout at them even when we are hard

pressed to think of other ways of dealing with them.

We try to ensure that the children have "do's" rather than "don'ts" - and when we introduce "don't" we try to explain why we have to do so.

As workers we try to provide positive models for anti-authoritarianism non-hierarchical ways of working together by working collectively with each of us taking responsibility for our own work and for the overall work of the Centre. We discuss day-to-day work, long-term policies and problems fully and openly and reach decisions by consensus.

We seek to create an open, sharing atmosphere in which workers, children and users can all participate fully in decisions about the Centre.

Implementing our Policies in Three Areas

There are many means through which our policies are implemented. Here we look at three of them: multi-cultural education, training and food.

Multi-cultural education

We are setting up a working group to explore how toys and activities from different cultures can be used in the Centre. We will be contacting sources of multi-cultural toys such as Lambeth Toys and Oxfam, will be looking through catalogues to see what is available, will be getting in touch with other projects, such as CUES, who are interested in the same type of approach, and will especially be looking at ways in which children, parents, and Centre workers can learn to make their own toys and develop their own activities based on their own and other cultures. We are also looking at ways of introducing other languages to children.

Training

Our training programme should as far as possible reflect the concerns outlined in our policy statement, for example racism, sexism and heterosexism awareness, cookery from a variety of cultures, women's health and children's health, women and the law, welfare rights, nationality and immigration, making games and books. We are aware that some women may like us to provide more conventional activities such as craft sessions, pottery or keep-fit within a supportive women-only environment and we explore with those women what their needs and wishes are. We try, through our publicity and other materials, to ensure that women who might be interested in particular workshops or training facilities know about them.

Food

In the meals which we provide for children, workers and users we use a wide variety of foods with special emphasis on fresh fruit and vegetables and natural foods. Children are never pushed to eat anything but we talk with them about the foods they eat, how they are prepared and how they differ from culture to culture. The women cooking on any day can decide whether to provide a meat meal or a vegetarian meal but in any case will ensure that suitable food is available for vegetarian adults and children and for those who have special medical or cultural needs. We discourage sweets, using instead, fruit, dried fruit, and nuts, raisins etc. Parents can provide food for their children to eat at the Centre; as with the children, we try to provide opportunities - through exhibits, a cookery library, discussions etc. - for parents to learn about new foods, nutrition and a healthy diet.

B. "JOB DESCRIPTION" FOR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1. The Management Committee (MC) members may employ 8 full-time workers. If you come to the office, you can see their contracts, and disciplinary and grievance procedures. For more details of your rights and responsibilities as employers, we have materials at the Centre.

2. The MC employs, in addition to the above workers, a book-keeper who has day to day responsibility for financial matters. She will prepare monthly financial reports for MC meetings. The MC has overall responsibility for financial matters.

3. The workers have day to day responsibility for decisions and the running of the Centre. In practice, they also draft policies which are finalised at MC meetings.

4. MC meetings are held once a month, generally on Monday evenings. Baby-sitting allowance will be paid so your own childcare doesn't prevent you from attending meetings. Where necessary, we also pay transport so you can get home safely. If you cannot get to meetings please let us know in advance. If you miss two meetings without a good reason (such as illness) we will approach you and try to explain why it will be difficult for you to make decisions and understand issues without attending meetings. Workers, as part of their job descriptions, have to attend meetings and report back on their work over the month and discuss issues and problems. In practice decisions at the meetings are arrived at by consensus.

5. We understand that you may have other commitments in your life. Nevertheless we do feel that MC members should be interested in the work the Centre does and we would welcome involvement in the following areas:-

a) There are several working groups (integration of children with disabilities; working with girls; publicity; premises; soon a multi-cultural education group). It would be very useful if MC members would join these groups.

b) One-off help. e.g. childcare cover, help with meetings and parties, campaigns, (e.g. asbestos campaign at the moment), helping to draft policies, procedures, contracts, individual support for specific problems etc, library rotas, driving children home. We have suggested that each MC member has a worker "partner" to liaise with, one Children's Centre worker is management-committee liaison person.

c) Meeting with other users, using our facilities, coming to events we arrange, talking to people outside/your friends about the work the Centre does.

6. We hope that you would want to be on the MC because you are interested in the work we do. We believe that it is essential that you agree with our aims and policies (some policies are in the officer and so is the constitution). We'd like you to be able to talk to us about why you want to be on the MC and about the areas of work you are interested in.

C. FOR USERS OF THE CHILDREN'S CENTRE

1. We do not hit children at the Centre.
2. We try not to smoke in front of the children. No smoking in the under-fives room.
3. If the children are disruptive, they may be asked to leave the room and cool off alone in another room.
4. Children will not be asked to leave the premises if they are disruptive.
5. We try to work with the children in an anti-sexist, anti-heterosexist, anti-racist, anti-authoritarian way. For example, if children make racist remarks, we will try to explain to them why such remarks are objectionable, in terms that the children will understand.
6. No child will be allowed to attend the Centre alone unless the child's parent or responsible adult has met the workers and unless a consent form has been signed.
7. If you have complaints to make about the way workers treat children or about our policies, these are the steps you should take so that issues may be discussed fairly:-
 - a) First of all talk to the worker involved.
 - b) Bring it up at the next workers meeting. These take place on Wednesdays from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. You are welcome to come to this meeting and bring a friend or representative with you.
 - c) If you don't come to the meeting, the worker involved and the chair of that meeting will contact you within 2 days to arrange a meeting with you which should take place before the next workers meeting.
 - d) If agreement is reached, it will be written down at the next workers meeting. If no agreement is reached, the chair of the workers meeting will contact the chair of the management committee within 2 days.
 - e) She will arrange a meeting of a sub-group of the MC within 2 weeks. The worker will be there and may bring a friend or rep with her. You will be asked to attend with a friend or rep if you want.
 - f) If agreement is reached, it will be written down at the next full MC meeting.
 - g) If no agreement is reached, the matter will be discussed at length at the next full MC meeting. You will be asked to come in, with a friend or rep if you want.
8. If workers are concerned about children they are looking after:-
 - a) The worker will always in the first instance talk to the child concerned.
 - b) The matter will be brought up at the next workers meeting.
 - c) If necessary, you will be contacted within 2 days of that meeting. This meeting will be arranged by the chair of the workers meeting

and the worker involved. You will be asked if you want to have a friend or rep there.

d) If agreement is reached, the matter will be written down at the next workers meeting. If there is no agreement, the chair of the workers meeting with contact the chair of the MC within 2 days.

e) She will arrange a meeting of the MC sub-group within 2 weeks. You will be asked to come to that meeting and bring along a friend or rep with you.

f) If agreement is reached, it will be written down at the next MC meeting. If not, it will be brought up at the next MC meeting. You will be asked to come to it with your friend or rep.

NO CHILD WILL BE DISMISSED FROM THE CENTRE UNTIL THESE PROCEDURES HAVE BEEN FOLLOWED. However, there may be very serious matters, such as violence to other children or workers where it would be inappropriate for children to attend the Centre whilst matters are being investigated. We will in these cases, contact the parent or responsible person after the next workers meeting and ask for the child to be suspended from attending the Centre until the procedures outlined above have been carried out.

If a child is dismissed, there may be a review of the situation at the request of the child's parents or responsible parents.

If you are worried about this procedure or any of our policies, please drop in and have a chat with us.

In Case of accident, contact during the day.....

I agree that the staff in charge may administer emergency treatment for my child, including dental treatment, if necessary.

Occupation name and address.....

Dentist name and address.....

Any information we need to know about your child.....

1. Please specify if your children are entitled to go home alone, if not, we will not allow them to leave the centre, until someone you allow them to go.

2. Please bring an old shirt to use as an overalls for painting, etc.

I authorize my child to take part in the..... Playhouse/After-School Club to use the clubrooms as the Playleader decides. I understand that the supervision will be exercised by experienced playleaders but that the centre will not be held responsible for any loss or damage to personal property or injury resulting from this activity.

Signed.....

112 Greenwood Road
London E.8.
Tel: 01-254 9661

DALSTON CHILDREN'S CENTRE

The aims of the centre are to provide a radical alternative to existing provision for children of all ages and their adults. We are trying to develop along actively anti-racist, anti-sexist lines. *anti heterosexual and cultural racism lines.* If you want to talk to us about these aims, drop in to have a chat with us.

NAME OF CHILD.....

AGES.....

PARENTS NAME AND ADDRESSES.....
.....
.....

IN Case of accident, contact during the day.....
Phone.....

I agree that the staff in charge may authorise emergency treatment for my child, including dental treatment, if necessary.

Doctors name and address.....
.....

Dentist name and address.....
.....

Any information we need to know about your child.....
.....

1. Please specify if your children are permitted to go home alone, if not, we shall not allow them to leave the centre, until someone or you pick them up.

2. Please bring an old shirt to use as an overall for painting.E.T.C.

I authorise my child to take part in the..... Playscheme/After-School Club to go out on outings as the Playleaders decide.

I understand that the supervision will be exercise by experienced playleaders but that the centre will not be held responsible for any loss or damage to personal property or injury resulting from this activity.

Signed.....

Dear All,

Enjoying my job very
much but miss the casual
and informal atmosphere of
The centre a lot! Thank
you for giving me a chance
to help out and for
giving me something to do
(the role was so boring)

Good luck with the new
centre. When I'm next
unemployed I'll come round
and help out again =)

really would love to
hope things are going
well,
love + thanks

Ernie x

/m

ilea

Leamington Spa

15, 11, 1965

15, 11, 1965

15, 11, 1965

15, 11, 1965

15, 11, 1965

55 May 1965

Hackney Area Youth Office
138 Kingsland Road London E2 8DY

Telephone 01-739 6951

Please reply to the Area Youth Officer

My reference

Your reference

Date 5th May 1983

Dear Dalston Children's Centre,

Thank you for the kind invitation and the warm welcome at last night's event at the Centre.

I am sorry that I could not stay any longer but a previous engagement meant that my time was limited.

The range and standard of food was excellent, the atmosphere warm and welcoming and I was very pleased that I went along.

Very best wishes to you all

Peter (Baxendale)

Please keep me updated on the developments in your project. We realise that watching it develop is really very interesting and would be glad to be able to help you and to see what you are doing. We would be very happy to hear from you, and your work is not at all too much for us to handle. We would like to discuss it with you as well as trying to help you.

With warm friendly regards,

[Signature]
Deborah Chen
Area YOC

Please send your response to my attention.

PO Box 200
Station St
Hendon, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3PH

CENTRE COMMUNAUTAIRE
SUD-ASIATIQUE

CCSA · SACC

SOUTH ASIA COMMUNITY CENTRE

31 March 1983

Manju & Anna
Asian Women's Book «Project
Dalston Children's Centre
112 Greenwood Road
London E.8
England

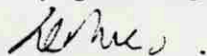
Dear Manju & Anna,

We came to know of your exciting project from the pages of Outwrite newspaper. We were thrilled to read of your plans. Congratulations -- and hoping your plans meet with success all the way! It is always very enthusing when we hear of others engaged in similar type of work.

Let us introduce ourselves. The South Asia Community Centre is a service and support organization in Montréal for women from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan. We have a drop-in centre that is open five days a week, and through this centre we offer the services described in the brochure which is enclosed. We also publish a newsletter four times a year in various South Asian languages. Through the newsletter we try to provide information that will be of use to South Asian women and their families, as well as give women a chance to share their lives, experiences. This is especially why we find your project so promising, because it will be doing work that we find very useful. We are also sending you a copy of our newsletter.

Please keep up posted on the developments in your project. We realize that networking is usually very time-consuming, and women engaged in the kind of work you and we are doing, barely find time to cope with all the things that have to get done to keep the organization functioning. However, we would be very happy to hear from you, and when your book is out I am sure we would like to obtain a copy as well as trying to sell some for you.

With warm sisterly greetings,



Dolores Chew
for SACC

P.S. Please send your response to my attention:

PO Box 882
Station #

Montréal, CANADA H3G 2M3