

IMPACT

Issue 9

Spring 2020



What if...?

An editorial by Trevor Birtle

Life has changed hugely in recent days as we all consider our individual and collective response to the outbreak of Coronavirus. Whilst acknowledging our current situation, I want to focus more on life at Eagle House before and after this when life returns to a relatively normal state.

Do you ever have “What if...?” moments. I suspect most of us do from time to time. For myself, I often wander across the site at Eagle House and notice unfinished and yet to start projects, some big and some small. I begin to ponder “What if we had the manpower and funds to fully complete the raised bed allotment and outbuildings”, or “What if the proposed family centre and manager’s accommodation was complete”, or “What if we had an established safe and fun community children’s woodland walk”, or “what if the field was full of mature British Woodland trees with an increase in bio diversity”, or “what if all of our available homes were full with families who were achieving their goals”. This isn’t however a comprehensive wish list, there is much, much more. Such thoughts can be inspiring or they can be overwhelming, and I know I can have both reactions just moments apart.



The reality for most of us is that dreams can only happen with a great deal of hard work and tenacity. The phrase “when the going gets tough, the tough get going” springs to mind. Spring is here and with it the promise of new life and new beginnings. It is also an opportunity for PACTNE to have a surge of activity to progress our development projects particularly in our outdoor spaces. In the light of this, much of this edition of IMPACT is centred on smaller achievements as well as dreams to fulfil.

Having introduced you to all of our staff, trustees and some of our volunteers in previous newsletters, I would also like to introduce one of our resident families who have achieved such a lot in the fifteen months they have lived at Eagle House.

No newsletter would be complete without a mention of funding and this IMPACT issue 9 is no exception. Like most small charities funds can be very tight and although our desire is to be fully sustainable, we are currently dependent on donations and grant funding as we develop our family friendly facilities across Eagle House.

As ever, I would like to acknowledge how much we are uplifted by the generous support we receive from a wide variety of people and organisations, some local and others further afield. THANKYOU to you all. Please keep yourselves, your loved ones and those around you safe.

Marvelous Monday Milestone

March 2019 saw the launch of our new Parent and Child group at Eagle House and one year on we say **HAPPY 1ST BIRTHDAY**. The focus of the group has been to have lots of fun and creatively encourage bonding and promote positive parenting. We also hope that the weekly morning sessions have encouraged child development through play, increased parents' confidence with play, and given lots of lovely sensory input. The group has benefitted from the creative and craft skills of **Katy Wilson** who has been a sessional family support worker for PACTNE for these past eighteen months. **THANKYOU Katy**. Although currently suspended, the group will re-emerge when it is safe for all.

One of our goals is to increase group work at Eagle House to include "Fabulous Friday" which will be a therapeutic and recreational ladies group. Sorry men! Rachel Hodgson, one of our family support workers has a passion to see this group established and she will be steering the programme.



The Big Shed



*Mick Sutcliffe, Our Operations
Manager outside "The Big Shed"*

Last summer PACTNE purchased a very large used wooden shed from the former Forest School in Eaglescliffe. The shed had been used as a rustic school room for groups of primary school children. It was thought ideal for us to use as a volunteer centre and a temporary home for residents groups such as "Marvellous Monday". Having struggled to take the shed apart a team brought the many hundreds of panels and pieces to Eagle House. Thanks to the invaluable efforts and skills of volunteers Ralph Bradey, William Ferns and others the shed now stands strong on its EcoBase at the side of the raised bed allotment. We are in the process of connecting an electricity supply and exercising a bit of creativity with the

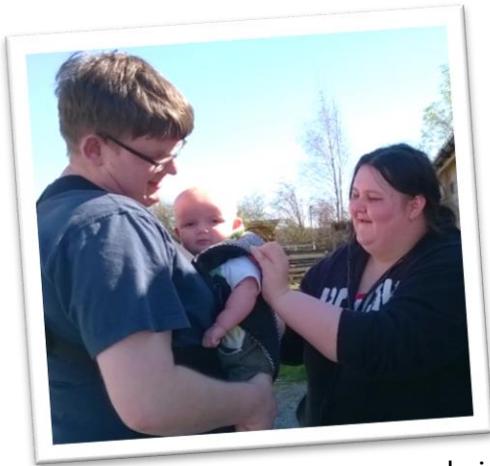
decorating. We expect the shed to be fully functional this spring although all group meetings are postponed to allow for social distancing.

In terms of naming this structure we had many suggestions, but the team and volunteers have got used to calling it "The Big Shed" and so the name has stuck. The sign has now been printed. We might even have a ribbon cutting ceremony in the late spring. Even after we build the brick Family Centre, and for many years to come, the Big Shed will be a very useful facility at Eagle House.

A Resident Family in Profile

by Pam Birtle

Jamie, Ruth and Jacobi arrived at Eagle House in December 2018 straight from the hospital where Jacobi had been born. Given Jamie and Ruth's previous experiences, parenting Jacobi was going to be a huge challenge. Jamie was abandoned by his mum at an early age and after a time he went into



foster care and lived in several residential homes before leaving care. Despite being bright he missed a lot of education, and low self-esteem and poor confidence were never far away. Ruth also ended up in residential care homes before reaching independence and her special needs made her vulnerable to exploitation. She became pregnant whilst still in her teens and after a period of depression her baby boy was unable to stay with her and was later diagnosed with autism.

Ruth and Jamie met when they were both in their mid-twenties and decided to have a baby together, despite the obvious challenges. Advised that they needed to be somewhere safe to be assessed as new parents, Jamie and Ruth reluctantly agreed to come to PACTNE. Initially they struggled to trust the staff and trustees who provided very close supervision, but they both worked really hard and focussed on learning how to care for their lovely baby boy. They listened, took advice and worked with the whole team around the family. In the early days sleep was in short supply but despite this the parents were learning how to shop, live and cook on a budget, and were meeting Jacobi's needs. Understanding that this was not going to be a quick fix was a real challenge but they rose to it, and Jacobi stayed out of the Care System.

The family had their first and second Christmas, Jacobi's first birthday and his Christening while they were still living at Eagle House. They now have a house to move to in their home area and expect to make the transition from supported housing very soon.

Jamie and Ruth commented *"...we didn't want to come to PACTNE for all sorts of reasons but now, we are really glad we did as it has changed things around for us and we know we can do it ourselves now."* (Please note: This article is shared with the express permission of the family. Thankyou!)

Accessible Cabin Complete!

You may remember that we previously shared with you our goal to complete our final Cabin which was designated since the design stage as an accessible unit for families where either an adult or a child has mobility issues. It seems like we saved the best till last! Thanks to the generosity of a Legacy Fund from the Family and Friends of Lynda Garrett and a very welcome grant from the Darlington Building Society we were able to instruct a local builder, Paul Brown. Paul went above and beyond the call of duty to complete Cabin 6 in time for a young family to move in. During the completion this mum and her young son who has complex special needs, were able to come to visit and be involved with Paul in



the interior decoration, making it a very personal move for them and a great motivator for him. What is also a delight is that Lynda's daughter is now a volunteer mentor for this family, and we were recently able to send a message of thanks to the extended family on both sides of "the pond". This young family attended our Marvellous Monday group and other local mother and toddler groups, as well as accessing studies through a course and nursery provision at Darlington College, until social distancing became a necessity.

The World's First



Early in March a resident family visited one of Darlington's little gems.

Emily (13 years old) writes, "Hello everyone, I'm in the Head of Steam Museum. Darlington celebrates the birth of the very first railway in the world. The North East can look back with pride to the 27th September 1825 when the Stockton and Darlington Railway was opened. Kids, parents, grandads and nannys come and see for yourselves"

Money Matters

As we continue to develop the site at Eagle House, while making potential referrers aware of what we are able to offer to vulnerable families, managing our funds is very important. Lesley Witherden, our sessional Administrator has been doing our month to month book keeping, and Brian Settle has maintained an overview as Treasurer, and so we are grateful to both. The grant we received from the Growth and Resilience Fund last year is still having positive effects and contributes to our family support staffing, business development and new web site. More recently however we have needed to dip into our reserves, but we are expecting new family stays at Eagle House, particularly as the restrictions imposed by the Coronavirus lift.



We had great news recently that we have been selected as charity of the year by Yarm School and we are grateful to Peter and Stacey for their nomination. Last month we also received a surprise donation of £500 towards the building of our proposed Family Centre. Our target is £77k and at the moment we have commitments that will take us to a third of this total. We are however exploring grant funding opportunities and continue to remain very optimistic. We expect the first stage of the build to progress later in the year.

One off donations are heart warming, but it is the regular giving that we receive that helps us to plan. Thankyou to all who give to us month by month. If you would like to make a regular donation the easiest way is to use the link to local giving as follows: <https://localgiving.org/charity/pact-north-east/>. We are grateful for all you kind donations.

Parent and Child Together North East

Eagle House, Neasham Road

Hurworth Moor, Darlington DL2 1QE

Email: pactne@gmail.com Mob: 07535977188

Website: <http://www.pactne.co.uk>

Charity number: 1169484

