



**FERRIES
FAMILY
GROUPS**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2020 - 2021**





Weekly Peer Support Groups Nurturing Programme Parenting Courses
Parents Support Group Volunteering Opportunities
1 to 1 Crisis Support Weekly Reading Group
Talking Teen Parenting Courses
Creche Support for all Courses
Regular Social Events and Celebrations
Singing for Fun Mental Wellbeing
Calm & Create Support Group Young Mums Group (17 to 25)
Men's Group Monthly Foster & Adoptive Group
Harvest and Christmas Hampers Distributed
Crisis Loans and Gifts

Who are we:

Ferries Family Groups have been supporting families across Wirral since 1988. For over 30 years we have been a valued service in the community working with families to create positive change.

We believe that:

- ◆ Everyone is valuable and we celebrate equality and diversity
- ◆ Everyone deserves to feel loved, accepted, safe and that they belong
- ◆ All children deserve to be part of a positive supportive family.
- ◆ All of us can sometimes feel overwhelmed and challenged
- ◆ Everyone has the potential to grow, change and move towards success
- ◆ We all have something to offer as well as our own needs
- ◆ Everyone deserves a time to discover their gifts
- ◆ Wellbeing is improved by spending quality time with supportive friends
- ◆ All families deserve to have a voice

What we do....

We support families across Wirral struggling to cope with the stresses of life to help them feel supported and empowered. By providing support for parents we improve family life for all and more importantly the outcomes for the children in their care, helping them move towards a more positive future.

For the parents we work with we:

- ◆ Have fun together
- ◆ Provide a community where people feel they belong
- ◆ Develop self-confidence and esteem
- ◆ Enable confident, consistent and positive parenting
- ◆ Provide time and space to make friends
- ◆ Promote empathy and self awareness in interactions with others/ their children, so reducing conflict
- ◆ Strengthen families
- ◆ Offer opportunities to grow and learn in a nurturing environment



A Challenging Year for Us! - COVID 19



We officially opened our Hub in January 2020—on 17 March we closed our Hub due to COVID. All groups and courses were suspended and all staff worked from home where we quickly adapted and diversified our service to ensure our **120** families were supported as they came to terms with lockdown, home-schooling, being furloughed, self-isolating, not seeing friends or family, illness etc.

Our focus became very much on providing emotional support and a listening ear as well as practical support.

We did this through the **11 WhatsApp groups, 1 to 1 calls from staff and volunteers, groups meetings on Zoom and Messenger.**

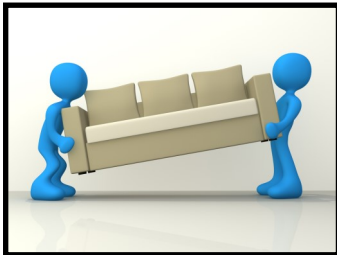
The support was 24/7 and soon support was needed around bereavements, children's behaviour, advice around activities to keep children occupied, home-schooling, children's mental health needs, adult mental health, loneliness, self-harm and suicide attempts and ensuring families had technology.



Volunteers and staff shopped for those isolating and delivered food hampers to those in need.



Volunteers picked up prescriptions for those isolating and not well!



Volunteers and staff picked up and dropped off furniture to members without transport and in need.

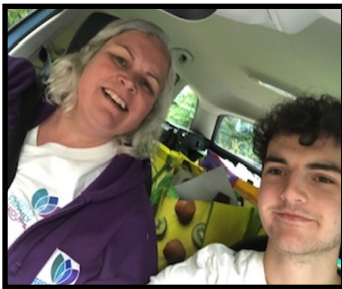


Many Acts of kindness throughout the year including Birthdays, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day and thinking of you days!

Bespoke packages and creations!!!



A grant and donations enabled us to deliver 117 calm and create packages to members which included craft, pamper items, hygiene and cleaning products (from EPF—Unilever) It was a great opportunity to see families in person.





Families enjoyed receiving sunflower seeds to plant, nurture and watch them grow! Families were creative, drawing, painting and making sunflowers too!





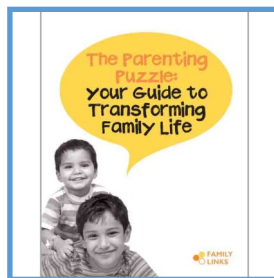
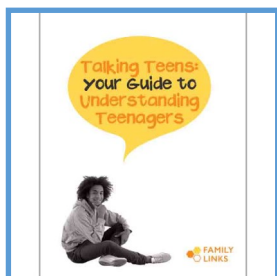
**We received donations of toys,
food and vouchers in December
to distribute to families in need.**



**15 Hampers
15 Pamper Packs
20 Vouchers**



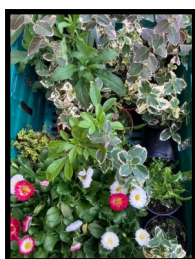
Courses



Three Nurturing Programmes were delivered online as well as the Talking Teens. One Talking Teens Course was held face to face. Some parents caught up on sessions online. Our Parenting Mentor supported over 50 parents as they waited to attend the courses! Parenting support continues.



Eight members enjoyed the Backyard Gardening Course at the Hub



“The nurturing programme has been so beneficial to us as a family. It has given us a ‘tool box’ of techniques to use to help us achieve a more relaxed harmonious home environment. Attending the course has enabled us to take ‘time out’ and reflect on our own parenting techniques and think about our own upbringing. It’s been really effective on ensuring we are both consistent in our parenting approach with our children.”

This course has given us a tool box full of tools to help. Our family life is calmer now and stressful situations are less.

We are now both on the same page parenting. It’s also helped me to realise that I am not doing a bad job, I just needed to tweak a few things.



The Staff Team

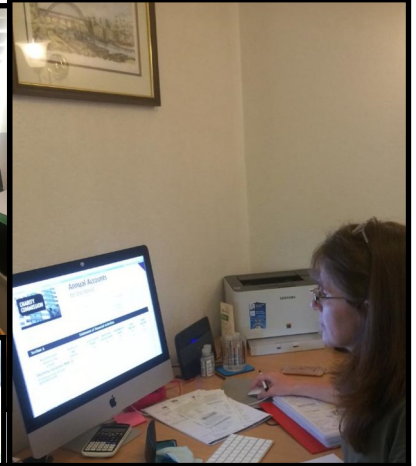
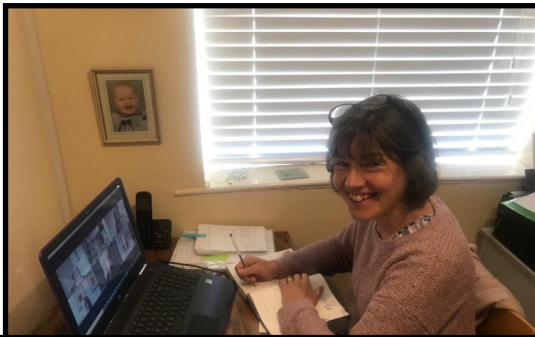


Project Manager:	Helen Wade
Support Workers:	Natalie Carlson
Parenting Mentor:	Deb Birch
Children & Family Worker:	Rachel Parker
Business Manager:	Ash Vestergaard
Administrator:	Julie Watson

Staff have worked above and beyond over the last year to ensure members receive support as well as undertaking courses such as ACES training, Engaging Resistant Families, Neglect, Information sharing, EHAT, Phonics, Fun with Numbers, Talking Teens facilitator training and many more!



Our Volunteers have been an incredible support throughout the year to members—we could not have done all we have without them. Volunteers joined monthly zoom meetings and some undertook a course in Helping People with Literacy



Project Manager's Report

This year has certainly been challenging and one of adaption and resilience for the project. COVID-19 caused the country to go into lockdown and we had to consider how we would continue to support the families that we work with whilst acting within national restrictions as well as local lockdown rules. Of the twelve months of this financial year the hub was only open to the public for 4 months during that time we ran face to face courses and one to one support sessions for families who really had to see someone in person. We had to ensure that the hub was COVID safe, having appropriate equipment and processes in place to protect everyone. The rest of the year was spent supporting members by telephone, WhatsApp groups, Messenger groups, weekly zoom meetings and delivering items and treats by post.

Most of the difficulties that arose were around people having to be in lockdown or isolation, unable to get their own shopping or other necessities. Our staff and volunteers rose to the challenge and delivered vital goods when restrictions allowed and supported people in a multitude of ways predominantly keeping people on an even keel with their already precarious mental health issues as well as advising and giving ideas on home school struggles and coping with being in lockdown with children with special needs. Each of the Peer Support Groups came into their own by supporting each other through the crisis including new members as they were added in. Information sharing became important so that parents could navigate their way through the crisis. At times people were terrified of what might happen, reassurance and a steady support were very much needed.



The pain of grief, isolation and separation from family and friends was shared and people found comfort in knowing that Family Groups were there for them. We all had to learn new technological communication methods that became a lifeline to families both to keep spirits up but also to ensure everyone had what they needed to get through.

Volunteer meetings and Trustee meetings all moved online too. I could not be prouder of our Ferries Family. Thank you for the love and support of all involved. It has truly been a privilege to lead such a wonderful community of people through a very extraordinary year.

Helen

“Grief and resilience live together” – Michelle Obama

“



“Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the
overcoming of it”

Helen Keller



Chair of Trustees Report

On behalf of the team and trustees it is my pleasure to commend to you the annual report of Ferries Family Groups. The word unprecedented has been used an 'unprecedented' number of times in recent months to describe the circumstances of the pandemic. For an organisation that has relationships at its heart, unprecedented days have presented a significant series of challenges for the work of Ferries Family Groups. However, you will discover in the pages of this report the creativity, endeavour and commitment of the staff and volunteers as they worked tirelessly to continue to support members enduring 'unprecedented' times and to overcome the isolating impact of lockdown. I'm sure you'll agree, they are to be congratulated for all they achieved, and commended for going above and beyond. Adaptability and flexibility was the order of the day, with not a little thoughtfulness. A genuine sense of community was fostered through innovations such as the Whatsapp group, with many an encouraging post bringing shafts of light to the foreboding gloom. Innumerable acts of kindness, from craft packs and food hampers delivered to the door to timely phone calls, made a real difference to well-being and provided the reassurance that support was close at hand. Whilst the global community was shaken, through the efforts of the Project, there was a real sense that we were all in it together. To coin a biblical metaphor: hard pressed we may have been, defeated we were not, due in not a little part to the care and devotion of Ferries community as a whole. Whilst the Hub was closed for extended periods of lockdown, of necessity, the equipping didn't cease, with many courses running on-line.



As a parent of a 'lockdown baby' I can testify to the value of the Nurturing Programme I undertook via Zoom. Perhaps it wasn't the preferred means of delivery, with many a cry of 'you're on mute!' but the benefit was nevertheless substantial. There remains a degree of uncertainty. As I write local cases are rising even amongst the vaccinated. We've learned that life can be unpredictable. Yet, as we look back over the past year, we can draw much comfort from functionality of the Project in the most testing of times, and the wealth of resource and commitment to members demonstrated by the Ferries community in general and its leadership in particular, For that, we can be profoundly grateful, and look forward with a confidence that simply wouldn't be there without the Project. Of course none of this would be possible without the ongoing support of our funders, their partnership with us is essential for the work. We want to acknowledge that, express our sincere thanks. Future financing is always a challenge, perhaps exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic on resources generally, I want to note the diligence of the staff and trustees in managing the Project, and their endeavour in making the work known to those who have an interest in supporting such work - to any potential funders reading this, I am confident I speak on behalf of the entire Family Groups community when I assure you that this is an investment worth making, one that has a significant impact now, and will echo down the generations to come.

Chris Slater, Chair of Trustees



The Trustees/Advisers

Chris Slater, Marie Beale, Lois Millington, Penny Bishop, David Renison,
Carole Gillam & June Pemberton

Thanks to those who support us and kindly make their venues available:

St Peter's Church, St Andrew's Church, St Mark's Church, Lower Bebington
Methodist Church, Life Church, Rock Ferry Library and Woodchurch Primary
School

A Big Thank You to our Funders 2020-2021

The Morgan Foundation

Garfield Weston

National Lottery Community Fund

John Moores Foundation

Neighbourhood Learning

P H Holt

Wirral Lions

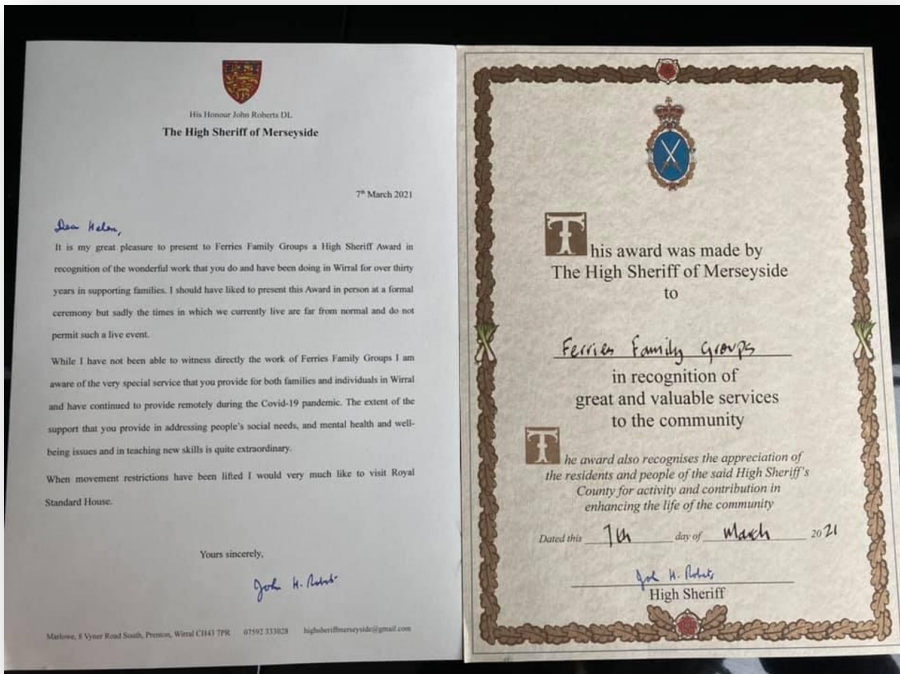
Local Churches

LCVS Community Impact Fund

Misc. Individual and Charitable Donations



We were delighted to receive an award from the High Sheriff Of Merseyside



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Company Number 064844131

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To donate

£5, text FFG to 70970

£10, text FFGW001 to 70191

You can donate through



Or

Get in touch to set up a monthly

donation

