



**The Independent Helpline for Special Educational Needs**

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## **Annual Report for the period 1 October 2005 to 30 September 2006**

### **Introduction**

SOS! Special Educational Needs (SOS!SEN) achieved formal charitable status on 9 December 2005, having been formed in October 2002. SOS!SEN provides a helpline for parents and carers to use if they need help and guidance for their children who have special educational needs. Whilst the charity is based at 275 Staines Road in Twickenham, the helpline and associated activities are run from 3 The Avenue in Hampton and from newly acquired offices at 35 Staines Road in Twickenham.

### **Objectives**

The objects of SOS!SEN are the relief of carers and children with special educational needs within the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames and the South of England, but not excluding other areas in England and Wales where the needs arises, by the provision of information, practical assistance and advice and such other exercises as the trustees shall deem necessary with a view to meeting the educational needs of their children and improving their conditions of life.

### **Advisers to SOS!SEN**

Bankers: NatWest, Teddington  
Solicitors: SEN Legal Ltd; Fisher Meredith

### **Links with other Charities and Organisations**

SOS!SEN has, historically, had close links with VIPs in SEN, a local organisation which supports parents whose children have special educational needs.

Over the past 3 years, SOS!SEN has forged working links with MAPS who are a charity based in Kingston, and who help parents with autistic children.

In both cases, these links enable all parties to benefit from research each carries out and from the experience each gains.

## **Summary of main activities and achievements**

During the year, SOS!SEN received over 2000 calls to its Helpline. Many of these callers had queries which could be dealt with quickly but others became Cases where the parent/carer needed more specific help in obtaining appropriate provision for their children with Special Educational Needs. Often this could be resolved by discussion with the school and the Local Authority. In other cases, it was necessary to take the Case to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST).

A member would accompany a parent to their child's Annual Review at the school. Parents would also be visited or would come to the Helpline offices for consultation if appropriate.

### ***Meetings***

A second annual Weekend Workshop was held at the Langdon Down Centre in Teddington. 120 people attended and heard from speakers who are experts in the field of SEN; it included a mock Tribunal.

As in previous years, Members of the team were asked to address other groups, including CiCS in Nottingham and Newbury.

In addition, many meetings (20 – 30 people) were held to discuss specific SEN topics.

### ***Fund Raising***

During the year under review, SOS!SEN held many fund raising events including all the profits from a Drama Group performance, a Sponsored Walk along the Thames, various culinary events and a Summer Ball in Leeds. Funds were also raised at the Weekend Workshop. SOS!SEN also benefited from donations given by many people who either received help from the Helpline or who were keen to support the work the charity does. It also successfully applied for a grant of £2,500 from the Openwork Foundation to help to establish permanent office facilities.

The funds raised in these ways helped SOS!SEN to achieve its aims of helping parents get the right educational setting for their children, based on their particular special educational needs; in this year, 89% of the charity's income was spent on providing direct support to families. The amount able to be allocated in this way is directly proportionate to the funds raised; the more that is raised or donated, the greater the number of children will benefit.

Martin Dean  
10 December 2006