



TRUSTing in SENSE

Editor's Intro



These are exciting times at Sense Scotland. Building begins soon on a new adult respite centre in Dundee, we have received over 300 entries for the 2005 Helen Keller International Arts Award and we are the lead partner in a year long international arts project involving partners from Italy, Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia and Croatia.

In addition to this, we have recently purchased a building in Glasgow, which will become our new combined head office and day services centre. This is a major development for Sense Scotland and this edition of Trusting in Sense focuses on plans to develop the new centre. Sense Scotland's Chief Executive Gill Morbey recently visited India, details of her visit are enclosed.

We have now been producing Trusting in Sense twice yearly for 3 years and have decided to reduce this to annual now that it is well established.

Mairi Morrison

Funding Development Manager

Sense Scotland – on the move

We believe that Sense Scotland has demonstrated a strong trend over the last 20 years to be at the forefront of innovation. In part this is due to the fact we grew from a parents' group and that we are still a young charity. In the early 1980's we supported some of the most challenging people in Scotland to come out of long stay hospitals into our Overbridge Centre. This was made possible by a number of Trusts supporting us in those very early days. Looking back many of you must have had some doubts about this new young charity and we can only hope you feel this early faith was well placed.

The Family Resource Centre in the early 90's was another example of pushing the boundaries. In those early days it was BBC Children In Need who showed faith in us. It was the largest capital grant in Scotland and to our knowledge remains as one of the biggest grants ever.

Currently we still feel we are leading the way for deafblind people in the arts, international work, healthy living (including sexuality) to name but a few areas.

Still we are keen to continue developing and to this end we are moving on again.

We have invested our funds and bought a property that will combine our own head office alongside service user and family areas. We hope that it will be a real flagship building that will be fully integrated. This will be a truly inclusive project, designed to be accessible and to involve the **cont'd on next page**

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local community and external organisations, providing facilities for some of the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups in society.

The coming year will be a particularly challenging but exciting one as we develop designs and raise funding to move forward the refurbishment, which is estimated at around £2 million. The new centre will push the boundaries and we feel it has the potential to be one of the most exciting voluntary sector developments in Scotland in recent years.

Gillian Morbey, Chief Executive Officer



Front entrance of our new building

Sense Scotland's new head office and day resource centre will be based within Greater Govan, a Social Inclusion Partnership area in Glasgow. We currently lease our head office and separate day centre and as we grow, these premises no longer serve our needs. Therefore we have used our own funds to buy the building as an investment for the future. This is a huge commitment, but one which will provide Sense Scotland with an important asset that will serve future generations well.

We want the building to say something about our values and culture, therefore head office functions will be integrated with service user and carer facilities. The hub of the building will be a central courtyard, which will serve as a meeting place, a café and a performance space. Surrounding this will be service user

facilities, community facilities and offices, creating a hive of activity.

Building on our success in the arts, a suite of arts rooms will incorporate studios for visual arts, music and recording, working with wood, and video editing and IT. These rooms will be designed to a high specification including sound proofing, air conditioning and adjustable heating and lighting. This will be a vast improvement on our existing facilities, which have developed in an ad hoc way over the years in response to need. It is our aim that the arts suite will act as a role model in the provision of fully accessible arts facilities for people with and without disabilities.

A child and family suite will have its own play and art room, family meeting area, toy library and changing area. This will create a child friendly environment where children can play and parents can meet with advisory workers and other agencies in a relaxed atmosphere. Existing day services such as play days, day care, out and about and family advisory officers will operate from here.

In addition there will be a sensory room and a quiet autistic room for stimulation and relaxation.

A suite of training rooms will provide flexible space for meetings and training and will be well used for Sense Scotland staff training and by external organisations. Some office space for external organisations and art studios for mainstream artists will also be available.



Car park and entrance to warehouse

We are consulting the local community to identify ways in which they can access facilities at the centre and have already

received some expressions of interest. Our vision is to have a fully accessible community facility with able bodied children playing beside disabled children, disadvantaged youth supporting disabled young people and mainstream artists renting studio space beside deafblind artists. In this way we will create a flagship resource that has a sense of vitality and energy. All participants will be welcomed and people will benefit from sharing and learning from each other.

The design and refurbishment will be an ongoing process throughout 2004 and into 2005 whilst we raise funding to support the project. This is a huge commitment for an organisation of our size, however we have been greatly encouraged by the level of interest the project has generated so far and feel confident that with the help of our supporters we will achieve our vision. We hope these articles give you some idea about the project. Lets hope we can make this a reality.



The workshop area, which will soon be filled with children, adults and families.

Mairi Morrison
Funding Development Manager

Gill Morbey's visit to India 2004

You may recall that in December 2003 our Chief Executive Officer was asked by Sense International to undertake some visits in India. This involved teacher training and supporting the emerging family network. Gill was asked to return in January this year and this short article notes some of the high lights.



Souvik and his dad at the Family Network Meeting

Gill had several tasks this time. She visited the deafblind programmes of the National Association of the Blind (NAB), the Blind

People's Association (BPA), the Association for the Welfare of the Handicapped and a two day family network meeting.

The NAB and the BPA in particular are very large organisations. Both provide a whole range of services and support blind children as well as deafblind children and adults. They undertake huge amounts of fundraising and use the funds not just to support their existing programmes but also try new innovative approaches. There is a sense of real vitality in their work.

Gill provided external evaluation reports for the various deafblind programmes she visited and was able to witness the Family Network considering formalising their status and becoming a recognised association.

In many ways the development of the family association is very similar to how the Scottish parents grew in the 1970's becoming their own organisation in 1985. The scale of the task is just that much bigger in India with many more deafblind people and the huge practical challenges they face of distance and a wide range of different languages.

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Despite all this Gill was hugely impressed with the commitment everyone involved in the tasks demonstrate. People work 6 days a week for long hours and the families are warm, generous and courageous, sometimes in the face of extreme difficulty. Gill visited

children. There are very positive relationships that work well together.

Another highlight was the circle time. Here deafblind children are very much brought together in joint activities such as prayer, games and yoga. The yoga in particular was very interesting where children are



A fieldworker gives special attention to sensory impaired boys at a local village school

some very poor families both in the slums of Delhi and remote villages around Ahmedabad. Gill commented even when a family had very little they still had an up to date and relevant personal passport for their child.

Gill also noted that where families have contact with a deafblind programme the standard of practice is very high, it is just that many more families are not in contact with services. Where children stay near to a centre they will often attend on a daily basis. However many children can't travel and the programmes have responded to this by developing field workers, rather like our own advisory staff.

In this respect the families are expected to follow the programmes where they act as trainers themselves. Indeed even in the classroom situation parents work alongside teachers educating and supporting the

encouraged to learn more about their bodies and posture as well as all the imitation, communication and just fun that goes with some of these activities.

They also have a great approach not just to the issue of rights for deafblind people but also responsibility. Gill was able to see a young deafblind man who was in charge of the school tuck shop and also had playground responsibilities for the younger children. Both responsibilities were taken very seriously.

Gill hopes that she was of some assistance to friends and families in India but equally it is clear that she has come back with lots of useful ideas for us. Gill noted how wonderful it is to continue learning from each other in these kinds of ways.

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