

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2023 HOMES THAT SMILE EXMOUTH - August 1st 2023**

2023 is the 11th year we have been working under the Homes That Smile name. Until 2016 we were a charitable company and then, as Charitable Incorporated Organisations were introduced, we were able to move into purely charitable status. Gratitude to the many Trustees that have contributed to the oversight of the project must be expressed as we always wonder what the next step will be. From the start, where we delivered the Parent College course, to now, where we look towards one to one work and shorter courses, we have kept Christian Education in the centre and also made some very long-lasting relationships with parents whether they commit to Jesus or not. We are just the bridge to provide a way to explore their personal faith and the courses and workshops are all run in church buildings, to reinforce this. The main way to cross that bridge is with the support of our family friends, like Fran, Susan, Siobhan and Becky. The work of Jackie and Richard on the cookery course has also been outstanding this year.

### **Family Support report**

During the last year we have received more referrals from the Children's Centre and this is now amounting to 50% of our family support clients. Set out below, are some answers to questions you may have about the kind of thing we do.

#### ***How many families are HTSE supporting?***

This year we have supported 15 families with individual visits.

#### ***How many visits have you made?***

128 (256 hours) visits have been carried out by Fran. Volunteers have added in many more, which are a mix of visits and other support.

#### ***What kind of support are you offering?***

It is mostly things that friends or extended family would do, such as trips out, taking the children to the park, chats in cafes, help with English, transport to activities or appointments, and also being an encouragement through phone calls, social media and face to face encounters.

Other examples are Siobhan, who has helped with a massive amount of de-cluttering in the last 3months. We have also assisted with specific needs helping parents to access services and with the inevitable form-filling.

#### ***How long do you offer support to a family?***

There is no set time - 12 weeks is the usual amount but for some it has been 30 weeks and others less. From September, Fran's paid support will be 20 hours per referral. Then we are actively looking to ask the parent to donate towards the help. We hope to move a family on to receive support from a group, a church or to connect with positive

friendships. This has happened to one parent who has become part of Brixington Community Church after many weeks of support and is now doing an Alpha Course and getting help with appointments from one of the members.

### ***Did you do any other activities to support?***

There were park meets every Wednesday in August hosted by Fran and other volunteers and a small group of parents enjoyed a trip to the Care for The Family, A Mind of their own, event in Exeter. We have started up dropping off food, if it is suitable, from M&S. This is only ad hoc but it's been helpful to have a few goodies to give to those we think would appreciate and use them sensibly.

### **Future needs for family support**

We would always like to have more volunteers able to give two hours a fortnight to help. Fran has done a great job but more volunteers are required to prolong our funds. There is one dedicated and talented young Mum who has recently said she could become a volunteer befriender. We hope this could be a great link as we continue to seek the right individual to run and expand HTSE. We will need more regular donations to ensure that we have enough money to continue with paid hours to contractors, or if the right person came along, to oversee the project.

### **Trustees**

Also it is good to have a younger trustee; we are thankful for an answer to prayer that Claire M has joined the trustees. She says, *"I am excited to be joining the Trustees of Homes That Smile! I think they do a wonderful work, and their vision of equipping families to be healthy, happy & successful is something I wholeheartedly agree with & support. I love to see people come together, creating community & a sense of belonging, which is exactly what Homes That Smile do! I am motivated by my faith in God, hope & kindness. I love meeting people, hearing their stories & encouraging them; helping them to realise how special they are & what a difference they make in the world."*



### **Policy updates and Reviews**

The Safeguarding and Safety policies have been updated.

### **Safeguarding**

We have joined Thirtyone Eight to register our own staff directly. The annual fee has been agreed and we benefit from their advice too. Matt Pitts is our outside advisor to

comply with insurance requirements; we also combine annual training with Exmouth Chapel. John W is Safeguard lead and Anthea J is deputy. Claire M and Becky W are able to do safeguarding checks with Thirtyone Eight.

### **More New Help**

Thank you to:

Tim Davies has taken over from Richard as our bookkeeper and doing this free even though he has a business.

Rachel Rust has joined our prayer group.

Neighbourly who have added us to their surplus food programme for M&S.

Hope Church who have provided vouchers for summer activities and are also going to help some families at Christmas with vouchers.

Tesco that helped with some food for the baby bubble.

World of Country Life gave Fran a pass for this season.

### **Courses and Groups**

#### **Credit Crunch Cookery**

From September to December we had a great fortnightly course with Richard and Jackie taking alternate weeks. We did lots of basic and tasty meals at cheap cost. There were 9 families who joined this and it was a successful group building time. We received a grant for the costs from Devon County and used it efficiently. The parents asked to start a WhatsApp group and are still posting their culinary creations for the others to see. This group is repeating this winter. It is run in Exmouth Chapel as they have a great kitchen layout for a small group.

#### **The Baby Bubble**



The parents from the monthly group at Scott Drive remain in touch and two of them agreed to help with the 8 week group for new Mums.

It is a combo group/course where we showed a short video and discuss the effects of the first 18 months of development with the parents. One Mum was touched and shared how she had lived with constant arguments as a child and how important she felt it was to make her child feel secure, as she never did feel that way. We were glad to have the help from Lorraine, Aimee and Louise plus delicious cakes from Emily.

While making a biscuit mix, one Mum shared it was the first time for her to do baking. It was lovely seeing her manage to achieve her first successful bake. We had help from the Children's Centre with this course using the Building Babies' Brains the 1001 First Days programme and they came to one of the sessions to run it.



### **Publicity and Fundraising**

We post our courses on the Exmouth community Facebook pages for parents.

Our webpage is updated with links to newsletters and annual reports for more details, but is used less than Facebook.

We are trying to have another Tesco 'blue tokens' slot.

We have applied to some grant making charities and have been successful with Devon Community Fund for 2000 towards this year's cookery group.

The objective is to find more regular supporters willing to contribute monthly to ensure we have funds for the support work.

Written by **Becky Wright** (Trustee & Project Leader) - November 2023

Checked & signed by Claire Merriam (Trustee)

*CMerriam*

7<sup>th</sup> December 2023