

## **2. DCDP Case Study: The Aspire Project: St. Peter's Free Church**

Our main aim, as a project, is to build meaningful and encouraging relationships with children, families and the local community. For years, we have been developing groups that have encouragement, support and care at the heart of them, at the same time as developing a space where meaningful relationships can begin to be built. Our groups are designed for primary school aged children, families and the local community to get involved in, in both the Charleston community and West End of Dundee.

In the past year, our groups have grown in a variety of ways.

We have seen a real growth in numbers in our West End, 'Wee Rascals' group with new faces most weeks; the group includes mums, dads, grandparents and childminders.

Our Charleston, 'Wee Rascals' group, has continued to steadily grow in numbers and sense of community. Some of the parents who attend have been keen to take on more of a role with the group, with mums helping to prepare snacks for the tots, while others make tea and coffee, or help clear up at the end of the group, working alongside the volunteers.

In our Tuesday children's group, 'Tuesday Mix', we have now reached the point where there is a clear divide between the ages who have been attending. This again has developed the group as well as being a challenge, but our team have been working together to come up with new strategies and activities to cater for the two age brackets.

We have seen connections being made and strengthened in many ways over the last year. Firstly, through friendships growing deeper between people who attend our groups. For example, between our young people who come to the children's groups which has created an inclusive and happy environment where the children look forward to coming to each week.

There has also been greater connectivity and communication between volunteers who help out in the different groups. Feedback sessions, planning sessions and events created to thank volunteers have all allowed volunteers to get to know one another more, to connect more strongly with the group they support, and has also enabled each volunteer to shape and have input into the group.

Our steepest learning curve has been the development of our programme for teenagers which is for the young people who attended our children's groups for many years, but have now gone on to high school.

Funding, has been a real gift to the project, allowing us to offer new opportunities to the children, adults and local community members who get involved with our groups. We offer food, organise events and take our group members on trips – a chance to try out things they may not have a chance to do otherwise.

Funding pays for the Aspire Project worker, has allowed us to update and buy better quality resources and equipment for our children's groups and Wee Rascals groups; it also allows us to offer resources to volunteers to further their own skills and development.

Our different programmes create safe and supportive environments where people can come and feel part of a group. For example, our parent and toddler groups help parents in feelings of isolation and loneliness which can often come to parents with a young family. These groups allow for friendships to be made in the local community, as well as an opportunity to learn from others who are at a similar stage. Our youth programmes offer activities that encourage different skills, team work, new experiences and relationships that help to support children and young people in different stages of their life.

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