



Solihull Life Opportunities
2009 Calendar
 "Adding value to the lives of people
 with a learning disability"

A Year in the Life of Solihull Life Opportunities Report of Activities for 2007—2008

Welcome to our 8th annual report—this year with a difference!



Solihull Life Opportunities (formerly known as Solihull Leisure Opportunities but commonly referred to as SoLO) is entering into a new and exciting phase of its work with children, young people and adults with learning disabilities. We are still committed to providing high quality social and leisure opportunities for our learning disabled members, but recognise that their aspirations reach far above these.

During the year that this report covers we have looked carefully at our goals for the future with our members, staff and volunteers. We all agreed that, as an organisation, we should seek to **“Add value to the lives of people with learning disabilities”**. We believe that the following goals will help us do this:

- **To continue and develop the delivery of high quality social and leisure opportunities for children, young people and adults with a learning disability**
- **To consider the respite needs of parents and carers when delivering these services**
- **To develop additional services that will increase the life opportunities of people with learning disabilities and add value**
- **To increase awareness of disability issues through the delivery of high quality training**
- **To keep our learning disabled members central to all that we do and empower them to support our decision making processes**
- **To develop our fundraising capacity to ensure sustainability of the organisation for the next five years.**

Our philosophy is to keep our members central to everything we do, and we have developed a person centred model of practice to support this.

I hope that you enjoy using our calendar and seeing what a year in the life of SoLO looks like—it is certainly never dull!

Janet Down—General Manager

Chair's Report



2007/2008 has been an exciting and positive year for SoLO. Following financial setbacks in the previous year, the whole team has worked very hard with outstanding commitment, dedication and enthusiasm, to provide high quality services for adults, young people and children with learning disabilities in Solihull.

New opportunities for funding have been sought and although these do not all come from a sustainable source, they have assisted SoLO to have a year of relative stability. This has enabled us to consolidate areas of work we are already involved in and focus on our future. It has been very rewarding that the whole organisation has been eager and willing to contribute to develop our strategy. We have been assisted in this process by “local experts” and we much appreciate their time and skills.

We are very aware of the high level of need for our services and have tried to align ourselves with current local and national requirements. We continue to be a respected organisation within Solihull and are pleased that we are able to actively participate in a wide variety of stakeholder groups with local partners, including Solihull Care Trust, Solihull Council, Children's Trust and the Learning Disability Partnership Board.

Funding continues to be one of our greatest challenges and sourcing it remains one of our highest priorities in order to achieve our goals and aspirations. Fresh insights and ideas are always welcome.

We believe that Solihull Life Opportunities more accurately embraces all that we currently do and are hoping to achieve in the future. My sincere thanks to everyone who has been part of the SoLO team during 07/08 and to all those who have so kindly supported us.

We know that 2008/2009 will bring challenges but also more opportunities to help us continue making a real difference to the lives of the people who use our services.

Jan Prior

Leisure Opportunities for Adults

Leisure Links

Enabling adults with learning disabilities to have the ability to meet up with their friends or pursue special interests together.

Throughout the year, SoLO has enabled 10 people with a learning disability to develop friendships and have a regular social event in their calendar.

Shared activities include meals out, visiting places of interest, going to the cinema, pub and, of course, the odd shopping trip!

All of the participants are volunteers.



Leisure Linkers enjoy a night on the town!

January 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	Trustees	22	23	24
25	26	27 Induction Training	28	29	30	31

Leisure Opportunities for Adults

Night Owl and Thursday Crew

Enabling adults with a learning disability to meet up with their friends, within the community, to play pool, darts, table games, have a drink or just simply a chat (or on most nights—all of these!)

Over the past year, SoLO has enabled 70 people with a learning disability to have somewhere to go, on a weekly basis, when they feel like a night out. It gives them ordinary access to an ordinary social evening, but with the safety net of support from specialist staff and volunteers.

The Project is particularly geared towards those adults who are becoming independent and need some extra support.



A bit of expert advice at Night Owl

February 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 Trustees	12	13	14
15	16 Half Term week	17	18	19	20	21
22	23 Makaton Training	24	25	26	27 Fundraising Concert	28

Leisure Opportunities for Adults

Icebreakers

During the year, 59 adults with a learning disability have been able, with the support of staff and volunteers, to meet up with their friends and enjoy a variety of group activities together.

The group manage their own programme of activities. During the week, you will find them chilling out in the pub, at the dog track, ice-skating, enjoying a meal together or just having a quiet pint (although we hear that it is not often that quiet!!!)



A night at the Movies with the Icebreakers

March 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
				Disco		PI Training
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
PI Training			SURG			
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
			Trustees			
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
				Vulnerable Adults Training		
29	30	31				

Leisure Opportunities for Adults

Open Door

A specialist social and leisure project, catering for young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities.

This year in particular the group has been extending the scope of the activities available to the members. As well as the in-house programme of arts, crafts, music and sports, the group has now agreed on regular evenings out and enjoyed bowling, a meal out and a karaoke evening!

The project is supported by two members who have a learning disability and work as volunteers.



Karaoke Night with Open Door

April 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4 Team Day
5	6	7	8	9	10 Good Friday	11
12 Easter Sunday	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20 Trustees	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28 Epilepsy Awareness Training	29	30		

Leisure Opportunities for Children and Young People

Teen Open Door, Time Out and Saturday Superfriends

All of these schemes have enabled 40 children and young people with a learning disability to have the opportunity to meet up with their friends either after school or on a Saturday on a regular basis—things that their mainstream peers take for granted.

The activities have been tailored to meet the individual needs of the children ensuring they all have had a great time together, with the support of a wonderful group of trained staff and volunteers.

Using person centred approaches, SoLO supports their move from children's services into adult life.



Members from various projects meet up for a photo-shoot

May 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
			SURG			
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	Trustees		Autism Awareness Training			
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Leisure Opportunities for Children and Young People

Performing Arts and Drumming

38 budding actors, actresses and drummers have been given the opportunity to develop their skills, perform in front of live audiences (I Dream of Shakespeare—North Arts) and showcase their talents (Emotions Exhibition—Arts Studio—South Arts). Our recently formed drumming group have already wowed the audiences at the BHIG forum with their newly developed skills!



Puck and Oberon—North Arts Group

June 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10 Trustees	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19 Members ball	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Leisure Opportunities for Children and Young People

Get Active

A sports based programme for young people aged 14+, Get Active gives a real opportunity for the members to determine their own programme and try out a whole range of activities. These have included fishing, cycling, football, ice skating and basketball.

This year they got together with a scouts group and spent a weekend camping which also involved a spot of caving, abseiling, campfires and many other exciting pursuits. It was such a success, that they are now raising money for the next!



Get Active Camp 2008

July 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6 Trustees	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15 SURG	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

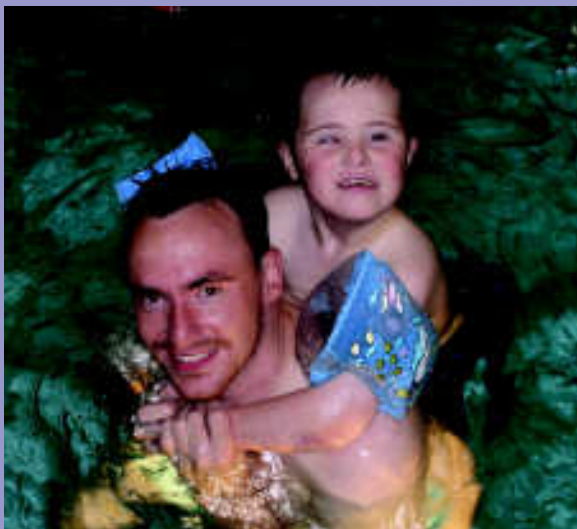
Leisure Opportunities for Children and Young People

Holiday Activities

Throughout all of the holidays, including half terms, SoLO has run activity programmes for children aged 4—19 years of age. These have ranged from:

- Specialist programmes for those with severe and challenging behaviour
- Interest based days for 8—13 years and 14+
- Inclusive Play for children aged 5—13 years.

The young people have been actively involved in planning the programmes themselves which has added to the enjoyment.



Enjoying a splashing time—Summer Playscheme 2008

August 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Fundraising

Not all of SoLO's activities are funded through our core contracts. To ensure that we have been able to offer the maximum value to the greatest number of people this year, our volunteer fundraisers have been very active.

We have run a very successful fundraising ball which brought in £9,000 in the Autumn, and then in the summer of 2008, we organised a bike ride where 25 riders were able to put in a team effort and raise over £1,000 as well as make a spectacle of themselves! (and lovely they looked too!)

Added to this, we have run quiz nights, a sponsored night at Jimmy Spices, a leap year concert and many other amazing individual efforts that support the aims of our organisation.



Sponsored Bike Ride 2008

September 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16 Trustees	17	18	19
20	21	22	23 Induction Training	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Training and Service User Involvement

SoLO believes that its members have the right to be involved in all aspects of the service delivery and that the services it offers are more appropriate and of a better quality if the members are at the heart of what we do.

The Service User Reference Group has been involved, over the year, in helping the Trustees to develop their business plan, carrying out an access review in Blackpool (which they raised their own money to fund) and supporting the general work of SoLO—newsletter writing, website development etc.

Two of our members have been involved in delivering Disability Awareness Training to schools, universities, medical practices and businesses.

In addition to the external training, SoLO has delivered an in-house programme to equip our staff and volunteers to deliver first class services.



Scott and Dominic delivering a Training Session

October 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3 Team Day
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12 Trustees	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20 Vulnerable Adults Training	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Supported Volunteering and Work Experience

SoLO recognises the value that volunteering brings both to our organisation and to the individual. We have, this year, made special efforts to enable 6 of our members to have the opportunity to enjoy supported volunteering placements within our own projects.

Added to this, we have provided student placements for 2 international students and a regular work experience placement for a young woman with Aspergers.

We have supported 2 of our members to access additional opportunities such as the Prince's Trust. All of these things, we believe, add value to the lives of our members.



A Learning Disabled Volunteer supports a member to bowl

November 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	Trustees		SURG			
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
			Annual Review			
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Volunteering

At the heart of what we offer at SoLO are a band of dedicated, skilled, volunteer workers. This year, we have worked with over 100 volunteers who have supported our work in many ways; on project, driving, developing our website, producing our newsletter, in the office, fundraising..... the list is never ending, and without our volunteers we would not provide the added value to our members.



Two volunteers together—like the outfit Santa!

December 2009

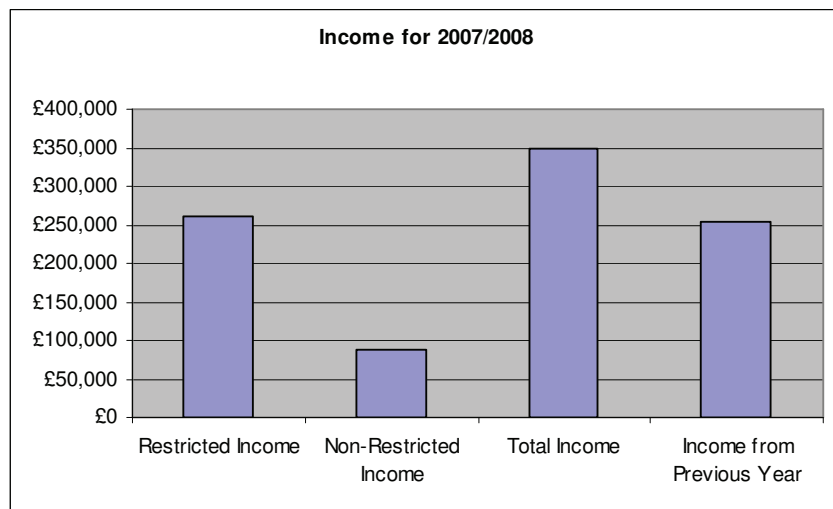
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9 Trustees	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17 Christmas Disco	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

And finally.....

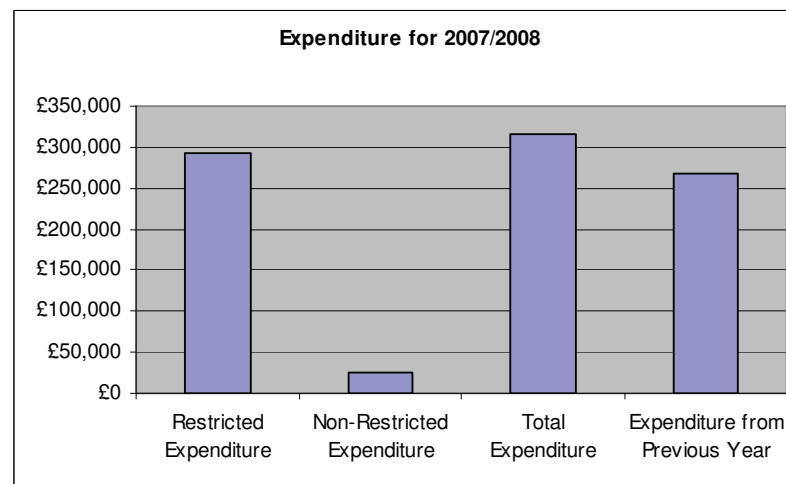
Our Directors

SoLO has been supported by our Directors who have a wide range of skills and experience which they have used during the past year. The following people have served as Directors from 1st April 2007—31st March, 2008

Paul Beech (co-opted)
Mark Hinsley (started 10.9.2007)
Susan Jobbins
Wendy Magee (Secretary)
Marina McGoldrick (left 22.2.08)
Nicola Miles
Gillian Penny
Jan Prior
Martin Wright (Treasurer)



Income levels have increased significantly over the past year, mainly due to additional contracts and grant funding. This has been matched with an increase in activity and delivery of services.



The future

SoLO has experienced a period of growth over the past year, but with growth comes challenge. The current financial climate presents concerns for all third sector organisations reliant on government funding or voluntary contributions. We are aware of this uncertainty, and have planned in a reasonable amount of reserves to ensure that we continue to deliver the same level of high quality services for our members.

Despite the environment we find ourselves in, we are excited about the future. Our members deserve equal opportunities to leisure, employment and day time activity as their non-disabled peers. We are well placed to support them in accessing this.

We are determined that SoLO will continue to grow and develop its range of services and really make a difference to the lives of its learning disabled members. With your help we can do just that!