



## **Albinism Fellowship Conference**

**Friday 20th - Sunday 22nd November 2009  
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Chester**

# **EVALUATION REPORT**

## **Delegate profile**

The event attracted 219 children, young people & adults including trustees and contact persons of the organisation who also registered as delegates but excluding such as exhibitors, presenters/facilitators and childcare staff who also helped deliver the event. Therefore, it is estimated that approximately 250 people were involved in the event overall.

Of the registered delegates there were:

131 adults  
21 teens/young people (age 13-18)  
67 children (age 12 and under)

Despite wide publicity of the event in line with previous years the vast majority of delegates were members of the organisation.

## **Delegate fees**

Every effort was made to keep delegate fees to a minimum. Adult member fees were kept at 2005 prices and included much, much more!

The fee profile was:

	Member	Non-member
Adult	£90.00	£120.00
Young person (aged 16-18)	£80.00	£110.00
Child/Teen (aged 12-15)	£65.00	£65.00
Child (aged 7-11)	£50.00	£50.00
Child (aged 3-6)	£25.00	£25.00
Child (aged 0-2)	FREE	FREE

Fees paid almost directly cover the costs of catering arranged at the venue including afternoon tea and dinner on Friday, dinner on Saturday, lunch on Sunday and refreshment breaks. Delegates were responsible for paying their own B&B costs.

## **Event promotion**

The event was promoted to the organisations paid up and past members going back to the time of the last event in 2005, a range of

organisations of and for blind & partially sighted people, and a variety of professional bodies supporting them. Use was made of traditional communication channels such as Royal Mail but also email and a range of on line channels such as facebook and twitter. It is felt that the online channels had a positive impact in driving up the number of delegates and in particular in enabling regular repeat communications to reinforce the opportunity to attend leading up to the event; an aspect not possible if a purely print/post approach to promotion was taken.

## **Geographical reach**

Delegates were attracted to the event from across the UK & Ireland with some of the furthest distances travelled to Chester including from Dublin, Ireland, Sussex and Devon in the South, Rosshire, Scotland, Gwynedd in Wales and Essex and Suffolk in the East, as well as Lancashire and County Durham in the North West and East.

## **Children & young people**

The event included a children & young people's programme. A range of activities were organised broadly for age groups under 7, 7-11 and 11-16. Activities included:

- Mask Making
- African Drumming
- Blue Planet aquarium visit
- Heritage Bus Tour & Ghost Walk
- Kidscape anti-bullying workshops

Of the 67 children & young people attending the event:

- 62 accessed the crèche provided by Kids at Heart
- 29 mask making
- 15 indoor giant games
- 29 accessed Kidscape workshops
- 32 African drumming workshops
- 19 Heritage Bus Tour & Ghost Walk

Of the 62 children accessing the Kids at Heart crèche & kids club. the age profile was:

- 19 under 2's

20 age 3-5  
13 age 6-8  
10 age 9-12

## **Main programme**

The main programme comprised of a mix of main sessions for all delegates, optional sessions and some social elements.

Four main sessions covered:

- Genetic counselling: what can it offer for families?
- An Overview of Albinism
- Building your dreams: self-advocacy as a skill for people with albinism
- Albinism Etc.-A Clinical and Research Update
- A wealth of possibilities (NB: technology)

Optional sessions included ones on:

- Living with Nystagmus
- Making the most of education support
- BULLYING-Awareness Raising
- Parenting with Albinism
- Options around Rehab
- Introduction to Welfare Rights

Social aspects included:

- Networking breaks
- Welcome reception & Gala dinner
- African drumming workshop for adults (optional)
- Time to visit Chester & for lunch
- Family dinner & Disco
- Interactive group session to inform the organisations future
- Family Sunday lunch

## **Exhibition**

An exhibition of equipment, aids and support organisations was held on the first day of the event. Information resources were available throughout the weekend.

15 exhibitors were present. They were:

- Albinism Fellowship

- Action for Blind People
- Calibre Audio Library
- Cheshire Carers
- Chester Tourist Information
- Dolphin Computer Access
- Genetic Interest Group
- Humanware Limited
- Look
- National Blind Children's Society
- Nystagmus Network
- Optelec
- RNIB National Library Service
- RNIB Products & Publications
- Visualey

There were also two stalls selling merchandise in aid of the organisation.

## **Accommodation**

Delegates were invited to arrange their own B&B accommodation. Options included the main conference hotel, where a rate of £112.50 had been negotiated. Also, an accommodation services offering several different options to suit all price ranges was made available via ChesterTourist Information. We also promoted nearby Premier Inn and Travelodge on our website.

We understand an average of 45 rooms were utilised at the main conference hotel. No delegates chose to use the Tourist Information accommodation service. Anecdotally we know a very small number of delegates travelled in from local areas daily, and also that some chose to stay at such as the Travelodge, Premier Inn and a small number in self-catering accommodation.

Based on the number of adult delegates and the number of rooms taken at the main conference hotel we can assume that approximately between one third and a half of delegates chose to stay at the main conference hotel. Based on some negative feedback about the cost of accommodation at the hotel this is not altogether surprising.

## Delegate feedback

Delegate feedback was sought formally through an evaluation form at the event. We received 38 family/individual responses. Based on the number of family/individual bookings for the event (73) this represents a 52% response rate. We also received a number of positive comments via our online forums after the event. These follow the trend of the positive feedback included below. We asked people the following questions and have summarised their responses below.

### 1. Please rate the following aspects of the event.

(Note, numbers shown are the number of people who gave each answer)

Aspect of conference	Very poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Length of notice given		2	8	10	6	12
Pre-event information		2	6	11	7	11
Conference fees		1	8	10	11	8
Cost of accommodation	1	5	11	8	4	1
Registration / info at event		1	1	17	7	12
Exhibition	1		3	9	18	7
Childcare / crèche		1		3	5	23
Children & young people's programme			2	4	13	10
Social elements			1	6	15	16
Range of sessions		1	2	2	20	13
Quality / relevance of sessions		1	2	3	18	14

### 2. What did you least enjoy about the conference?

Responses to this question were quite wide ranging and often very individual. Several respondents commented on the costs of the venue and the clash of sessions that they were equally interested in attending.

Some people felt that some sessions were too scientific. Also, some parents with young children would have preferred earlier evening meals.

Other individual responses related to: lack of family rooms at the hotel, having a later start to the days, and having more special activities for teenagers.

### **3. What did you most enjoy about the conference?**

Many, many respondents said that they most enjoyed meeting other families affected by albinism and catching up with old friends and making new friends.

Several respondents mentioned their delight at seeing children, young people and adults with albinism at different stages of their lives and how useful this is especially for parents of young children with the condition. Some parents mentioned specifically the benefits of their children interacting with others with albinism and the positive impact the conference has had on them.

A lot of respondents most enjoyed the social aspects of the event. Many praised the overall organisation of the conference and the quality of speakers and sessions as a whole. Numerous individual mentions were made especially about the nystagmus (John Sanders) and technology (Richard Orme) sessions, with many wishing there had been more time for the latter.

### **4. Do you have any comments on any of the individual sessions you attended?**

Very varied responses were received to this question. Although many people got a lot from the focus on genetics, some felt this was too much. Some were ok with the level of content of sessions, but others felt that especially the more scientific sessions were too complex.

Some respondents specifically positively mentioned the Parenting with albinism session and the Advocacy session especially said that it was great to hear personal stories.

Whilst there were positive responses about the anti bullying sessions most people felt there should be more time given over to this topic and especially more discussion on coping strategies.

Many respondents shared the dilemmas they faced in which sessions to attend, at times from three choices, and said they would prefer two concurrent or perhaps repeated sessions.

#### **5. If you have children with you, what has been their experience of the children & young people's activities?**

Those who responded overwhelmingly spoke positively about the crèche (Kids at Heart).

Julie Shaw, organiser, commented on the crèche as follows:

*"The set up of the rooms was good and worked well with the older group in a separate room. It was sometimes difficult to keep the under 3's and over 3's apart as there were siblings but on the whole it was fine. The main problem with the creche rooms was the temperature. At times it was very hot in the creche.*

*The older children's activities/programme was very good and enjoyed by all. Our staff were very complimentary and the feedback from the children was excellent.*

*With regard to improvements for next time, I would say that we (KAH) need to have a different system for parents coming in to collect children at the end of the sessions, having handed in their security cards, to enable them to collect their child safely without the door being left open longer than necessary.*

*It was a fantastic turnout of children, many younger children this year, which is a good indication of the families you are reaching. As always the children were delightful. It is a pleasure to be associated with the Albinism Fellowship."*

All respondents spoke positively about the outings and specifically mentioned the aquarium visit. Also, some commented on the good friendships that had been established between children and young people at the event.

A few respondents felt that more could be provided for older children not using the crèche some or all of the time.

## **6. What's the most important thing for us to consider when planning future conferences?**

The majority of respondents felt that location & venue were most important followed closely by affordability, activities for children and young people and accessibility.

A few respondents wanted more practical sessions and less formality in the programme. Also events or buddy arrangements for those attending for the first time.

Other factors important to individual respondents included: sufficient advance warning of the event and relevance of sessions,

Although not reported through the evaluation we did identify a possible need for an informal buddy/counselling support team ourselves to help respond to a variety of welfare issues that arise during the conference.

## **7. Where do you think we should hold future conferences?**

There were a variety of responses to this question. The vast majority of respondents favoured a central England location. Almost all wanted the venue to be near easy transport links

A few respondents commented on other needs including: outdoor space to allow more outdoor activities for children & young people. Two reminded us of the importance of more affordable venues which may include conference centres rather than hotels.

In addition, 5 respondents suggested London, 2 Ireland, 2 Manchester and individuals Birmingham, Brighton, Cardiff, Colchester & Chelmsford.

## **8. What do you think of the conference format and do you want us to consider other options, times of the year or types of events?**

Most respondents said the format of the event was fine as it is. They felt it needed to be 2-3 days to be worthwhile attending.

Many people asked for more regional events in between conferences.

Some people felt that the conference should be another time of year to avoid its proximity to Christmas. Suggestions included September/October Spring or autumn and avoiding the summer holidays.

Several respondents made individual suggestions for future conferences or other events. These included:

- Conference: fun experiential activities for adults with albinism, a swimming pool event, more things for older young children, video or web hosting the conference, and an event for children to perform their talents e.g. musical
- Other events: a summer event, summer holidays for children & young people, an activity weekend such as at Calvert Trust

## **9. Do you have any other comments?**

There were many responses to this question. The majority included very positive comments and compliments about the event overall

Some individuals made helpful suggestions for future events including:

- A general session on what's available to VI people
- Making a calendar for sale of Rick's photos
- Improving the links between the crèche staff and children attending workshops outside of the crèche in particular to ensure children are signed in/out of sessions by parents

## **Learning**

Taking all delegate feedback into account the trustees have drawn together the following learning points in relation to how to improve or what to include in future similar events.

- Pre event
  - If possible re funding plan ahead & promote earlier
- Creche
  - Ensure more effective & safe access to/from the creche

- Make clearer parent/creche responsibilities for children & young people's sessions/activities
- Programme
  - Consider session on all that is available to VI persons e.g. concessionary travel
  - Ensure there is enough available for teenagers
  - Understand the age profile sooner to adapt the programme as appropriate
  - Provide 2 rather than 3 options or repeat popular sessions
  - Include more & longer input from such as Richard Orme on technology
- Location/venue
  - Hold the next event in central England
  - Aim to use more affordable venues
- Other
  - Consider a buddy system for new delegates
  - Hold the event less close to Christmas
  - Have lunch rather than dinner elements for families for children
  - Hold more regional events outside the conference

## **Income & expenditure**

Although not exhaustive a summary of the key aspects of conference income and expenditure is included in Appendix 1 for information.

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Dated: February 2010

## Appendix 1: Conference Income & Expenditure Summary

### INCOME

Delegate fees	£14,045.00	
Fundraising (raffle, merchandise etc.)	£ 1,252.97	
Grants: BBC Children in Need	£ 5,500.00	
MSE Charity	<u>£ 800.00</u>	

**Total** **£21,597.97**

### EXPENDITURE

Crowne Plaza (Conference rooms)	£ 8,187.50	
Crowne Plaza (Disco, AV & misc.)	£ 745.00	
Crowne Plaza (Food & beverage)	£13,838.55	
Kids at Heart (Creche etc.)	£ 6,200.00	
Kidscape (Anti bullying workshops)	£ 674.50	
Trap Media (Mask making & drumming)	£ 801.55	
Selwyns Travel (Coach to/from aquarium)	£ 250.00	
Blue Planet Aquarium (visit)	£ 265.25	
Heritage Bus Tour	£ 200.00	
Visit Chester (ghost walk)	£ 70.00	
Party Time Leisure (giant games)	£ 115.00	
Chester Town Criers	£ 90.00	
Deeside Balloons (displays)	£ 79.50	
Presenter expenses	£ 132.50	
Merchandise & T-shirts etc.	£ 490.00	
Self direct (logo design)	£ 138.00	
Self direct (design flyer/booking form)	£ 138.00	
Print 5 (flyer/booking form)	£ 411.53	
Print 5 (delegate booklets)	£ 150.00	
Print 5 (posters & signs)	£ 104.65	
Postage (inc p/cards & envs etc.)	£ 461.11	
Thank you gifts & prizes	<u>£ 179.89</u>	<b><u>-£33,722.53</u></b>

Conference investment/reserves **-£12,124.56**