

Annual Report 2002-3

The year 2002-3 was chiefly one of review, particularly from July when Rosie Roberts the National Director retired and the new Chief Executive Officer took up post. The fact that PEEP had grown quickly beyond its first development phase, and had begun to disseminate the programme in other parts of the UK, made review appropriate.

Aims and Principles

The process that was initiated was strategic. A reconsideration of PEEP aims was begun, involving all staff. Although this process took a considerable length of time to complete, PEEP has now completed the reformulation of its Vision Statement, Mission Statement, Aims and Principles. These have proved useful already, but are not cast in stone. They will be reviewed regularly to ensure that they remain a focal point for all projects using the PEEP programme.

A capacity-building organisation

There was also a need to clarify the direction in which PEEP would go as an organisation. The Trustees reaffirmed the policy that PEEP would remain essentially a capacity-building organisation, which would offer consultation to help projects clarify how they could use the PEEP programme to meet the needs of families in their communities, training to run the PEEP programme, and a wide variety of programme materials. PEEP would not become a large-scale national delivery project. The focus of its direct delivery will continue to be its project in the Oxford area, which is large enough to make a significant contribution towards meeting the needs of families within the Rosehill/Littlemore/Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys estates, while also enabling the programme to be continually developed and revised.

Restructuring of PEEP

With the appointment of Peter Silva as the Chief Executive Officer in July and the earlier appointment of Marilyn Ashley as National Director in April, there was a need to look carefully at how the organisation would now operate. When Marilyn decided to return to Huddersfield and not to continue in the post after her probationary period, and Anna Edwards, the Peers PEEP director, decided that she was not able to return to the post after a significant period of leave to recuperate from major surgery, a review of the whole structure of PEEP was undertaken. It was decided that the CEO would be both CEO and Director of the Programme, and a Deputy Director would be appointed with major responsibility for both Peers PEEP and Programme Development. Jenny Martin, who had been acting as Peers PEEP Director, was appointed to this post in January 2003. This structure meant that there would not be any division between the functioning of the local Peers PEEP programme and the national development. Thus the operation of the organisation would be determined not by geographic area but by process.

Flexibility and growth

PEEP as an organisation has continued to grow steadily, and so in order to meet the needs of the growth and remain flexible enough to respond to continued development, many of

the posts in the organisation were redefined. A particular effort was made to keep in mind both the needs of the organisation and the skills of people within it, so that the posts created were both functional and fulfilling. The redefined posts, with clear Key Performance Areas, have also been regraded to ensure fair remuneration packages for each post holder.

Decision-making

Much experience had been gained over the initial development phase of PEEP by people at all levels in the organisation, and this expertise needed to be energetically harnessed in the decision-making process. So the committee structure and decision-making processes were also reviewed, with decision-making then being spread throughout the organisation at different levels. We hope this will provide distinct challenges for people and enable them really to contribute as fully as they possibly can to the development and operation of PEEP.

Finance and Human Resources

Other equally important reviews were also carried out. New financial processes were initiated, with an improved monthly reporting system. This makes financial control easier as well as facilitating the preparation of appeals for funding. A six-monthly interim audit was done which enabled the annual audit to be completed with ease by the end of May. The activities for the year were carried out fully with a small surplus at the end of the year. A number of Human Resources policies were also reviewed and a new staff handbook is almost completed.

So, it has been a year of much activity on the organisational front, but this has simply been groundwork so that the programme can really flourish. It is here that the really exciting developments have taken place.

Peers PEEP

Access to PEEP activities

Peers PEEP has continued to develop and grow in an exciting way. Child minders and other adults living in the PEEP area are encouraged to join PEEP groups with the children in their care, even if the children themselves do not live in the area. It is always a challenge to engage families with particular needs in PEEP activities. A focused Access Strategy, funded by the Basic Skills Agency, was begun in September 2001 and then continued with funding from the Learning and Skills Council from 2002. The aim of the strategy is not only to ensure that no aspect of the programme prevents families from participating in PEEP activities, but actively to encourage them to take advantage of what is offered.

Increased support at home

Efforts have been made this year to increase support to families who are interested in PEEP but are unable or unwilling to join groups. An evaluation of Link visiting was carried out in 2002, and its findings were used to plan developments. The strongest point

to emerge from the report was the high value placed by families on the personal contact with Link visitors. In response to this an extended visiting programme, Link Plus, has been developed and will be piloted during the autumn term of 2003 in the Leys, initially at Baby level. A more intensive home visiting programme is also being planned. This programme will draw on the experiences of PEEP home visiting programmes cross the country, as well as those of Peers PEEP Link Visitors. Although the evaluation report showed that PEEP materials were widely used in the home, it was decided that families should be offered a choice between full folders and a smaller pack of ideas and activities (drawn from the folders). A trial of this system at Ones level was successful, and it will be extended to other levels in the new year.

Volunteers get involved

The visiting team is being extended by the participation of volunteers. As a result of responses to a questionnaire administered by Link visitors in the autumn term of 2002, in which families welcomed the possibility of being visited by other families, volunteer PEEP parents have been trained and begun parent-to-parent visiting.

Groups as usual but more as well

Amid all the developments this year, groups have continued with good attendance by families throughout the year. Early Start PEEP-Plus groups ran, with their particular focus on supporting parents to develop their own literacy and communication skills as well as those of their children. The report on these groups was produced in summer 2002. Parents who participated in the groups felt that they had gained in confidence, and that their speaking and listening skills had improved, amongst other things. They also felt that their children were more sociable, more interested in toys, books, games and singing, had a more confident approach to play and were more ready to share and choose. One of the Early Start PEEP Plus groups ran on a Saturday morning, which made it more accessible for some fathers. This will continue into the next year.

Open access groups

Open Access groups have been continued and developed this year. By running PEEP groups in the Sure Start Family Centre playroom, families not regularly involved in PEEP have been given the chance to observe the group and join in the singing and activities. Although this way of running a group requires great sensitivity in striking a balance between extending engagement with PEEP activities and respecting the privacy of the families enrolled in the group, it has proved successful, particularly in the baby group.

PEEP in the UK

A more flexible dissemination process

With the growing numbers of projects and organisations using PEEP throughout the UK, a review of the support offered to them was necessary. The first issue that arose was that the Replication method adopted by PEEP was problematic. It created the impression that the programme that was developed on the estates in Oxford was to be implemented in principle and detail in other places. In reality, much more creativity was required to use the programme principles, while adapting the details to suit the local needs. Replication was thus suspended and a more flexible dissemination process initiated. PEEP in Oxford is working with the projects using PEEP in other places, to formulate the details of the new process. This will enable some projects, if they wish, to gain PEEP accreditation, while others can maintain a less formal relationship with PEEP and simply be associated projects. It will also allow for individual people such as child minders to be affiliated to PEEP. The new process will also enable individuals to become accredited PEEP trainers.

New Programme Support Department

The key to progress in the dissemination process is the nature and quality of the support that projects receive when they start using PEEP. A new department was therefore created in Oxford, with an experienced member of the Peers PEEP project leading the team, to co-ordinate the necessary support for projects. Everybody interested in PEEP now has the opportunity to discuss issues with a wide range of people directly involved in delivering the programme in different projects all over England, Scotland and Wales.

National and local networks

The goal of the dissemination process is to recognise and build on existing Early Years expertise and good practice. By introducing the PEEP programme with the appropriate training, the local activities will be enhanced. Projects using PEEP are beginning to meet together at both local and national level to share what they have experienced and what they have developed themselves to meet their local needs. The growth of the networks at national and local levels will help to draw together what is being done in Early Years at the local level, and will strengthen provision by utilising expertise at all levels. The process of accrediting PEEP trainers will further serve to make local areas self sufficient and more cost effective, while providing a national standard which can be supported by all projects involved.

Consultations and Information Days

It became clear that projects needed to discuss the possibility of using PEEP before they could commit themselves to any expenditure. PEEP therefore began providing initial visits to projects free of charge to help local management and delivery staff think through issues early in their deliberations. Information Days are available after this initial consultation. At these events, which can be arranged anywhere in the UK, the PEEP programme and related issues are presented to a range of people who may be involved in deciding whether to use PEEP, as well as people who are interested in finding out more about the programme. This enables projects to consider carefully matters related to their entire provision and see how PEEP could best be used to strengthen it.

Visitors' Days still in demand

Visitors' days enable delegates to go into more depth in particular areas of the programme and also visit a PEEP group in session to experience 'the real thing'. The frequency of the events is carefully controlled, as is the number of people attending, because of the close and confidential nature of the groups. Visitors attend the groups with the permission of the group members.

New and focused training

The demand for PEEP training has grown substantially and a full-time trainer is now working exclusively on delivering training to projects wanting to do PEEP or increase their activities. The training course has been revised and renamed '**PEEP for Practitioners**' in order to express the nature of the training more adequately. The announcement of the revised course, which can also be conducted anywhere in the UK, has been very well received and bookings have been coming in fast. From present indications, it is clear that more trainers will be necessary to meet the needs.

Learning from each other a key factor

Peers PEEP staff in management and delivery have been participating in the presentation of Information Days and training over the last year. This has benefited those projects new to PEEP as they have been able to discuss concerns and questions with those directly involved in delivery and management. It has also contributed to the development of staff at Peers PEEP, who have had the opportunity to share their experience and also hear about what other projects are doing.

International interest in PEEP

Besides general academic interest in PEEP, this year has seen practical interest in the PEEP programme. PEEP material is being used in the training of Early Years practitioners in East Africa, and there have been enquiries from Europe and the Far East for PEEP to be used in projects there.

Research and development

New video materials

The high standard of PEEP programme material has proved to be a key factor in the dissemination of the programme. This year a video for Fours was taken into use, which completed the *Learning together* video series. Much feedback has been given by parents and carers to say how much they have personally gained from their participation in the programme. Thus taking into use the adult learning video *Feeling good about learning together*, which explores value of the programme to adults, added further to the scope of material available.

Materials Survey

In the summer of 2002 a volunteer PEEP parent produced a report on the survey she had

conducted on the opinion of PEEP materials among organisations that had bought them between September 2000 and January 2002. There was a generally positive response to both the content and the format of the materials, which were found useful for work in a variety of contexts. Suggestions concerning both format (eg the size of the folders) and content (eg the accessibility of the language) are being taken into account in planning for development.

PEEP Link Evaluation

An evaluation of the Peers PEEP Link Visiting programme by an independent consultant was completed in June 2002; the final report was produced in December 2002. A sample of families who had received Link visits were asked about their reactions to the visits and the *Learning Together* materials. The extremely enthusiastic response to the Visitors confirmed the importance of personal contact in delivering the programme. The materials too were in general favourably received, especially the songbooks and tapes.

Birth to School Study

The study has continued to track over 600 families who have been part of the study since the children were born. Dr Maria Evangelou has taken up the post of Director of the study, and the data collection and analysis process is on schedule for reporting back in 2005.

Enabling Parents Study

Anecdotal evidence from PEEP staff indicated that attending PEEP brought benefits for parents, in both parenting skills and their own learning. However, the many conversations between PEEP staff and participants did not provide rigorous evidence of the effects of PEEP on parents for the following reasons: the anecdotal evidence did not allow for comparison with similar parents who did not attend PEEP; parents may not have been fully frank with PEEP staff; informal conversations did not cover the full range of services, attainments, feelings, attitudes and aspirations in a systematic way. This study, which has a treatment design, is investigating the full range of possible outcomes for mothers whose children have attended PEEP in Oxford. By comparing the group of PEEP mothers with a matched group, the study constitutes a comprehensive and in-depth examination of whether and how PEEP benefits parents, exploring a range of outcomes including training and employment, self-efficacy, parenting skills and social support. The study accomplished all its objectives within the specified period of operation. A further year of funding will enable the study to complete the sample, and allow time for statistical analysis, write-up and dissemination of findings at local and national level.