

Kith & Kids

PARTNERS WITH disABILITY

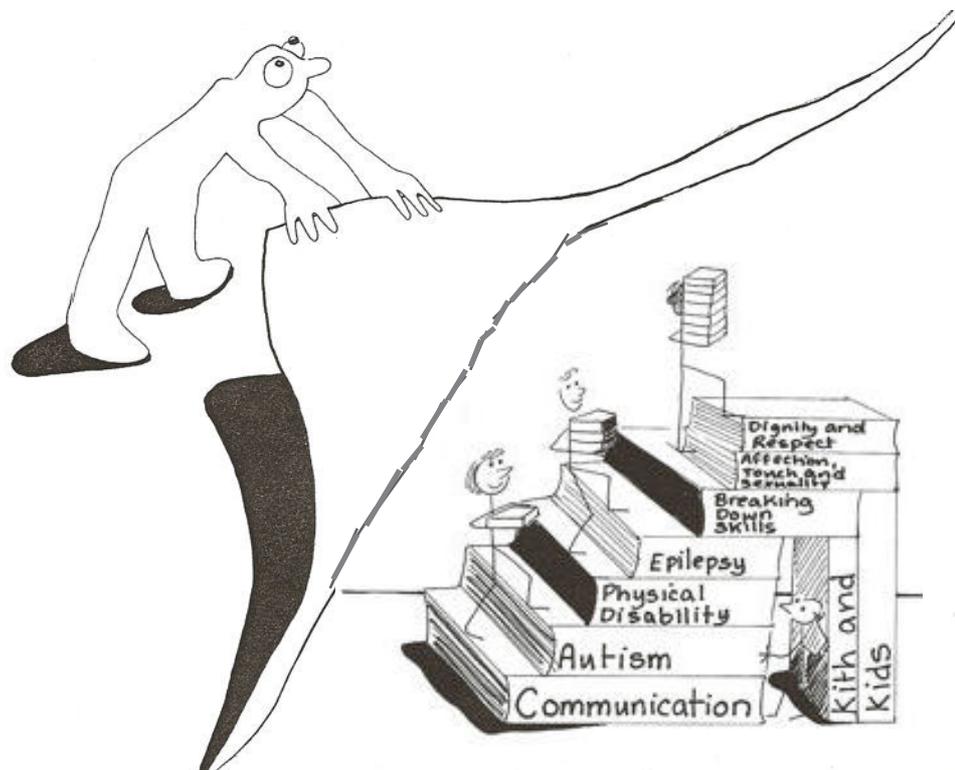
**A comprehensive Training Manual
offering a refreshing insight
into working in partnership
with people who have a learning
and/or physical disability**

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Editors

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Illustrations



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the years many people have contributed to our projects and activities, and so to this training manual.

We would like to thank all members, volunteers and staff - past and present - for their contributions, and we dedicate this manual to all of them.



PREFACE

Although primarily a handbook for volunteers, this book may be useful to anyone who works or is involved with people who have a learning disability, many of whom also have a sensory and/or physical disability.

It outlines how Kith & Kids operates as a self support group for families with one or more members who have a disability (referred to as members) and describes the various projects it runs:

- * 2:1 Social Development Project
- * Summer Camp
- * Weekend Club
- * Friendship Project
- * Employment and Life Skills Project
- * Advocacy Project

It also contains training materials used in the training workshops for volunteers.

Every year Kith & Kids involves 350 to 400 volunteers in its various projects, all of whom provide direct support for members who have a learning and/or physical disability.

As the majority of volunteers getting involved with Kith & Kids have no previous experience in supporting people who have a disability, volunteer training is an essential part of all projects.

Kith & Kids has developed a comprehensive basic training programme for all its volunteers consisting of experiential workshops supported by training materials as well as team-building and trust-building activities.

In addition to the basic training programme Kith & Kids provides specialised training for volunteers participating in the Friendship and Advocacy projects, which is outlined in the relevant chapters.

This book does not cover every disability nor does it provide indepth explorations of any specific disability. It seeks to raise awareness around aspects of learning, physical and sensory disabilities, and by exploring a number of related issues it offers guidance on positive ways of support - i.e. support for everyone involved in our activities and projects: volunteers, members who have a disability, their parents and siblings, and staff.

Kith & Kids is committed to sharing the experience and expertise built up within the organisation since its beginnings in 1969. It also seeks to adapt, improve and where necessary expand all aspects of its services on an ongoing basis and welcomes any questions, queries and/or comments you may have.

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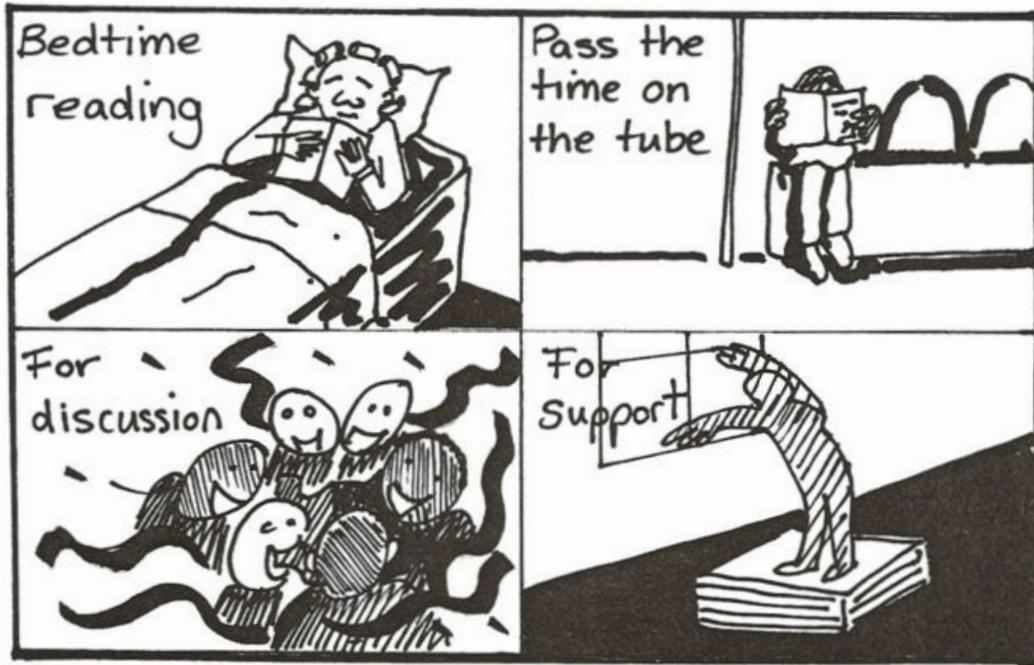
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How to use this manual



You will find that the contents of some sections have overlaps with those of others. This is so that each section is as complete as possible in itself and can be used as an individual hand-out to support a training workshop

SYMBOLS KEY



WHO ARE KITH & KIDS?

Kith & Kids was founded in 1969, by a group of families whose members included a child or young adult with a disability. At that time there were very few opportunities for families to meet with each other, or to share with and learn from each other about living with their children who had disabilities. At the same time opportunities for those children to join in activities others took for granted were rare. Brothers and sisters too were isolated, often having no-one to talk to about what it was like for them to have a brother or sister with a disability. Although there are more services available now than there were in 1969, things have not changed very much for families with members who are disabled.

Kith & Kids began as a self-help group: a group of families with experiences and skills to share with each other. The group has been unique from the start, as it embraces all types of disability, children as well as adults, from all backgrounds. The group also focuses attention on the non-disabled members' needs, encouraging participation and integration. Self-help was the beginning: when we recognised our children needed to develop social skills that others had, we became a pro-active group. Hiring professionals and organising volunteers to support us on social training projects, where our children would have close individual support to learn new skills. Skills like getting dressed, making tea, crossing roads, sharing conversations, playing games - whatever skills our children needed to learn could be developed with imagination and fun.

As families with members who have disabilities, we are often on the receiving end of insensitive bureaucracy, completely disempowered like our sons and daughters. As a self-help group, we could empower ourselves and each other, to bring pressure to bear on policy makers who affect our children's lives. With many years of experience and a much larger group of families who bring a wide variety of skills and experiences, if one of us doesn't know the answer, or have an idea, someone else will. This is really important to families who often have to fight daily to have our children's needs met. Self-help is about sharing ways of resolving problems, and feeling supported.

In the early days and years of coming to terms with the fact that our child has a special need, or learning and/or physical disability, most of our time is spent attending hospitals, learning about the difficulties, finding out about education, and battling with funders to get needs met. Many of us spend years seeking cures that are impossible. It is important to know that others have worked through similar issues, and will understand what we are doing and going through. Often our own extended families are unable to understand, and Kith & Kids can be a life line in the most difficult times.

Over the years we have developed a number of projects, and fundraised to employ staff to co-ordinate activities. The whole family is welcomed and supported in Kith & Kids. Through our social training 2:1 projects, our members with disabilities can learn new skills, have fun, meet new people, and join in activities that are often denied them in other areas of their lives. Parents are involved too, sharing skills and supporting volunteers. Brothers and sisters join in too, and this gives them an opportunity to have attention for themselves, and also to play with their brother or sister in a supportive environment. Most importantly, the brothers and sisters can meet with each other to share feelings and ideas about what it is like to live with their sibling who has special needs. Many of the brothers and sisters suffer bullying and ridicule from peers because of their sibling's disabilities. At Kith & Kids there is recognition and support for these difficulties throughout the age span.

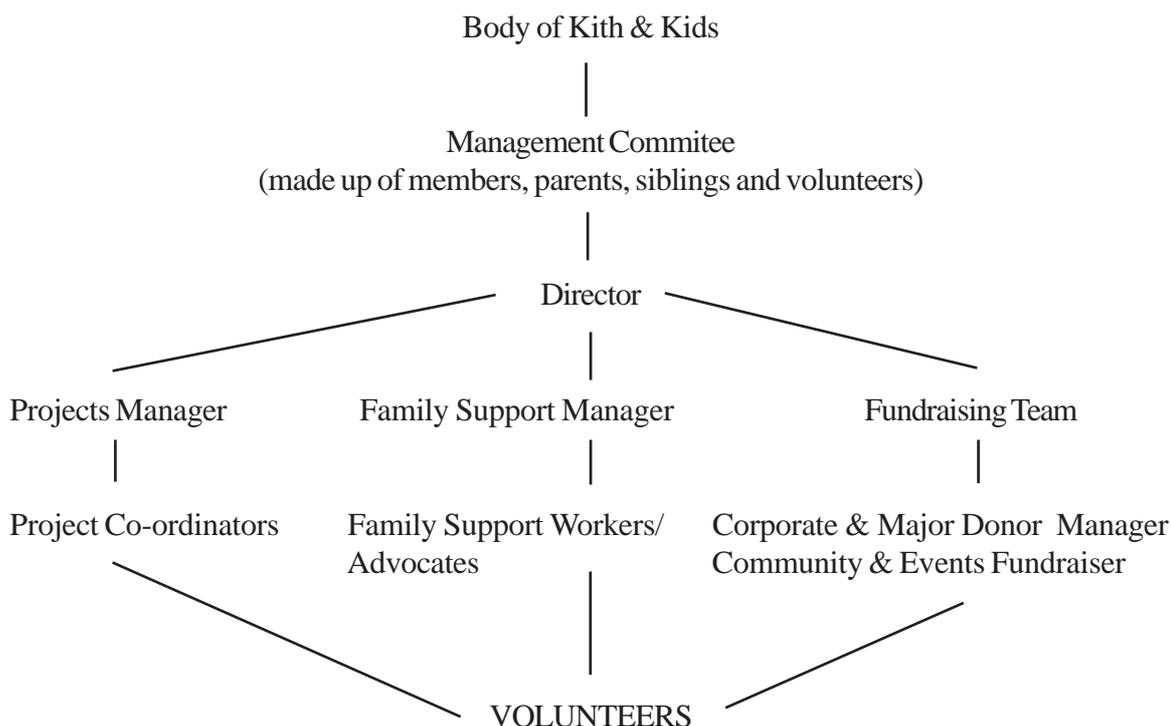
One of the difficulties facing children and adults with disabilities is isolation. There are reduced opportunities, or none in some cases, to meet people, make friends and do the things other people their ages do. Kith & Kids trains volunteers so that when making friends with people with disabilities they are confident to support them in a wide range of activities and situations; and if necessary to give them specific support (e.g. after an epileptic seizure or with personal intimate care).

As a group we have trained thousands of volunteers over the years, many of whom have gone on to work as doctors, nurses, teachers or into the caring professions. Many long lasting friendships begin during our projects. We have shown that with imagination, creativity and dedication, our children can achieve great things. As a self-help group, we have evolved to meet the developing needs of our members, and this evolution continues as we encourage membership from more families and/or facilitate new families to set up their own groups and projects.

STRUCTURES IN KITH & KIDS and OUTLINE OF PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

This section aims to provide an overview of management (supervision) and support structures as they operate within Kith & Kids. It also gives an indication of the various projects and activities K&K runs every year.

Structure of Kith & Kids



What do they do?

Volunteers are the people who make possible all the projects and activities Kith & Kids run. Without them, none of these could work - they are the lifeblood. Volunteers can take on a variety of tasks or focus on one specific task. E.g. supporting a member who has a disability on a project or activity, being a friend and/or citizen advocate, supporting the organisation in its fundraising efforts and/or offering admin support.

Representatives of the **body of Kith & Kids** are directly involved in the range of projects and activities Kith & Kids offers its membership throughout the year (policy making and assisting in e.g. training, support, screening procedures, planning, transport).

Around 12 members, parents, siblings and volunteers make up **the Management Committee**, which gives direction to the organisation and monitors all aspects of its operation (e.g. finance, service delivery, longer term planning, decision making on major issues). The Chair of the MC line-manages the Director.

The **Director** manages all aspects of the organisation's operations and is the line manager for the Projects Manager, the Family Support Manager and the Fundraising Team.

The **Projects Manager** oversees all the projects for members who have a disability and line-manages the Project Co-ordinators.

The **Project Co-ordinators** are responsible for running the projects for members who have a disability and recruit, train, supervise and support the project volunteers.

The **Family Support Manager** is responsible for all aspects of family support work to (e.g. information and support for parents and/or siblings, various forms of advocacy, new service developments in line with newly identified needs, outreach work for non-members families, individuals and other organisations). She also line-manages the Family Support Workers.

The **Family Support Workers** provide direct support to families with one or more members who have a disability on a wide range of issues. These include: appropriate housing or residential placement, education, day services, health care/therapeutic services, and social activities; respite for the family if the person lives at home, correct benefits, and adherence to all (disability) rights relevant to the person with a disability.

The **Fundraising Team** is responsible for raising funds for all the projects and services Kith & Kids runs throughout the year. Together with the Director the team applies for grants from charitable trusts and (local) government. The **Corporate & Major Donor Manager** is in charge of attracting and maintaining support in cash or in kind from businesses and wealthy individuals. The **Community & Events Fundraiser** is responsible for recruiting and supporting volunteers who will take part in our sponsored events or organise their own fundraising activities on behalf of Kith & Kids.

OUTLINE OF VOLUNTEER-SUPPORTED PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Throughout the year there are a number of regular projects and activities which our members who have a disability, and in some instances, their brothers and sisters look forward to. For many of them, Kith & Kids offer the only opportunities to be with people of a similar age and have a clear empowered say in what they want to do.

Social Development Projects run for one week each during the Christmas and Spring breaks and two weeks in the Summer. Each project aims to create a community where all activities and trips can be accessible to all who want to join in.

Weekend Clubs take place fortnightly on alternate Sundays and Saturdays and are a mini-version of the Social Development Project.

Our **Summer Camp** takes place late August when members and volunteers go off to a field-study centre in Surrey for a week. This is an opportunity to have a holiday away from family and carers and spend time with people more of their own age. The principles of the camp are the same as that of projects and clubs in that training creates a supportive community allowing participants to feel free to enjoy a flexible structure which allows for a very enjoyable holiday with a wide range of activities on offer.

The **Friendship Scheme** enables volunteers and members to build on relationships established during projects, clubs or camps. Kith & Kids offers further training and support to help develop a longer-term friendship between a member and his/her 2 linked volunteers.

A more recent extension of this scheme is the **Outings Scheme**, which enables volunteers who have less time available than those on the Friendship Scheme to go out once every so often at a time that suits them with a member who does not have linked volunteer friends.

Our **Advocacy Project** consists of Crisis Advocacy and Family Advocacy provided by Kith & Kids staff and Self Advocacy for members who are at the more able end of the learning disability spectrum. These young adults have formed a Self Advocacy group, where with volunteer support they learn to express their needs and wishes themselves, as well as gaining an understanding of the skills and actions required to fulfil their wishes. They meet up every other Thursday evening during term time and thrive on the interaction with the volunteers who regularly support the group.

The **Employment & Life Skills Project** is our newest project and an off-shoot of the Self Advocacy Project. From the needs and wishes expressed by participants in the Self Advocacy group, it became evident that to realise some of their wishes, they would need to develop skills to achieve greater independence and have a chance of gaining paid employment. Hence this project, which takes place on weekdays during term time, enables them to work on basic life and employment skills with the support of volunteer mentors.

You can find out more details on each of the above in Section 2.

Please feel free to phone/email the Kith & Kids office if you have any queries about any of our projects.

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