

Thank you for giving Renee and her family a precious lifeline

When Renee was born, her mum and dad were thrown into a daunting world of hospitals, doctors and medication. But as soon as they arrived with their tiny baby at Sense's Family Centre, they were given a warm welcome. And thanks to you, we've been there for the whole family ever since.

The first time Renee smiled was at Sense's Woodside Family Centre. Support Worker, Helen Potter, was helping her to hit some chimes, and Renee loved the musical response. For mum Jayne, it was a very special moment.

"At the beginning, I didn't realise that you could play with children such as Renee. But Sense showed me simple things you can do with ordinary objects and that there was a spark with her. All Renee needs to do is smile and you want to keep going. When you see her getting excited, it's the best feeling in the world."



Renee donkeys about!

This has made all the difference to a family who've been on a very difficult journey since Renee's diagnosis.

Now four years old, Renee has Lissencephaly and an associated disorder, Miller Dieker Syndrome. This is characterised by a pattern of abnormal brain development, where the brain is smoother, with fewer folds and grooves. It results in severe disability, including blindness, hearing and feeding difficulties. This, together with Renee also having an uncontrollable epileptic condition called infantile spasms, means she needs constant one-to-one care.

But despite Renee's disabilities, you've enabled Jayne and the whole family to connect with her and show their love. Renee's brothers and sisters often join her on the visits to the centre, so they are fully involved and can enjoy playing too. Jayne told us:

"Last year, when I picked them up from Woodside's holiday playscheme, my son who was eight at the time turned to me and said, 'You know Mummy, if it wasn't for Renee we wouldn't be able to come here.' So even he realises what a special place it is."



Renee making music

And of course, you are also helping to support Renee's mum and dad.

"I can go to Woodside and offload with the other parents, or with Helen. You feel comfortable and everyone understands."

Helen's home visits, when she'll often take a guitar and sing to Renee, are also so important to Jayne. It's a chance to get information, guidance and emotional support.

From play schemes to family days, family weekends to weekly clubs, Renee enjoys all that Sense and the Woodside Centre has to offer. You have helped to make this amazing work possible.

Susan's continuing success

Susan has been a regular in our newsletters! When we last wrote about her, she'd just started a new mainstream school, today she's grown into a happy and ambitious 15 year old. Now, Susan is relying on Sense's help, and yours, as she prepares for the next stage in her life.



Susan enjoying the art of cooking!

Susan has CICNA (Chronic Infantile Neurological Cutaneous and Articular Syndrome), a rare condition affecting her sight, hearing and mobility. As a young child, she had acute arthritis and was wheelchair-bound. Yet today Susan is walking and talking. The cochlear implant that was fitted two years ago has really developed her speech, along with her ability to listen and understand.

Being in a mainstream school with the help of a support teacher has also had a major impact on Susan's communication skills. In a special school, Susan just wouldn't have been able to come this far. Mum Mary credits Sense and her deafblind specialist, Joan, with helping to give her daughter this amazing opportunity:

"Sense has helped me to get the support Susan needs. It's fantastic as they will back her for life. She can prove to other children with similar syndromes just what can be achieved."

Now in her last year at school, Susan is hoping to move on to a residential college, where she will be able to continue learning and develop her independence. Sense is supporting the family all the way throughout the transition process.

You can help us be there for young people like Susan at every transition in their life, so that they can make the most of their abilities and the world around them.

Musical Matthew

You are giving Matthew the chance to feel the vibrations of the guitar and triangle, as well as the big boom of a microphone. You've brought happiness to his parents every time they see their little boy smile at our music therapy sessions.

It's wonderful to see four year old Matthew taking such delight in music, especially when you consider that he is profoundly deaf.

As a result of an illness soon after birth Matthew has Cerebral Palsy affecting his vision, hearing and movement. He only recently had a major operation to straighten his spine. But this motivated and bright little boy is recovering well, and continuing to learn more about the world around him.

Along with music therapy, dad Stuart says that Matthew has taken a real shine to the sensory toys they have at the Sense Woodside Centre:

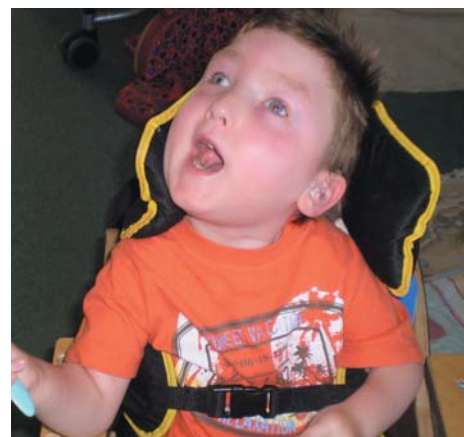
"Sense loaned us a suitcase full of fibre optic lights and Matthew really enjoyed them, that was brilliant."

In particular, Sense deafblind specialist, Jenny, has found that Matthew responds well to switches. He's thrilled when he activates flashing lights, mirror balls and robots – and Jenny explains that this technology is crucial to his future:

"Matthew might be able to receive sign language but because of his physical disabilities, he

can't move his arms and hands well so will have difficulty signing. Technology is definitely the way forward for Matthew, offering him an alternative form of communication."

His parents are so impressed with Matthew's progress and with your support, their little boy can continue to thrive.



Matthew's making great progress

Jump in!

Thanks to your support, deafblind children and their families can make a real splash at our fun-filled swimming events.

Swimming is known to be incredibly beneficial to deafblind children who often love being in the water, floating along and feeling the gentle bobbing motion. That's why our Sense swimming events are so in demand.

Three times a year, we hire a hydrotherapy pool, fully equipped with changing lights, gentle music and a warm, bubbling Jacuzzi. In this calm and controlled environment, families each have a reserved time slot in the pool and, with our support, they can help their child to move more independently, or develop their balance. It makes a real change



Having fun whilst learning is what it's all about

from the noisy, busy, crowded pools at local leisure centres, where there simply isn't the time or space that deafblind children need. At 34°C, a hydrotherapy pool is also warmer than a standard one, so it has the added benefit of enabling muscle relaxation.

Brothers, sisters and grandparents can join in the fun too – it's a real family event.

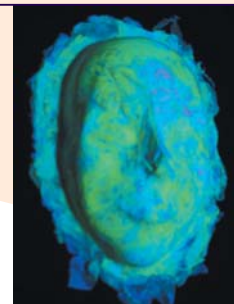
For parents in particular, our swimming events give them the opportunity to meet others and share their experiences. We give them all the encouragement they need to help their child enjoy the benefits of the water.

With each splash in the water, you are bringing great delight and happiness to a deafblind child. It means the world to their families too to see their beaming smiles.

Touching art

In July the Touching Art exhibition at London's artsdepot showcased the work of a number of deafblind artists who are supported by Sense. It offered a fascinating variety of paintings, mosaics, ceramics and textiles. But one theme united them all – the theme of touch.

Touch is vital to all of the artists who were exhibiting their work. Some of the artists had a little vision or hearing that they could make use of, but most of the works were created without a sense of sight or sound. And visitors to the exhibition were invited to experience the exhibition in the same way – to explore the works with their hands and to relate to the world in a new sensory way.



The pieces of work, which shone out against the clean white walls of the gallery, offered a myriad of colours, textures, styles and impressions. Maurice Lee, for example, had created a flowing, babbling brook from blue, white and turquoise wool, with pieces of fabric representing pebbles in the stream.

These artistic adventures weren't just about having fun though. They also acted as important stepping stones to enable deafblind people to communicate and express themselves. Some of the artists, for example, find it

extremely hard to express their preferences, so that making choices about colours, textures and forms is very meaningful for them.

The artwork created by the deafblind people for this exhibition came from a unique perspective – and their honest and open approach resulted in a powerful artistic experience. Creativity is about looking at things in new ways, taking risks and following the unexpected. This exhibition opened doors for deafblind people, and their journey of exploration and self-expression was illuminating for all who saw the exhibition.

Thank you for the memories

As days begin to shorten and nights lengthen, we will all have our own memories of the summer just passed. Some of us may have worked through the sunny days, and others may have taken a little time off to potter in the garden or spend time with the family. But I'm sure many of us will have gone away on a special holiday, one which we were looking forward to for a while.

For the deafblind children who this year went on a special Sense holiday, that sense of excitement and anticipation was just the same.

This year our children's sensory holidays took place across the country, on farms and campsites and in cottages. The activities were as energetic as one would expect a holiday for kids would be, swimming and sailing, climbing and canoeing and, for the little ones, a whole host of furry animals to meet and hold. Throughout



Messing about in boat is just one activity to enjoy on a Sense holiday

July and August our specially trained staff and fantastic volunteers tried to keep up with the children as they explored new horizons and challenges.

All children who go on a Sense holiday are encouraged to keep a scrapbook of memories and special things. Hannah Tompkins, Head of Holidays & Events at Sense says 'The scrapbooks are amazing sensory reminders of the children's summer holiday, sea shells, feathers, flowers and an eclectic range of tactile and scented objects that only children could adore fill the pages!'

These summer days are made possible by the generous gifts of our supporters. Hannah says: "In just a week the difference we see in so many children is amazing, as they take part in new activities their confidence builds up. The specialist staff on every holiday are great at bringing out the best in each child and ensuring they have a wonderful time, and...well, you just have to see the smiles. Thank you!"

Sense holidays have been going for an amazing 36 years! And whilst the memories they make are priceless, to keep them going we need your support. One way to help create so many happy memories and to make a lasting difference to deafblind children is to leave Sense a gift in your Will.

Roobarb and Custard, supporting Sense

Roobarb, the loveable green mongrel, and Custard, the lazy and mischievous pink cat, are back



– this time on the counters of Barclays Banks nationwide.

The latest 'must have' Roobarb and Custard merchandise are pin badges and are available at over 1,700 Barclays branches from 10th September until late October. In exchange Barclays is asking for a donation of £1 to be given to the charity Sense, to support their work with deafblind people in the UK.

Today a 'cult' classic, Roobarb was the first fully animated television series to be made in the UK and was broadcast on the BBC in 1974. So whether you are buying a little piece of nostalgia or introducing someone else to the slapstick mayhem of Roobarb, head down to Barclays this autumn to buy a badge and support Sense.

A simple gift in your Will could mean so many sensory memories that last a lifetime for deafblind children. To find out more please call **020 7014 9350**.



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