

END OF TERM REPORT!

2024



SECOND  **CHANCE**

An Account Of Some Activities During The Year

It's The End Of Another Year, Older and Wiser?...

This year marks the 40th 'End of Term Report' - when we set out in 1984 to 'change the world... one child at a time' we had no concept of that kind of time scale, we just did what we could with the resources that were available and waited to see what would happen! We didn't map out any particular direction or had any set ideas; we just let circumstances and events dictate what we did. We merely responded to whatever scenario was presented.

Like our finger prints every child is totally unique and individual, you never know what their needs will be or how they will respond to what we offer. That's what's so interesting and exciting about what we do, nothing is ever quite the same or definitely repeatable. Maybe that's the key to why we have been able to keep the pace up for 40 years. The (almost embarrassing) fact though is that the young people that were in the first group of children in 1984 are now well into their 50's. One of the most encouraging elements to all this is that some of those (then) young people is that a few are still volunteers with us and some even employed by us. When you've got the T shirt you might as well wear it!

There are some exciting new developments that have either happened this year or are about to happen in 2025 so the journey continues and shows no signs of slowing down. We have almost finished building and now started using our new Fishing Lodge building, we have acquired a new cottage in the Scottish Borders for us to use, we are looking for a new youth worker as I write, the Nature Reserve and our Rural Centre are maturing into a resource like no other and we continue to see changed lives in not just our children but their whole families. We do so hope you can continue to join us in this journey and support us in new and rewarding ventures in 2025.

..changing the world... one child at a time



Doug Hulme
Chief Executive
December 2024



Cover Picture... July 2024. Cruising on The Baltic Sea! An expedition out from our cottage in Finland. Exploring the many islands in the Finnish Archipelago, Which is actually the largest in the world.

Our Rural Centre from the air. The lakes, river and fields melting into the background almost unseen. An Unknown world for a child from the inner city.



Finland 25 ...

That's not the year 2025 but whilst we are in a reminiscing mode... it's now 25 years since we first took a group of children to Finland. It was only ever going to be the once! Kotka City Council and our friends in Finland had other ideas and with the gift of our cottage and great offers of support from Finnish volunteers we are still there and the English young people have an experience of their lives when visiting the cottage, nature, sea, solitude, a foreign country, all alien to an inner city



Sunset, The Baltic, Our Boat.



July—We finished concreting the new slipway for launching our boats



Cottage steps—Home for the week.



Breakfast on The Veranda.



Off into the forest on another adventure

Many hours spent messing about in the water. In the summer The Baltic reaches temperatures up to 21 degrees. Yet in the winter we can drive The Land Rover on the ice!



Wikipedia anyone? ...

We were thinking we ought to have an entry in Wikipedia for the charity. We tried once a few years ago ourselves but they don't like it if you write about yourself—any experienced Wiki moderators out there that could write a submission for us? We've got loads of content you could use?



Success!



**Our Rural Centre In
Action**



It can change a young persons life



For some it might be the first in their life



Our flock of sheep are a continuous source of education from biology to sociology. Lambing is timed for the Easter school holidays.



Our freshly readied mud kitchen for pre-schoolers and parenting classes

Work Parties...

We rely heavily on volunteer labour. The children still think they've done it all and feel ownership of the results and take pride in the 'hard work' but in reality it's the adult volunteers that have done the 'hard' bit! We are ever grateful for the work parties that come from various companies and organisations to spend the day with us. Long may it continue—we couldn't manage without you.



One of 3 Specsavers working parties—planting pollinator plants in our nature reserve



Zurich Insurance once again coming to the aid of their nearest charity to their Whiteley offices



Its not just at The Rural Centre—here a Finnish volunteer working party launch one of our boats at the beginning of the summer.

Dates for your Diary 2025

House of Lords Dinner & Auction:

Friday 14th March

Manningford Fishery Corporate Days Fishing:

Wednesday 18th June

and Sunday 5th October

Look out for our 'Open Week'

To mark the opening of our new fishing lodge in May

All will be welcome.



Underfloor heating goes in Fishing Lodge



Screed Poured. May 24



Not finished but 1st use—November 24

Discipline your children while there is hope. Otherwise you will ruin their lives. Proverbs 19 v 18

erbs 19 v 18

Now stay with me for a minute before you think I have turned into a preacher; I promise you I haven't. However, I read a verse in the Bible the other day that struck a chord with me and has great relevance for what is happening in our Charity and society in general just at the moment.

Those of you with long memories will recall that about 20 years ago I referred to the publication of some statistics from The Office of National Statistics. At the time the statistic was incredibly impressive (to me anyway) to the point that it seemed almost unbelievable (and some chose not to believe it and probably still do). The statistic that I refer to was that at the time they announced it 25% of all teenagers in England and Wales had some sort of criminal record. Now that wasn't saying that 25% of all teenagers were criminal just that there was some sort of record of some sort of behaviour that the police and authorities had recorded.

At that time when I was giving lectures and after dinner speeches about the Charity I said that if we didn't do something about it now (then) then in 20 years' time it might be that 25% of the population would have criminal records and if it did, that would mean that a minority (a massive minority since the population of the UK was heading towards 60million at the time) would represent themselves as having little respect for property, old people the rule of law and indeed respect for each other. I also predicted we would have a right-wing government and the largest police force we had ever had.

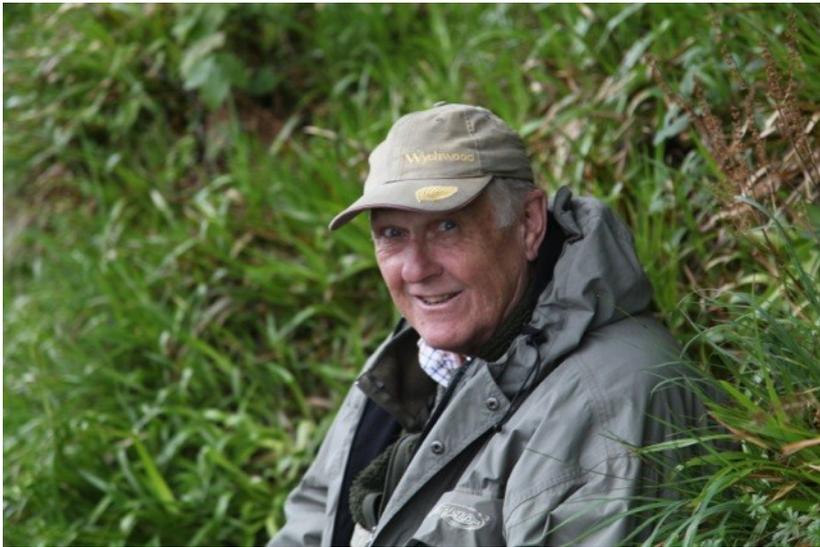
Well clearly, I didn't get everything right but there is still time for some of these things to yet come to fruition! Times have changed for the Charity and the work we do. The best illustration of this has a direct application to this scenario. At the time when I was saying these things I was in and out of court perhaps 3 or 4 times a week. The magistrates of the day knew my name and would greet me when they saw me sat in the court ready to speak on behalf of a young person. Things like criminal damage, shoplifting, anti-social behaviour... (anyone remember the Paulsgrove Riots?). However, I actually can't remember today the last time I was in court, it's been at least 9 or 10 months maybe more. The reason for this is not some major change in social attitudes or responsibility – it's the Xbox and the mobile phone! Instead of wandering the streets at night, daring each other to kick a bus shelter in or pinch a pint of lager, they are now at home in their bedrooms talking to each other remotely and playing games and watching youtube on their gadgets.

I am uncertain on how this is going to affect them going into old age but clearly they now lack the skills of communication that face to face meetings impart to them. I have seen several groups of 5-6 young people sat in the same 10' square space texting each other even though their elbows might physically be touching each other, their voice boxes maybe 4' from each other.

For the last 40 years our specialism with young people has been with the school non-attenders. The scale of the problem has been covered up for decades, in fact ever since we started to have Ofsted reports on schools. Non attendance was a down grade for schools who could not account for it, thus it was covered up (I did the same myself when I was a head teacher!) we have for many years been dealing with 16 year olds who had perhaps 20 or so weeks of attendance in their last 5 years of schooling but no one had really noticed or accounted for it. In the past we have had young people with us full time, for anything up to 2 years and they have been marked at school as in full time education but in "Education Other Than At School". Schools and Social Services were just pleased to know the young people were looked after and something was happening in their lives. We used to take care of their basic education as well that is to say we did maths and English with them but then filled their time with life skill giving activities. We then became so inundated with referrals that we would only agree to take the children on if the school took care of their basic education (an hour a week of maths and English)!

You can imagine what happened when we had the two-year lock down of covid. We had all the children all of the time, we never closed and operated throughout a full-time service. Now this covid thing is very interesting because all we hear

Farewell to an old friend during 2024



It was with great sadness that we had to say goodbye to one of our very best and most trusted of volunteers during 2024.

Terry Williamson was a real stalwart. We once left him at our cottage in Finland for 6 weeks, while we shuttled backward and forward with groups of children. Terry was always there at Helsinki Airport waiting for us in the old mini bus to take a fresh group to the cottage. We gave him some of the most challenging children to mentor and be their advocate and he never failed. Terry left us after a battle with dementia but he will forever be in our memories and his influence will live on far beyond this generation. Thank you Terry... a job well done.

these days is that "since covid..." it's as though we can now acknowledge some of the problems because it was covid's fault and these problems didn't exist before covid so its now a new phenomenon that we are having to cope with.

You will forgive me for saying this is complete bunkum! Nearly everything that is blamed on covid existed before. It may be that the situations are a little more common than before but there is nothing new here. Readers of this may recall how last time I wrote in this way I outlined how children had decided that school was an option not a regulation. This fits nicely into the theory that it was because of lockdown when they didn't have to go to school that they got used to this idea. I agree it does sound a logical explanation but let me assure readers this phenomenon is not new and is not down to the lockdown, we have been working against this attitude for many years.

What has happened is that 'the system' has woken up to the problem and the increasing prevalence has forced the education department to acknowledge the problem and account for it. This has meant a plethora of rules, regulations and guidelines have now been introduced to protect the children's interests. Whilst we don't decry this, indeed, we applaud it, what it has meant is a massive increase in our workload of administration. In days gone by our Child Protection Policy (a weighty tome with all aspects of childcare and provision and operating practices of the charity included) was deemed sufficient evidence that the children in the care of Second Chance were well looked after. Today the same schools that have been referring children to us for 20 or more years now want far more from us and want us to do all the paperwork for them. If we were charging for our services, I might consider that reasonable but since we do not charge for our services, we are saying to the schools that they need to take care of the paperwork and satisfy themselves that the children are well catered for. This has in a couple of incidents resulted in schools no longer referring children to us. Since we have a waiting list as long as our arms and as old as our history, we don't really mind, we are never short of clients, that's for sure.

Another 'innovation' for us is the average age of referrals coming in. For decades our specialism was the older disengaged young person, usually 14-16 year olds and most usually male and most often wanting to fight every adult that tried to give them guidance. However, these days even the average age has fallen to about 12 and we have an ever increasing load of under 8's who have been permanently excluded from education, often they have travelled the route of a second school, then a specialist school, then a special unit, then home tuition then nothing – just us.

Most of the mainstream population find it unfathomable why any school cannot cope with a 5 or 6 year old child's behaviour. Or why a child of this age can present the proposition that they don't have to go to school at all or to do as the teacher has instructed.

This comes back to my age-old proposition that many of the readers of this will have heard me say in the past. We have moved from the accepted good practice of administering a Child Centred provision to the unacceptable one of a Child Driven provision. A subtle but very damaging change that we have witnessed over the years.

This begs the question of how has this happened? I don't have all the answers, but I can see some of the problems that have led us to this unacceptable and most difficult situation. In our (honourable) drive to respect the children's rights and wishes we have burdened the children with decisions that they are not sufficiently developed to be able to make. We disguise these things by saying such things as 'children grow up so much quicker these days' or 'you can't tell them what to do anymore' or 'you cannot discipline them'. These are of course all things that will and have led to a chaotic system that I am now commenting on.

I have for many years had Social Workers telling me I am not supposed to shout at the children, yet they can (and have) attacked me with knives, scaffolding poles, bricks and other extreme measures, yet in response we are not supposed to even shout! I once admitted to a professional that I had shouted to which they replied 'you may have scarred him for life' to which I said I doubted that very much because of what his home life was like but that he would remember for quite sometime what it was I had said!

A year or two back I was invited into a very nice primary school and into a classroom of one of our children so that I could see how the child was treated and how he responded to what was asked of him. The classroom was immaculately and imaginatively set up with much stimulating material for the children. The room was split up into variously themed areas. One for Maths, one for Reading, one for art, one for Geography, one for physical activity etc etc. It was explained to me that the child was allowed to choose what area they attended at any one time. At first, I thought this was marvellous but then I got to thinking, what would I have made of this when I was say 10 years old? So, I pointed out that a 10 year old version of me would have done art, PE and Geography all day long but no one would have found me in the maths or reading corner at any time. The answer was the teacher would not direct the child to unpopular corners but would persuade them to visit the corners by great enticement and guidance so that they would of their own volition choose to visit their least desired choices. I left humbled because I thought I was a great teacher until then but readily recognised I did not possess such powers of persuasion, and my powers of coercion had no place in this utopian of classrooms.

This is all heading in the direction of a new but chaotic system of care for our children where we ask them to be in charge of their own destiny. At first this was not too bad because the old system still had some muscle and there



Thanks to Jemima and The Titchfield Mill for fundraising. Could you organise a fundraiser?

were still ways of directing the wayward bound child back to some form of useful input. Initially as parental direction was relaxed schools and their teachers took up the slack and gave rise to the sentiment from parents that it wasn't their responsibility to educate the child in most matters it was the teachers. It was about this time that I entered the teaching profession and although teachers bemoaned the lack of parental input they were able to pull off an acceptable job of making up for it. However, as the years have progressed and as we have burdened the children with ever more responsibility for themselves that has begun to fail.

Teachers and other professionals no longer have any bullets to fire, they are all having to rely on those massive powers of persuasion and encouragement that that young teacher had in her classroom that I visited. The problem is when you have a classroom of 36 children or a year of 250 or indeed a school of 1500 pupils how do you employ those subtle skills with any success to individuals? I'm a pragmatist, I can see where utopia exists and would love to enjoy it but am quite prepared to sacrifice those desires for the best possible result for the children.

Whilst parents may rely too heavily on teachers, teachers will tell you they lack support from the parents. We are in the middle of all of this, and we can see that there is truth in both these views (and feel unsupported by both camps).

This brings me back to my starting point and that verse of Scripture. Proverbs is a wonderful source of common sense that is largely relevant to today with many words of wisdom. Here's the verse again that caught my attention...

"Discipline your children while there is hope. Otherwise you will ruin their lives".

This sentiment applies to both parents and professionals with childcare responsibilities.

The word 'discipline' has a harsh ring to it, but there is an alternative definition that I prefer to use. When we use the word discipline, I think it is likely that most people will think of punishment as the main 'weapon' to achieving it. Those older than 50 will think of the school cane, of the teacher who was a descendant of Atilla the Hun. Many will recall an overbearing parent who resorted to the spoon or the strap or something else. If it isn't physically painful instances, it might be psychological pain of overbearing controlling and manipulative patterns of behaviour.



That is the unfortunate side of the word discipline, one that has no place in our vocabulary here at Second Chance where many of our young people have been the victims of abusive behaviour because all of those things outlined in the previous paragraph are just that, abuse.

However, the writer of the Proverb is clear that it is absolutely essential for every parent (and therefore professional too) to know how to do it and to do it well and positively.

Discipline is not about punishment it is about education. We often use the words 'self-discipline' when we refer to getting things right in our own lives. When we use that term, we don't usually conceive hurting ourselves to achieve our goals. So it should be with parents and professionals that when we recognise the need to discipline our children, it doesn't have to include physical or mental pain or anguish. There are ways of disciplining our children without resorting to physical violence. It is true that it's probably time consuming and maybe almost painful to the administrator but none the less both necessary and beneficial in the long run.

We should see discipline as the way that parents and professionals show love or care to the children they have responsibility for. Later In Proverbs (22:6) It says, "Direct your children on to the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it." This of course is the arrival point for that phrase 'self-discipline'.

I hope we have distanced ourselves enough from the harsh use of the word discipline for the reader not to think we are advocating a return to what can also be found in the same book 'the rod'. Methods of discipline have changed considerably over the past 3,000 years, but the principle holds good. Every child needs to have the security of knowing what the rules are, and someone who will ensure that they are followed.

We have found that children thrive within guidelines and boundaries. Nor do they ultimately resent those who administer these rules and make sure they are kept to. I often say to my staff and volunteers (with an element of exaggeration to make a point) you can do anything you like to a child so long as it is fair. Young people will recognise fairness, and they will respect it. Over half our volunteers and staff are ex clients/pupils, they wouldn't be here if they didn't have respect and gratitude for being kept on the straight and narrow by us when they were young people.

I recently read an account of teenage years by a now mature adult. His parents allowed him to do whatever he wanted and, at the time, he thought this was great. It stood in marked contrast to those around him who had to follow some very clear rules. He was allowed to come back home at any time at night and to drink as much as he wanted. When he started using drugs, his parents didn't raise any great objections. Then slowly it dawned on him that they gave him this much freedom because they didn't care. They didn't love him and this led him into a time of deep depression. This may be a story that is an over generalisation for every story but the principals within it hold good. Sometimes, however, the lack of guidance is not because the adult doesn't care but because they believe they do not have the right to discipline the young person they have responsibility for. Here lies the nub of the problem.

If we were to replace the word discipline with the word direction, that would work to a point but we would then reach the stage where a direction is merely a word of advice or an optional choice that is merely advised. If you don't know any better, if you don't have experience of the various choices, you will feel entirely free to ignore the advice and thus make a bad choice. This I believe is the position of many young people today. How can a 13 year old or indeed a 16 or 17 year old make an 'informed' choice about whether to have sex or an abortion or to go on the pill let along lesser choices of should I go to school today or how should I react towards the person I don't like, or how do I treat someone who can do nothing for me.

You simply cannot make decent informed decisions like these when you are so young and inexperienced. People often say to me 'children grow up so much quicker today' to which I invariably reply 'do you think so?.. My father left school when he was 14 and went to work from 7am to 5.30pm every day, he went to war when he was 18 and had responsibilities for the lives of men and prisoners of war by the time he was 20... that was growing up". Young people are not a new race, their brains don't grow faster or their emotional development strangely accelerate from the young people of countless generations before them. Young people are not now empowered to make decisions that no one else has before them been able to make. They need boundaries, they need guidance they need our care. It is a plain but unpopular truth that sometimes if not often children do actually need to be told what to do.

Adults should not be afraid to give these things to young people. The politically correct loony orientation that has led to the lack of discipline is entirely misplaced (albeit for the most honourable of reasons) and all adults with these responsibilities whether they be parents, teachers or others should feel empowered to give children what they need in an authoritative manner and not be made to feel afraid of the consequences. I am not advocating a recipe for child abuse here; I would say the neglect of these things is the real abuse of our children not the implementation.

Discipline may not sound attractive, but it is actually the clearest expression of love and respect. Elsewhere in scripture it says "No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening – it's painful! But afterwards there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way" (Hebrews 12:11).

If you are a parent or other professional, you should show wisdom, gentleness and love as you discipline children in your

care. Its how we try to do things here at Second Chance and I promise you it works! Sometimes 'no' is simply the best word to show how much you care about a child yet so often we as professionals are afraid to use it. Sometimes to say 'you have no choice' or 'I insist' is also the best and most caring way forward. We need to find ways of empowering parents and teachers alike to feel 'ok' about enforcing these kinds of phrases.

If we don't, self-discipline, will not exist, society as we know it will no longer be applicable. I believe the door is slowly closing on the opportunity to teach our young people responsibility, philanthropy, care of their neighbour and all the other altruistic characteristics we deem to be wholesome for a thriving society.

I hope you will forgive me for the scriptural references but ultimately the truth of these sentiments matter to us all, whichever faith or none we prescribe too. Margaret Thatcher once famously said 'there is no such thing as society' I do hope she was wrong because that's all our young people have to look forward to, their place in this society of ours. They also might have the responsibility for looking after me in my old age!!

So, I do hope as many of you as possible, reading this jumbled line of thought, will be able to find a way of supporting The Second Chance Children's Charity and its fight to bring these disadvantaged children into a fulfilling role in our society. Dysfunctional families and poor education have no place in that vision.

... Doug Hulme. CEO 2C Charity

The Scottish borders ...

We have been given a cottage in our old stomping ground beside The River Tweed, with its own fishing and access to the river close to Berwick. We propose to use this in much the same way as our cottage in Finland (but with no air fares!) and hopefully, by letting out when there are no children there, we may raise some much needed finance for the Charity. More news on this to follow...



***2025 is coming ... and we would love
you to journey with us ...***

***Please lend your support to 2025. We do not charge for our services
and we do not receive any funding from statutory funders. We notice
every penny and we make every penny count!***

***Please join with us this year and help us to build a 'Centre of Excel-
lence' where children from all over the UK will travel to and find out
what it is to have 'a second chance'.***

***"You Can Easily Judge The Character Of A Man ... By How He Treats Those Who
Can Do Nothing For Him!"***

The Second Chance Children's Charity, Solent Nurseries, Fontley Road, Titchfield, Hants, PO15 6QS
Tel 01329 842525 Fax 02392 737550 Email: charity@second-chance.org.uk

Web Page: <http://www.second-chance.org.uk>

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