‘Care in the High Street’

The Hop Skip and Jump Foundation

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Business Plan – ‘Care in the High Street’

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A Charity offering Flexible, Immediate and Sustained Respite Day Care to Children with Life Limiting Illnesses or any Special Need, with support for their families.
The Business

- Hop Skip and Jump have been providing respite care for children and young adults with disabilities and SEN for over thirty years. Previously, our model has been based upon large, semi-rural centres with extensive outdoor space, smaller indoor soft-play facilities and sensory facilities. At each of our three centres (located in Bristol, Cheltenham and Swindon) we run a variety of different clubs and activity packages in order to develop our children’s social skills, self-esteem and life skills. We have a proven track record of preventing family collapse and enriching the lives of people struggling to cope with the rigorous demands of caring for those with complex needs. We have a new centre under construction in Wigan and are looking to expand in West Sussex – with discussions underway for a CitHS type unit in Horsham – as well as in Milton Keynes.

- Having developed the above model, which we know is effective and sustainable, we have identified an additional need: short term care available in town centres that can be easily accessed, located close to shops, restaurants and other leisure facilities.

- Town centre locations would allow parents/carers time off to go shopping, have a coffee or go to the gym knowing that their children are being well looked after in a secure environment by trained professionals. Many of our parents find it very difficult to go shopping with their children, due to the pressures of the child’s
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- needs and the lack of understanding on the behalf of other people. Consider two scenarios:

  1. Your child has autism and finds the barrage of stimuli on a visit to the shopping centre too much to handle. He lashes out, kicks, screams and bites – where do you turn in the face of stares and sneers?

  2. Your child has complex physical needs and needs to be changed or go to the toilet – where do you go, other than the floor of the existing disabled toilet facility, a demeaning and degrading experience?

A small unit, with a fully accessible changing facility, a range of play activities and fully qualified professional staff would allay these issues, allowing parents/carers time to do things that we all take for granted. Such a facility would provide reciprocal benefits, driving footfall to shopping centres whilst improving the lives of the 1 in 10 people with some form of disability. Currently, there is no such provision in place – whilst there are crèche facilities at a large number of shopping facilities, there is simply not the infrastructure in place to cater for children with complex needs. As such, Care in the High Street is an innovative and unique project which families are crying out for.

- Given the current economic climate, there are numerous empty units in every high street and every shopping centre that could be used to house such a facility, making the provision of care immediate, centrally located and available to all. We envisage such a facility not only in pre-existent locations, but as a key part of the provision for the disabled in every new-build establishment.

- Care in the High Street will be run under the auspices of The Hop Skip and Jump Foundation, an organisation with an established client base and thirty years of experience catering for families living with disabilities and special educational needs.

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Market

- 1 in 10 people are now living with some form of disability. There is a high probability someone you know is struggling to cope with the demands of caring for someone with complex needs. There is a massive unheard minority who are not presently provided for. We envisage providing care for children and young adults up to the age of 25, addressing this desperate need for respite care.

- Care in the High Street will allow us to target more people than our existing static locations do. Easy access to town centres will make our units highly visible and accessible to a wider market.

- Hop Skip and Jump have an existing client base, with placements for up to 12,000 children per year. We know that there are more people out there that we can help – central locations allied to the existing reputation Hop Skip and Jump has for providing quality, cost-effective care will help us reach out to more families in need. Additionally, these centres will allow us to provide better and more flexible care for our existing benefactors, who we know would welcome such facilities.

- Whilst there is limited competition from existing crèche and soft-play facilities, there is little to no provision for children with disabilities. Some schools run limited respite services, but these are simply not available when parents need them. Our model provides care throughout the year, not just during term time or for a one-off summer holiday session; Hop Skip and Jump will be there when families need us most.
Sales and Marketing

- Our service users will be drawn from our existing client base, as well as those who are currently unable to access our rural locations due to travel limitations. We are ambitious, and look to expand into areas that we have not previously worked in. We are well established in the South West, but seek to expand into new markets around the country, placing Hop Skip and Jump on every high street.

- Hop Skip and Jump have recently embarked on a complete website overhaul. We now have a contemporary, interactive site which receives high volumes of traffic. We will be able to use this site and our active social media presence to promote our new initiative. We have an established contact database of parents, local schools and businesses through which to disseminate information and marketing materials.

Management

- The Hop Skip and Jump Foundation has operated successfully for over thirty years. We have two committed founder trustees, Mrs. Clarissa Mitchell and the Reverend Celia Carter who have amassed a great deal of experience in the process of managing and running a charity. They are both involved on a daily basis with Hop Skip and Jump and will continue in their roles as Care in the High Street develops, providing valuable knowledge of corporate fundraising and charity management. Both act on a voluntary basis.

- Mrs. Mitchell and the Reverend Carter are supported in their work by a dedicated board of trustees and ambassadors whose experience in the commercial world will drive the initiative forward.

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Hop Skip and Jump have an experienced senior management team who work to assist staff members working ‘on the floor’ and drive footfall to the centres. Our senior management team is made up of

- Lesley Molnar, a qualified social worker and magistrate who is Head of Development, responsible for liaising with care bodies and local authority organisations to encourage more people into centres.
- Sonia Osbourn, a care worker who is Head of Training, responsible for ensuring that everyone who works here at Hop Skip and Jump is trained to the highest possible standards. Mrs. Osbourn is able to train members of staff in house without the need for expensive outsourcing.
- Hayley Stone, a qualified nurse and care worker who is Head of Care Standards, responsible for ensuring that everything we do at Hop Skip and Jump meets the expectations demanded of us by statutory bodies and the families we support.

The Foundation Office is staffed by a team with skills in finances and accounting as well as charity fundraising. We have recently employed a marketing and communications representative to promote the charity further.

Operations

- Care in the High Street sees Hop Skip and Jump moving towards a new business model with multiple smaller units functioning independently from our existing, larger centres. These two operations are by no means mutually exclusive, and we intend to continue developing larger centres alongside our town centre operations and existing centres.

- Location will be critical in our new venture. As we intend to expand our care remit, so we need to ensure that we are located where families can most easily

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access our services. High street, shopping centres, cinemas and stadia are potential venues for our new initiative.

- Each centre would require:
  1. Soft-play facilities.
  2. Wet room with full-sized changing bench, shower, hoist and bed.
  3. Additional materials – arts and crafts, karaoke, pool, table football etc.
  4. Sensory equipment.
  5. Computer and telephone for staff use.

- Each new unit would require a minimum of two staff members, trained in child protection, manual handling and administration of medicine. These staff members would be given full training and extensively vetted. At Hop Skip and Jump we already oversee an extensive volunteer network, which we would seek to strengthen by recruiting local volunteers to assist in the running of our new units.

- Ideally we envisage a Hop Skip and Jump ‘app’ whereby parents can be ‘pinged’ when the time they have booked is up, allowing them to return to collect their children, or ask for a little more time. Such an ‘app’ could be used to find the nearest Hop Skip and Jump facility and would be fully integrated with our existing website to provide parents with the latest Hop Skip and Jump information.

**Finances**

- Based upon a unit size of a minimum 350sq. metres, we envisage start up costs of around £50,000. This includes provision for a small soft-play facility, in addition to a fully equipped wet room and changing facility.

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- Overheads will cost anything between £7,000-£15,000. We would hope to be able to negotiate more favourable rates as a charity, variable on a case by case basis.

- Members of staff appointed would cost £43,322 with a head of care salary (inc. NI) at £24,600 per annum and an assistant carer employed at a cost of £18,722 per annum.

- Unfortunately, due to rising costs and a lack of council funding, we have had to implement a fee structure in our existing centres. Much of the cost to families can be covered by the care package provided by their local authorities. We would charge £5 per hour in our high street units, but we would hope these centres would become self-sustaining, thus removing the need to charge service users.

- Sessions would be able to cater for a maximum of 12 children and the centre would operate on extended opening hours, seven days a week where possible. A conservative assumption of six children per hour, 9-5, six days a week, we could forecast a weekly income of £1,440. A rough annual income could therefore be estimated at £74,880.

- Funding for the project and for start-up costs would be derived from corporate sponsorship, charitable trusts and grants and donations from generous individuals.

- We would actively encourage shops to champion Hop Skip and Jump as part of their corporate and social responsibility aims, providing capital outlay in order to finance start-up costs. In this way, we can help more families and the shops are provided with greater footfall, as well as the opportunity to sponsor the work of an ambitious, forward thinking charity.

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