

SOCIAL AUDIT

Milltown Day Workshops

Audited Social Accounts

1st April 2003 – 31ST March 2004

**Milltown Day Workshops
Arbuthnott
Laurencekirk
Aberdeenshire AB30 1pb
01561 362 882**

1. INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT

Milltown Day Workshop was started in 1996 to give people who need to work in a supported environment the opportunity to do so. We are involved in a number of different practical activities all of which have a clear end product. We collect and restore hand-tools which are sent to the Third World in conjunction with the national charity Tools For Self Reliance, we grow plants to sell locally, we do a range of craft activities, and do a certain amount of small building and maintenance projects around the workshop. In the course of the last three years we have also been working at the Mill of Benholm, six miles away, as founder members of a new project initiated by an association of local groups and individuals.

The Day Workshop is a part of Milltown Community Ltd. a company with charitable status based in Arbuthnott in south Aberdeenshire, and managed by a group of local volunteer directors. The Community also provide a residential service which is home to up to six adults with learning disabilities. The Community has been in existence since 1975 and rents its premises from Arbuthnott Estate. The Day Workshop has the use of a workshop building, with two large work-rooms and a dining room with a small kitchen for heating food and making drinks. A large greenhouse adjoins the workshop and we also have a polytunnel and an area of garden ground. Currently fifteen people come to the workshop to work in the course of a week. Some come only one day, others up to four days. Of those five have their home in Milltown, the others live locally and travel to work by taxi provided by the Social Work Department. The maximum number of workers at any one time is ten. All workers are funded through the care management structure of their local Social Work Department. The Workshop is organised by five co-ordinators, three of whom take the main responsibility. They work between one and four days per week. We also have three holiday relief workers.

The directors of Milltown Community carry the final responsibility for the Day Workshop, but day to day decision making is devolved to the three carrying co-ordinators. Decisions affecting the Workshop are made by consensus. All five co-ordinators carry responsibility for, and take initiative in, their areas of work.

All the Day Workshop's income to its revenue account comes from fees charged to local authorities for the service provided to each individual. Income from plant and craft sales goes into our Donations account, which funds new capital expenditure. Three-quarters of the revenue income goes to support the co-ordinators, the other main items being a contribution to Milltown House to cover rent, insurance and vehicle running which are paid centrally for the whole Community (7%), and materials for activities (6%).

Milltown Community is part of the international Camphill Movement, which began in 1939 in Aberdeen and now has communities in many countries throughout the world, providing living, educational and working communities for children and adults with special needs. Camphill was started by Dr. Karl Konig, a doctor originally from Vienna, who worked with, and developed, the insights of Rudolf Steiner in his work.

2. INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL AUDITING

Social Auditing is now established internationally as a successful way for organisations to look at how well they are living up to the aim, values and objectives that they have set for themselves. The method is for the organisation to define these clearly and then ask the individuals and groups – the stakeholders - that it comes into contact with through its work for their perceptions and observations. These comments are then put into a report, along with some factual information, which is then checked for honesty and accuracy by a panel of independent people. The report can then be published with a certificate from this panel as to its authenticity.

This is the second Social Audit we have done at Milltown Day Workshop. The first covered the period 1st July 2000 to 31st March 2001, and was generally felt to have been a positive exercise. We got a good amount of feedback, which reassured us that we were providing a valuable service, and gave us a number of suggestions as to ways we could improve further. This time we cover the period 1st April 2003 to 31st March 2004, although one of the main interviews did fall just outside this period.

3. WHAT WE HAVE TRIED TO ACHIEVE WITH THIS SOCIAL AUDIT.

The fact that we had done a previous Social Audit has made this one a lot simpler. We have been able to pick up from the recommendations and suggestions of last time and this gave us a good basis. We decided that we also needed to gather information in a different way. Last time we used only questionnaires, and given that many of the people whose views we were interested in this time were the same as three years ago, we decided another questionnaire would probably not be popular ! We therefore used interviews as the means of collecting information. Three of the four selections of information that are analysed in Section 7 of this report were recommended by the Panel of our last Social Audit. The other, the interviews with carers of workers, was felt to be the most straight-forward way of assessing how the workers experience the Day Workshop.

In the questions in the interviews we emphasised how people saw our values, again as the Panel had recommended.

We had also quite consciously decided to make this second Social Audit simpler and shorter than the first. Last time it was difficult to find the time to do all the work involved and we hoped that by simplifying it the process would be quicker. A fond hope !! It has actually taken longer this time and the implications of this will be considered further on. This also explains why we did not contact all the groups of stakeholders that we were in touch with last time.

4. AIM, VALUES AND OBJECTIVES

AIM : To give individuals who need to work in a supported setting the opportunity to grow in dignity, self-respect and practical and social skills by involvement with others in work activities.

VALUES : We promote the aim using insights of Rudolf Steiner as a starting point. We recognise that :

- We all have a unique spiritual core and are all ultimately equally valued
- We are each on an individual path of evolution and development, and need to be supported in that, and respect it in others.
- Work gives each of us the opportunity to express the responsibility we all have towards the earth, the world of nature and our fellow human beings, as well as enabling us to enhance our physical, psychological and spiritual well-being.
- Working as a group in a mutually supportive environment we are encouraged to develop initiative and to take responsibility and to appreciate and respect the contributions of our colleagues.

OBJECTIVES :

1. To provide work activities that have a clear and significant end product, the achievement of which can give satisfaction to all involved by...

- Restoring tools in conjunction with Tools For Self Reliance
- Growing plants for sale
- Growing vegetables to take home
- Making items for sale and as gifts
- Maintaining the land and buildings at Milltown

2. To ensure that workers, volunteers and co-ordinators receive the support they need – social, practical or financial – to do their work by....

- Holding regular discussions with workers on daily work activities, future activities such as trips out, and their involvement in the Day Workshop
- Ensuring that co-ordinators are always available to give advice on social or practical difficulties
- Ensuring that co-ordinators receive adequate salary and that the levels are agreed at a co-ordinators meeting
- Working flexibly to allow workers, co-ordinators and volunteers to fulfil other responsibilities
- Giving constructive support to those who feel that they would like to move on from the Day Workshop

3. To ensure that workers, volunteers and co-ordinators have the opportunity to learn new skills by....

- Holding regular discussions with workers on work plans and carrying out decisions included in them
- Visiting other projects to see other possibilities

- Encouraging everyone in the Day Workshop to develop relevant skills and interests through attending meetings and training events
 - Finding and bringing in instructors in new skills
4. To raise the profile of the Day Workshop and develop it as an integral part of local service provision by....
- Publicising events in the media
 - Holding Open Days and stalls at local events
 - Developing closer links with other organisations and professionals providing services in the area
5. To work in ways that respect the environment by....
- Growing vegetables organically
 - Recycling waste responsibly and reusing materials where possible
 - Upgrading the workshop premises to conserve energy

5. STAKEHOLDERS - THOSE CONSULTED AND WHY .

In our original Social Audit we identified the following Stakeholders :

- Workers
- Families / Carers
- Co-ordinators / volunteers / students (Staff)
- Families of co-ordinators
- Council of Management
- Funders - Social Work and grant giving organisations
- Taxi firms
- Other organisations with whom we work
- Arbuthnott Estate - our landlords
- Tool donators
- Organisations receiving tools
- Health and Safety adviser
- Customers for plants and craft items

On that occasion we sent questionnaires to the first eight on that list.

The Social Audit Panel recommended that this time we should consult Arbuthnott Estate and also the residential part of Milltown Community, who up to then we had not acknowledged as a separate Stakeholder.

Our updated list of stakeholders is :

KEY

- Workers (15)
- *Carers of workers (family, professional carers or co-workers at Milltown House)*
- *Day Workshop co-ordinators (5)*
- *Milltown House*
- Milltown Community Council of Management
- Funders - Local Authority Social Work and grant-giving organisations.
- Other organisations with whom we work – Tools for Self Reliance, Mill of Benholm project, Forest View Centre, Mearns Area Project, Rotary Clubs, Thrive.
- *Arbuthnott Estate – Landlords*

OTHER

- Families of co-ordinators

- Taxi firms who bring workers to Milltown
- Tool donators
- Organisations who receive tools
- Customers for plants and craft items
- Visitors to the Day Workshop
- Other Camphill Communities

We held interviews with the groups in italics and a focus group with the co-ordinators. This was due to time constraints but was felt to cover the most important groups.

6. SCOPE OF THE SOCIAL AUDIT.

Method.

Interviews were held with six individual carers, the parents of two workers and a group of five House co-workers about each of the five House residents in turn. Those to be interviewed were given a list of the topics to be covered, and notes were made on identical pre-printed forms of the responses. The answers were then read back and agreed as a fair reflection of what had been said, and signed by both parties. For the five workers resident at Milltown Community an interview was held with the group of five co-workers from the House, whose answers were treated in the same way. These interviews were all conducted by Richard from the Day Workshop.

The interview with Keith Arbuthnott, Milltown's landlord was done in the same way, and again conducted by Richard.

The focus group with the five co-ordinators was organised and facilitated by Sue Briggs from the Mearns Area Project. The intention was to review the Aim, Values and Objectives. The aim was considered on an H Form but taken as a straight grading in terms of the performance in regard to the aim. Each of the five Objectives was considered separately and comments recorded on an H Form and also the different gradings given by the participants. The values were considered individually and Sue recorded the main points of the discussion.

The consultation on the relationship between the Day Workshop and Milltown House took the form of an evening meeting, chaired by Jilly Arbuthnott, a long-standing member of Milltown's Council of Management, who took notes of the discussion. Four co-ordinators from the Day Workshop attended and five co-workers from the House.

THE WORK OF THE DAY WORKSHOP – 2003/2004

This year was very much a year of consolidation. There were very few changes in either activities or personnel.

We completed four joinery kits and one construction kit, about 450 tools in all. These were sent to Africa through Tools for Self Reliance. Two of the kits went to groups of artisans in Sierra Leone and one each to groups in Uganda, Mozambique and Tanzania. We also restored a bench planer that went to TFSR to be forwarded on .

We took plants to three Plant Sales – at the mill of Benholm, at Laurencekirk Community Centre and once to the Square in Stonehaven. Originally we planned a second visit to Stonehaven but the weather let us down. Due to the amount of work involved in growing plants the vegetable garden got planted very late. Despite this there was a reasonable autumn and winter crop, and those workers who wanted to were able to take home vegetables.

We had a craft stall at the Arbuthnott Advent Sale in November and workers also had the opportunity to make presents for Christmas.

We bought and dismantled a wooden garage, the pieces of which were then brought to Milltown to be re-erected as our new garden shed.

We had a successful day out in July to visit two gardening projects – Sugaracre at Falkland, and the Walled Garden in Perth. At both we were shown round and had the opportunity to ask a lot of questions. We also enjoyed visiting the café at the Walled Garden ! We also paid a visit to the TFSR workshop in Aberdeen for a social visit and a look through their tool shelves.

Two new workers joined us in the course of the year, one for one day a week and the other for half a day. Both settled in well. No workers moved on and there were no changes among co-ordinators in the year either. All the co-ordinators attended a one day Emergency First Aid course at Aberdeen College in April.

In this year it still continued to be difficult to hold regular six-monthly Work Plan meetings with individual workers, but on the whole suggestions raised in these meetings were carried through. (Since April 2004 we have managed this much better and these are now incorporated with internal six-monthly reviews as requested by the Care Commission). Every worker has Care Management reviews and at all of these it was felt that the Day Workshop was an appropriate place for the individual concerned and that they were all benefiting from working here.

Publicity was a low priority and once again we feel we have reached a plateau. In one of the interviews it was said that the Day Workshop is known now, and in the local community many people know of us. However there are still a lot of people who do not, so this will have to be picked up again. We also did not have an Open Day, because the obvious time to have it on a summer Saturday was filled with plant sales. Again it will be something to think about.

All the vegetables we grew were organic and all scrap metal was recycled. We had a new roof put on the main workshop building, which did not make it noticeably warmer but certainly keeps out the rain much more efficiently. We have also been given a copy of the Green Office Checklist, which we propose to look at in due course to find further ways of minimising our environmental impact.

7. ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL AUDIT.

INTERVIEWS WITH CARERS

There were fourteen interviews held. All the responses were verbal quotes and there was no scoring of comments that would make statistical analysis possible. We have attempted to pick a reasonable cross-section of responses and give numbers where similar responses were given. In hind-sight some scoring on a 0 – 10 scale might have been helpful to enable us to give a general average to people's views in answer to some questions.

QUESTION - How has it been for them in the Day Workshop in the last year ?

Overall – workers seem happy to go to work and happy when they come home.
This was the main criteria that carers used to assess how workers felt about the Day Workshop.

One carer said it was difficult to be sure how the worker really experiences the Workshop

One that : “ it is still getting easier for her to get to the Workshop “

Two carers said that the individual got up earlier on Milltown days, and one worker was keen to come even when told he could stay at home because he had a cold.

Two carers said “ sees it as work “

One that “ he feels appreciated as a person “

Two said “ he likes the work “ and one “ the variety of work “

Two mentioned the positive relationships workers had formed in the Workshop

Two said that the workers talk about people that they work with, one of them emphasised that there was no distinction made between workers/co-ordinators/volunteers in such conversations.

QUESTION - Has there been any change from previous years ?

Six carers commented that they saw little or no change from a year ago. Of those who did most noted a growing maturity or greater confidence.

“ He is more confident and more willing to take “ no “ for an answer.

“ Impression he is getting more settled “

“ Still does not speak at all in the Workshop. She will choose her moment. “

“ Does not talk about (another worker) so obsessively “

“ Not so drawn away by tractors etc. Took on responsibility of opening the polytunnel and watering on summer weekends very positively “

“ Seems more confident and initiates conversation now if she meets people from Milltown when she is out and about “

QUESTION - How could we improve their experience in the Day Workshop ?

Most of the answers to this question were very practical and will be taken up through individual Work Plans. Such suggestions as :

“ Potential for more communication through digital photos “

“ He needs variety as boredom can set in “

“ Possibly make something wooden to bring home. A garden seat ? “

“ Try giving her an area of responsibility – a task that she has responsibility for “

One carer noted that it would be important to maintain the new diet that had been worked out with a particular individual by the dietician.

THE AIM

QUESTION - How far do you feel we live up to our aim ?

Overall most people felt we lived up to it.

Some comments:

“ Pretty well really “

“ Aim is fine “

“ Hard to say as we have never seen him working at Milltown “

“ 100% “

“ He has done things at Milltown we did not think he would do “.

THE VALUES

QUESTION - How far do you feel we live up to our values ?

People found this more difficult to comment on and tended to be brief.

“ Fine “

“ From what I hear you live up to them “

“ Nothing much to argue with “

“ All incorporated in the way the Workshop works “

“ Good values to have , they suit him “

“ Difficult to comment on – obvious when you come in that people are valued “

“ Goes hand in hand with aim. Uniqueness is there. Practical work gives understanding of how things work. No massive expectations of what he can do. Everything is valued “

THE OBJECTIVES

QUESTION - How far do you feel we achieve our objectives?

People tended to comment generally and did not single out specific objectives.

One person found it difficult to comment.

One carer felt “ you fulfil most of your objectives “

Three said that from what the worker they knew said the objectives are achieved

Several comments were made that clear activities are important :

“ He would not work if he did not want to “

“ Very much a product man so good activities “

“ Valuable end products “

Two commented that there was plenty of support

Another that “ People know who Milltown are now. Sales have raised profile “

Another “ Need to discuss land use and gardening. Pleased that maintenance of buildings is still included “

QUESTION - Do you see any alterations or improvements we could make to the aim, the values or the objectives ?

Five respondents said “ no “ or “ not really “.

One suggested “ they could be put into a form workers could relate to “

Another that “ needs to be something about co-ordinators being pro-active in encouraging workers to extend and optimise their potential “

Another that “ the layout could be friendlied up “

Another observation made was “ Pretty comprehensive. Nothing airy fairy. Solid “

QUESTION - Do you have any other thoughts or observations ?

A range of different thoughts were contributed here from the practical to the appreciative.

“ A farm shop or similar at the end of the road “

“ Continuous communication to let other groups know what we are about – a pop-in afternoon or Open Day

(Social Audit interview was a) “ Good process “

“ Getting paid would help him develop a more realistic attitude to money “

“ As far as he is concerned it's the best move he has made “

“ Thank God for Milltown, it's been the saviour of this young man “

INTERVIEW WITH KEITH ARBUTHNOTT - MILLTOWN'S LANDLORD

This interview took place in the Estate Office on 6th May 2004.

Keith Arbuthnott said that his experience of the Day Workshop was limited to what he had seen on one visit, and that he did not feel he could say much about the project or about possible ways we could improve it. He assumed that it was successful, but he did not experience it as something separate from the residential part of the Community. He did experience that Milltown was now open to more people. He could not suggest any way in which we, as the Day Workshop, could be better tenants. He thought there might be the possibility that we could be practically involved with work projects at the Village Hall or in future Community Woodland. He felt that Milltown had a good relationship with the local community, and said that Milltown's involvement with events at the Hall was appreciated. He would have no problem with the Day Workshop having a seasonal roadside stall to sell plants.

FOCUS GROUP WITH CO-ORDINATORS

Sue Briggs initiated discussion about the aim, the values and each of the objectives in turn. At the end we each marked where we felt the Day Workshop stood on a scale from 1 (poor) to 10 (good) for each of these except the values. The marks were not precisely made, so the average scores quoted here are approximate only. For the Objectives, comments were made and noted as “For “ and “Against “ and then suggestions for improvements for that objective were made and noted.

AIM - Milltown Day Workshop gives individuals who need to work in a supported environment the opportunity to grow in dignity, self-respect and practical and social skills by involvement with others in work activities.

The average score on this was 7.8

VALUES - We promote the aim using insights of Rudolf Steiner as a starting point. We recognise that :

- We all have a unique spiritual core and are all ultimately equally valued
- We are each on an individual path of evolution and development, and need to be supported in that, and respect it in others.
- Work gives each of us the opportunity to express the responsibility we all have towards the earth, the world of nature and our fellow human beings, as well as enabling us to enhance our physical, psychological and spiritual well-being.

- Working as a group in a mutually supportive environment we are encouraged to develop initiative and to take responsibility and to appreciate and respect the contributions of our colleagues.

All five co-ordinators agreed with these four value statements. It was noted that they recognised the importance of respect to other individuals along with tolerance and understanding, and that they all felt valued as co-ordinators. There was general agreement that the values were seen as appropriate.

OBJECTIVES

1. To provide work activities that have a clear and significant end product, the achievement of which can give satisfaction to all involved by...

The comments for this statement suggested that workers were perceived to get pleasure and satisfaction from these activities. Tool kits were sent off and Plant Sales held regularly. There was a variety of work for all abilities, co-ordinators had the necessary skills and enthusiasm, and a sense of humour pervaded.

Comments against centred on the lack of space for activities, especially crafts but also outside, and the fact that workshop space had to be shared between activities. Craft areas were often not clean enough. It was also difficult sometimes to find appropriate craft ideas that workers could really be involved in, and selling the end product was not simple. We needed more tools to work on, and there was a time and space conflict between growing plants and growing vegetables.

Suggestions:

A separate craft room
A potting shed and tool shed
Dedicated spaces for different activities

Average score : 7.9

2. To ensure that workers, volunteers and co-ordinators receive the support they need by...

The comments for this statement suggested a good feeling of mutual support among co-ordinators and a confidence that the Council of Management were there if needed. Organisation within the Workshop tended to be on an informal basis, but this gives scope for flexibility. There is good support if needing time off for family commitments and salaries were perceived as "fine".

Comments against suggested a concern that Council of Management members did not have personal experience of the Day Workshop and that co-ordinators did not necessarily know who they were. There was a feeling that there were not enough opportunities for co-ordinators to meet. Also a concern that support to workers could be negatively affected by different co-ordinators being in on different days.

Suggestions :

Attempting to find ways of co-ordinators meeting more regularly
Management Council members to be invited on a tour of the Workshop to raise awareness of who they are, possibly Council of Management minutes available to co-ordinators
Employ additional co-ordinator/s especially for gardening

Average score : 2.9 . This score seems very low, which does not really reflect the comments made. The areas that probably scored this down were the difficulty in managing to hold regular Work Plan meetings with workers, and of having co-ordinator meetings, which

everyone felt were a good idea but were practically difficult to arrange. Also the perception that the Council of Management were a fairly distant body.

3. To ensure that workers, volunteers and co-ordinators have the opportunity to learn new skills....

Comments for suggested that the possibility to attend training events was there and listed training that had been received.

Comment against was that people needed to look for their own training events.

Suggestions ;

Some health and safety training.

Average score : 6.3

4. To raise the profile of MDW and develop it as an integral part of local service provision..

Comments for listed various contacts and events and suggested that the Day Workshop was perceived by co-ordinators as integrated

Comments against noted that there was no longer a regular newsletter, and a feeling that the links we have need a new push.

Suggestions :

Open Day and Newsletter, and look into developing the web-site. Also more general publicity.

Average score : 5.0

5. To work in ways that respect the environment

Comments for noted recycling that took place through our activities, and our new central heating, frost stats and roof. Comments against noted the building was still not fully heat-proofed, and could be further upgraded. Also the question of chemically spraying plants against specific diseases.

Suggestions :

Double glazing, drain-friendly washing up liquid.

Average score : 6.5

DAY WORKSHOP AND MILLTOWN HOUSE CONSULTATION

Four co-ordinators from the Day Workshop and five co-workers from the House met with Jilly Arbuthnott there to facilitate and take notes.

There was a brief introduction to the history of Milltown and of the Day Workshop followed by discussion started with this brief :

“ What do we mean by Community ? How far do people want community – given that it is essential that no one feel excluded ?
We would like to start to work to be clear what we share and what are our differences, so that we can appreciate each others positions.
We have all come to Milltown as a community based on Anthroposophy. Is that a reality at the moment ? “

The aim and the values of the Day Workshop were read out as a starting point.

Comments :

There was a clear perception that the relationship between the House and the Workshop had changed dramatically over the eight years of the Workshop's life. From being very dependent on the House in the early days the Workshop was now able to stand on its own feet.

This meant that a new relationship could now be established and that more interchange between the two would be a good idea. There was a suggestion that co-ordinators and co-workers could exchange for lunch or tea-break.

There were also questions about information flowing back and forth between the two, although a suggestion of a morning and afternoon hand over of information was not felt to be appropriate.

There was a clear recognition that those who live in and those who work “ nine to five “ have different perceptions of community, and there was some exploration of what we meant by community.

It was felt to be very important to maintain the feeling for residents of the House that they are “going to work “.

There were no more concrete proposals as a result of the meeting, but it was felt to have been useful to have this exchange of views and to have started a dialogue that could be continued.

Jilly Arbuthnott's perception was that there was a bit of tension and anxiety about which she had not expected. Some people seemed shy about speaking in a large group like this one and might have been more relaxed in a smaller one. She also found her position of facilitator and note taker difficult and would have appreciated a separate minute taker.

ISSUES RAISED IN PREVIOUS SOCIAL AUDIT AND PROGRESS MADE

In our previous Social Audit, which covered July 2000 to March 2001, there was a section headed : “ Main Issues, Conclusions and Recommendations “. We will now look at each of these in turn and see what progress has been made.

1. “ Improvement of physical working environment. The main comments related to heating, but we will need to look at facilities for new activities “.

Since 2001 we have installed oil-fired central heating in the two workshops and the dining room. This means that the workshop is warm when we arrive in the morning and with thermostatic controls on all the radiators means we can maintain a comfortable working temperature at all times. The system seems reasonably economical to run and in environmental terms is a great improvement on the old electric fan heaters. We still have the wood stove in the main workshop, mainly because sawing firewood is such a popular activity,

but it also allows us to convert old wood etc into heat. All the wood we buy in is off-cuts - "backs" - from the local saw-mill.

We have put a new roof on the workshop, which means it is now completely water-tight, which the original felt certainly was not !

We have converted the third main room in the workshop building into a dining room, with a small kitchen off it. This gives more space and comfort and is considerably more convenient than our original dining area, which was in a separate building.

We have moved the office into the corner of the new dining room, which has given us more space in the craft workshop. This is partly taken up with a new hot water tank. This gives us more hot water at a consistent temperature than the original system, and will be connected to the oil boiler, giving us environmental benefits once the plumber comes back ! The craft workshop has been upgraded with new storage cupboards and shelving and been redecorated.

These changes have allowed us to introduce the new activities we have wished to.

2. "Actively look for ways to develop the project to continue to meet the needs of the current workers particularly those less able".

In January 2003 Gillian started making paper on Thursdays with the group who had been making baskets. The new activity was popular and the end product sold well at sales before Christmas. Both the basket-making and the paper-making appeal to our less skilful workers. We have increased our involvement with the developing project at the Mill of Benholm. This old water-mill was reopened as a tourist attraction in 1996 by Aberdeenshire Council. It is being taken over by a group of local people, with strong support from Aberdeenshire Council Social Work, to provide supported work opportunities for people with learning disabilities and mental health problems. They will work alongside employed members of staff to run the tea-room, work the garden and do general maintenance. We have been going for two years to work on specific projects identified by the committee and project development officer, such as weeding the garden, laying slabs and gravelling tracks. It has given us a wider social context in which to work, and everyone who has been down has enjoyed working in a different place and meeting new people.

3. "Follow up contact with Care Managers to find out what they would like to see us offering in terms of more specialised provision"

One conversation with a Care Manager was held, but no specific suggestions emerged.

4. "Improve our development of Work Plans to make it more regular".

This continued to be a problem, basically one of finding time to sit down with fifteen people within a reasonably short time. However a new effort was made - again - and we completed all the work plans in two weeks in June 2004. The next time will be January 2005. An added impetus to the process is the wish of the Care Commission to see us work to develop a system of internal review every six months, separate from Care Manager reviews. We plan to incorporate this into the Work Plan meeting.

5. "Improve our administration".

Gail has now worked for three years on a Tuesday on basic administration tasks and the change is enormous.

6. "Upgrade our computer".

We were able to do this shortly after the last Social Audit, thanks to the generous donation of a computer from Shell. We upgraded it again in March 2004. This has simplified life considerably. As with number 5 above it takes an effort to remember how much more difficult our lives were before we were able to make these changes.

7. "Delete growing plants organically from our objectives".

Done !

COMPLIANCE

Our activities now fall within the remit of the Care Commission and we have a contract with Aberdeenshire Council, which defines the mutual expectations on providing the service. By the end of the period covered by this Social Audit we had never had a formal inspection from the Care Commission or a contract compliance visit from Aberdeenshire Council's Contracts Officer. We had a meeting with the Contracts Officer after the last Social Audit was finalised to discuss the process of Social Auditing and how we had gone about it. She was extremely supportive of our efforts and encouraged us to continue with it, and felt, fortunately, that an annual audit would be too ambitious !

After the end of the period covered by this Audit we had visits from both Paul Clemson of the Care Commission and Mhairi Mclean our Contracts Officer. Both meetings went well. Paul's report had no requirements or recommendations, simply some areas to work on, which are being progressed. Mhairi was similarly happy with how things were being run and was interested in our plans for the future.

We had a visit in the summer from the Health and Safety inspector from Aberdeenshire Council and he was quite happy with everything he saw in the Day Workshop.

We are up to date with our fire equipment inspections.

MAIN ISSUES, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall the impression received through our consultations is that the Day Workshop is perceived to be doing a good job and by and large living up to its aim and values. There were a number of suggestions for improvement that emerged at various points in the process and they are listed here, in no particular order.

- The aim, values and objectives could be put in a form that workers could relate to. This implies a larger question of how much the workers understand what is going on with the Social Audit.
- Co-ordinators could be more pro-active in encouraging workers to extend and optimise their potential
- We could open a farm shop or plant outlet at the roadside.
- There could be better communication with other groups. An Open Day or pop-in afternoon was mentioned. The co-ordinators felt that we could hold Open Days and restart the newsletters that we did in the early days. We could also develop our web site, and have more general publicity.
- We could follow up Keith Arbuthnott's suggestion that we could perhaps be involved in practical work at the Village Hall or in future Community Woodland.
- We could develop a separate craft-room, also a tool-shed and potting shed. These in an attempt to have more dedicated spaces for specific activities
- We could have more regular co-ordinator meetings
- We could try and develop closer personal links between the Day Workshop and individual members of Milltown's Council of Management. We could also explore the possibility of Management Council minutes being available to co-ordinators.
- We could consider exploring the possibility of employing additional co-ordinators, especially in the gardening area.
- Co-ordinators could have additional Health and Safety training
- We could install double-glazing in the workshop.
- We could use drain-friendly washing up liquid.
- We could have exchanges of Workshop co-ordinators and House co-workers at tea-breaks or lunchtime, to develop more awareness of how the other works.
- We could find ways to improve the information flow between House and Workshop
- Some co-ordinators are not familiar with Rudolf Steiner and the context this gives the Day Workshop. It could be useful for background information on Rudolf Steiner and the associated ethos to be available

We will be making a big effort to reinstate regular co-ordinator meetings, and taking up the issues raised here will be a part of those meetings.

PROBLEMS AND WEAKNESSES OF SOCIAL AUDIT PROCESS

The main problem with this Social Audit has been the length of time it has taken to do. The first interviews were held in April 2003 and the Panel meeting was on 10th Dec. 2004. None of the suggestions for action have lost their validity despite the time lapse, but clearly this needs to be addressed by the co-ordinators and a way found to speed up the process.

It is also true that the Social Audit is still a one man show. This gives consistency, but it would strengthen the process and bed it more into the life of the Day Workshop if more people were actively involved.

We deliberately limited the scope of this second Audit, so that it would not be so challenging to complete as the first one had been. What the Social Audit Panel will feel about this we do not yet know, but it seems realistic to expect the third to go to greater depth, with implications for the comments already made above.

It also remains to be seen how simple it will be to produce an edited version of the Report for wider distribution. In the initial planning it was hoped that the way the report was written would allow for simple editing, but this rather slipped out of mind in the actual writing ! The extra time and effort required for this the first time round was seen as a major question. Also the fact that the Panel did not see the edited version, in order to give it their seal of approval.

There is also the question of how the Social Audit process is understood, or not, by the workers.

FUTURE PLANS

I feel that this has been a valid and valuable process. We can definitely improve it further. I look forward to discussing these questions at the Social Audit Panel meeting, and then in due course to starting to plan our third Social Audit. I think we will have a wee break first though !

Richard Firth.

Milltown Day Workshops Social Audit Statement 2003/4

The Social Audit Panel has examined the draft Social Accounts submitted to us and discussed them in detail with Richard Firth of Milltown Day Workshops at the Social Audit Panel meeting held on 10 December 2004. I have examined the revised Social Accounts which were prepared following the Social Audit Panel meeting and which have taken into account various points identified in the notes of the Social Audit Panel Meeting [1]. We also examined a sample of the data and the sources of information on which the Social Accounts have been based.

We believe that the process outlined above has given us sufficient information on which to base our opinion.

We are satisfied that, given the scope of the social accounting explained in the revised draft and given the limitations of time available to us, the Social Accounts are free from material mis-statement and present a fair and balanced view of the performance of Milltown Day Workshops as measured against its stated values, and social and environmental objectives and the views of the stakeholders who were consulted.

In the notes of the Social Audit Panel meeting we identified a number of important issues to be taken into consideration during the next social audit cycle. In particular we would refer to the following:

- i) That MDW consider adding a sixth Objective to do with the sustainability of the organisation and the adoption of good management and financial practices;
- ii) That the ideas behind the Values might be better “unpicked” for purposes of meaningful future consultation;
- iii) That MDW consider using participant observation as an appropriate methodology to obtain the views of workers.

The members of the Social Audit Panel were:

- a) John Pearce, Chair, Community Enterprise Consultancy & Research
- b) Steve Lyons, Co-Facilitator, Camphill Scotland
- c) Clark Simpson, Johnshaven

Signed:.....
Chair of the Social Audit Panel

Dated: 18 March 2005

(1) The notes of the Social Audit Panel meeting form part of the Social Accounting and Auditing process and may, by arrangement, be inspected at the offices of Milltown Day Workshops at Milltown, Arbuthnott, Laurencekirk, Aberdeenshire AB30 1PB. Members of the Social Audit Panel have acted in an individual capacity.