Introducing President Phoebe, by Janet Gurney, Director of Training

Many of you, like us all at Us in a Bus, have been inspired, delighted, challenged and re-inspired by the work of Dr Phoebe Caldwell over the years. Over many years I might add – Phoebe has been practicing, researching and writing in this field for well over 30 years.

I remember seeing a BBC Horizon programme about her work in 1990 and thinking “That’s what we are trying to do – and she’s doing it so much better”. That inspired us to find out more, to learn about Intensive Interaction, to try to understand the impact that autism or a profound learning disability might have on sensory experience – and to trust ourselves enough to have a go and to build bridges with people who seemed to be isolated.

We are thrilled that in our 25th anniversary year, and after 25 years of inspiration, Phoebe has agreed to be Us in a Bus’s Honorary President. She kindly says “I immensely admire what you have done setting up a long-standing viable service and am really very touched and honoured that you should ask me”.

Phoebe has been a vital part of a movement towards opening up connection, communication and emotional engagement for people with complex needs and we are very proud that she wants to be connected with our work.

Phoebe generously invited me to share the stage with her at a recent conference in London organised by The Caldwell Autism Foundation. There is always something I learn from hearing her speak. And it is always good to be reminded that doing nothing – leaving someone in isolation – is not an option. We’re looking forward to continuing our process of being inspired by her to carry on connecting lives.

And from the twinkle in her eye in this photo of her wearing her ‘President Phoebe’ shirt I would say she is not taking the honour too seriously....

And meet Victoria
our new
Chief Executive
on Page 2

In this Edition:

Pages 2 and 6 – Marianne takes us back to 1990 when Us in a Bus was formed

Page 5 – Follow Olivia through the three sensory zones at our Sense of Colour Event

Pages 7 and 8 – The Appliance of Science – Anne Laney shares some of the reasons why they use Intensive Interaction

Page 9 – Meet Renée Canter, Business Development Manager for Us in a Bus
MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

As I write this first message for Linking Lives, I’m only two weeks into my new role at Us in a Bus, but already it feels like I’ve been here forever. Thank you to all the team and Trustees for giving me such a wonderful welcome, and for planning such a great transition.

I have already found two things that inspire me on a daily basis. Firstly the fantastic team at Us in a Bus. I am amazed by the creativity and constant enthusiasm that surrounds me here in our new ‘hut’ at Redhill Aerodrome. I’ve never before worked with such committed and entertaining people.

Secondly, the people that we support on a daily basis, with four teams out on the road criss-crossing Surrey to visit about 60 homes a week. Both the team and the people we support seem to specialise in change – trying things in different ways, finding delight in new challenges, seeking adaptions that work for them. But, the first thing I’ve noticed that doesn’t change is the challenges for funding care for the most vulnerable people in society, especially as funding comes from a diversity of sources.

But my real job in this edition of the newsletter is to wish Janet well as she departs in February for a long overdue sabbatical. Janet has been guiding Us in a Bus, delivering sessions for clients, running the teams, fighting funding battles and generally keeping the wheels on the bus for the last 25 years. All of us will miss her vast memory for names, faces, homes, clients, service users, staff and funny stories whilst she spends time with her husband Colin. But we are looking forward to welcoming her back as Director of Training in May where she will focus on delivering training, with courses planned for the rest of this year. We’ll be expanding our training offering, and also coaching and mentoring, so please do get in touch with the office if you’d like to find out more, or perhaps book a refresher course.

In the meantime, please join me in wishing Janet bon voyage for a few weeks. Let’s hope that the time away will allow her to firm up the chapter headings of the book I’m hoping she’s going to write on Intensive Interaction!

I’d also love to hear news and thoughts from the wider Us in a Bus family, so please do get in touch with any ideas or stories you might have.

• With a diverse background in politics, energy conservation, business development, management consultancy and charitable trusts, Victoria has a wealth of experience to bring to Us in a Bus. She is also Chairman of the Brigitte Trust, which provides support in the home for people with life threatening illnesses in Surrey, helping

Back to the Future – Marianne in a Metro

Us in a Bus was formed in 1990, initiated and overseen by The Spastic Society (now Scope) and funded for three years by The South West Area Health Authority. The person Scope wisely employed to get the project started, Marianne Hecker, takes up the story ....

“When I began work there was no ‘Bus’ and no ‘Us’, it was just me in a Metro! So it was time to employ a co-worker. That’s when Janet Gurney joined me, and what a find she turned out to be! We were a team, yes only of two, but there was no stopping us, we were off, initially me in my Metro and Janet on her Motorbike!

My next very scary job was to buy a van (not a bus) to carry us and the equipment we needed to the four hospitals in Surrey where we would work.”

Turn to page 6 to read the rest of Marianne’s story
A Day in the Life of an IP

*Tiw Raegening, an Interaction Practitioner, tells us about the rewarding work they do every day at Us in a Bus...*

“When someone joins an us in a Bus session for the first time, it’s important that we observe carefully the things that seem to be of interest and importance to them – this is our first step in building connections between us.

We celebrate people’s skills and interests in various ways, using ourselves, as well as various pieces of sensory ‘equipment’. This is our starting point and we use our imagination to find activities that are relevant, social and interesting to each person.

Sometimes we might look and sound a bit ‘happy-clappy’ – but it’ll be for a reason, not just for the sake of it! We are not trying to entertain to keep someone occupied – there is more to communication than that. What we are exploring are the connections and responses that build up between us.

Of course, there will be frustrations and mis-connections along the way and this is where we need to be patient, to listen, wait, observe. We need to go at each person’s pace, not ours. They may walk away, not be in the mood, be sleepy – or just need more time to decide whether to let us into their world.

One of the approaches we use in our work is Intensive Interaction. This starts with observing then mirroring someone’s actions, or echoing their sounds. By doing this, we are celebrating the actions they will be most aware of, letting them know that we are acknowledging them, that the things they do are interesting and important to us as well as to them. We all like to be noticed – it’s a fundamental step in building a conversation. It is vital that the people we support feel that we have noticed and heard them – and that we are interested in what they want to do next.

By involving ourselves in their ‘language’ in this way, a shared activity evolves and we can carefully and imaginatively (that word again!) encourage and enhance interest in the social world.

The connection evolves and we begin to embellish movements and sounds by using sensory objects or pieces of equipment. However, some of the interactions that have seemed most connecting have involved no equipment at all.

The intensive aspect might come when we exaggerate responses and maybe begin to gently stretch someone’s comfort zones by carefully offering and re-offering an experience or an opportunity. All of us have had the experiences of stretching our comfort zones a little when we are relaxed and feel safe. In this way we can support people to be less fearful and to make more informed, personal choices.

As well as using imagination, Intensive Interaction, patience and equipment, humour can be a powerful tool. I have no qualms about being playful in a slapstick or a more subtle way. The lively interactions are easy to spot, and some of the more subtle ones might look as if nothing is happening – but in my experience sometimes these are the most satisfying and meaningful connections we have.”
What a way to celebrate 25 years!

The St. John’s Ambulance Hall in Redhill was transformed by the Us in a Bus Team in June into three colour experience zones, using three colours from our new logo – a green jungle experience to represent nature, a red campfire to celebrate friendship and warmth and a blue space exploring imagination. This was for the Sense of Colour Event, which was the first of the celebrations to mark the 25th Anniversary of Us in a Bus.

Twenty two of our Service Users came to this unique event, which explored the senses of sight, touch, sound and smell in a truly multi-sensory experience.

Chair of the Trustees, Julia Hancock, couldn’t believe her eyes when she saw how the team had transformed the rather ‘bland’ hall in Redhill and said “It is absolutely amazing what the Us in the Bus team have done. In all the years that I have been working with people with learning disabilities this is the most creatively themed event that I have ever seen. Very well done to the whole team.”

People Inspired during Conference

Us in a Bus would like to thank everyone who joined them at their “Intensive Interaction and Emotional Wellbeing” conference held on 2 December. The whole team ended the day feeling buoyed up by the interest and enthusiasm people had shown in our work, as well as inspired and informed by our speakers. And your evaluation forms very clearly tell us that you all felt something similar!

Thank you for being so willing to enter into the discussions during the workshops and in breaks – there was a tangible sense of common purpose throughout the whole conference. The theme of focusing on well-being rather than doing didn’t mean that the conference didn’t lead to actions; it’s been a pleasure to hear people’s plans and ideas that the day engendered.

If, for you, those plans include getting more people on-board with the concept of Intensive Interaction, you might like to pass on to them our dates for our ‘open to all’ Introduction to intensive Interaction workshops for 2016. If you want to know more about the in-house workshops we can provide, or our coaching/mentoring input, please get in touch to discuss what you need. You can call 01737 764774 or check out our website for all the current training dates planned during 2016 – www.usinabus.org.uk.
"Linking Lives followed one participant, Olivia, as she travelled through the three sensory zones and you can see what an amazing time she had!"

**The Green Zone**

“Green to represent nature and excite the senses”

**The Red Zone**

“Red to celebrate friendship and warmth”

**The Blue Zone**

“Blue to explore the imagination”
A Garden Party to Remember!

Gorgeous warm sunny weather, great company, scrumptious food and a magnificent venue made it a 2015 Garden Party to remember. Over 75 people came together for the Summer Garden Party at Pyrford Court, near Woking in July to celebrate Us in a Bus’s 25th year of providing their unique services to a wide range of people who have profound learning disabilities and complex needs. As well as current staff, trustees and their families, friends of Us in a Bus and former Interaction Practitioners and their families were also invited to celebrate the difference that so many people have made during the last 25 years.

Back to the Future – Marianne in a Metro

Continued from page 2 …..

“Over the next few years Janet and I visited these four hospitals, where we worked with around 40 people who would share hour long sessions once a week. For many of these adults this was their only opportunity to experience social interaction.

With the closure of these long stay hospitals and the advent of care in the community, the people who we worked with were moved into smaller residential homes, which were widely scattered across the Counties. This meant that we needed to expand our organization. We needed more staff, more vans and more administrative help, because when the three year’s initial funding ended we became a registered charity, which then meant we also had to raise our own funds.

Looking back over the last 25 years with Us in a Bus, it’s a pleasure to say that our work has gone from strength to strength and I am still supporting the organization as a Trustee. Our way of working has a name – Intensive Interaction – and Janet, as well as being our CEO, has been training people in this very effective way of communicating.

So in 2015 we now have 20 staff, some who work part-time, as well as our essential, and very effective, administrative staff. We have 4 vans and the team visit over 200 people every week. What wonderful growth I have seen during the last 25 years – good luck for the next 25!"
Like any connection between people, the purpose and the methods change according to what’s going on – and there can be a seamless segue from one purpose to another.

Graham Firth, who has been practicing and researching Intensive Interaction for many years (and who is keynote speaker at our Dec 2nd Conference – see page 4), talks about the Dual Process Model of Intensive Interaction.

There are, broadly speaking, two reasons people choose to use it. The first is because it is an excellent way to communicate with, and respond to, people who have profound, multiple and complex learning disabilities and/or autism. Sharing their language, extending their communication abilities and promoting self-expression (the Developmental Process Model). The second is because it offers an effective way to support people in their exploration of their social relationships with other people. Developing connections, building confidence and the understanding of how to positively influence others (the Social Inclusion Model).

Within the Us in a Bus team we regularly debate if these two models can be separated and, for the most part agree that actually both happen (either simultaneously or in a slightly staggered fashion) in pretty much every interactive conversation we are part of with the people we support - not necessarily independently from each other.

I now want to describe to you how an Us in a Bus group session works within the Dual Aspect Model, drawing on one specific session.

Each week, for four years now, we have been visiting seven people who live together in deepest Surrey. They each have a profound learning disability, and several have additional physical and sensory disabilities.

We have come to know the people well and recognize, notice and engage with the tiny (and not so tiny!) responses from each person.

We had noticed over several weeks that one lady (we will call her Joan) seemed to be experiencing a low mood and was very quiet. We decided that we would have a session specifically to boost her feelings of well-being. Knowing her favourite colour was red we planned to offer everyone else the opportunity to choose something from our red ‘tactile/sensory’ box to give to her. We hoped this would facilitate the process of people being able to express their feelings of empathy and to demonstrate their concern for her, if they chose to.

As we moved around the room singing our greeting song we were aware of the sensitivity with which the others were responding to Joan. We encourage each person to join us as we sing and to choose who we sing to next. For those who find it more difficult to choose, we observe everyone to see who may be ‘calling’ in some way (through a change in posture, an attentive tilt of the head) and suggest we go to them. We moved to join Joan and she gripped our offered hand tightly. One of the other people in the group (let’s call him Donny), who has a vigorous rhythmic head motion, vocalized clearly from across the room and we noticed this, pointing it out to Joan.

As a way of reinforcing everyone’s awareness of each other, and to illustrate to them how they have influence over each other, we frequently ‘share’ what they are doing by using rhythms from individuals in songs. On this occasion the energetic rhythm being provided by Donny didn’t seem to fit with Joan’s mood, although it was too brilliant to ignore! We spoke about this and wondered (out loud) what would happen if we started singing more quietly, but still using Donny emphatic rhythm, giving Joan every opportunity to join in if she wanted to.
We celebrated his sensitivity towards Joan’s feelings

As soon as we sang the first note, Donny’s vocalisations and head movements stopped and as we finished he began again. As we looked over to him we noticed he had turned his head towards us and had a broad smile on his face. We felt the change in what he was doing was intentional and celebrated his sensitivity towards Joan’s feelings, thanking him for his support of both us and her.

We also noticed that another person (let’s call him Rick) had adapted his tone and volume of his singing to reflect Joan’s apparent mood. For this person this is a common occurrence that seems to have developed over the years of his participation in the weekly session.

Rick loves singing and we have encouraged him in his self-expression. As we sing with him, matching his energy and volume and giving him plenty of space, we have been able to support him to practice how he modifies his singing.

Previously he found it hard to reduce the volume and could become ‘over stimulated’. As we have sung with him, responding to his voice and really listening, the depth of his ‘need’ to be loud seems to have changed.

He now regularly, and almost without fail, adapts his style of singing to fit with the person in the group we are singing to. For those who might need a little ‘encouragement’ to be aware (i.e. wake up!) he sings loudly and with gusto; for those like Joan he sings sensitively, really looking at her with fondness. When he chooses, he looks towards the person, points and says their name. His awareness of the others and the nature of his interaction with them has changed.

We wanted to hear and we valued what he has to say

Intensive Interaction has supported his exploration of how this might happen and it began with us proving to him that we wanted to hear and we valued what he has to say. We have celebrated his journey, which has resulted in an easily accessible expression of empathy for the people he lives with.

As we offer each person the box of red items, we support them to choose one to give to Joan. For three people with no sight, or who are less responsive, we offer a choice of two, stroking the items against their hands or face and noting their responses. Although we can’t know exactly what their responses may mean, experience has taught us that ‘going with’ the biggest response is a reliable way of fostering intentionality. So, when another lady raised her eyebrows dramatically when we gently rubbed her cheek with a piece of red fur and didn’t raise her eyebrows when we did the same with a red piece of Lego, we chose the fur. She has communicated her understanding that there is a difference in the items and it is our belief that if we treat these moments as intentional, they will, over time, become intentional. During interactions like this we are operating within the ‘developmental process model’, encouraging and supporting developments in communication. The fact that the purpose of the choice in this case is to find something to offer Joan also means we are facilitating connections between two ladies who live together and is therefore working within the Social Inclusion Model.

It is sometimes hard to see how ether model can operate separately. It is a little like the chicken and the egg. Does the courage to reach out to connect with others create an environment where greater communication is possible? Or does the realization that one is being listened to and one’s communication is being recognized lead to a desire to explore socially?

Whilst this case study offers an idea of how an Us in a Bus group session operates, it cannot accurately depict the fluidity and spontaneity of a session, when the practitioners are constantly celebrating, reinforcing, noticing and sharing the contributions of each group member. It cannot describe the expression of genuine fondness we saw on Rick’s face as we supported him to present Joan with the red feather rose he had chosen for her. Truly wonderful.
Meet the People behind Us in a Bus

In this edition of Linking Lives we find out a bit more about Renée Canter, who has been Business Development Manager at Us in a Bus for the last four years …..

Q Where did you work before joining Us in a Bus?
A I’ve done various things including cooking chicken nuggets for McDonalds and driving children living at a children’s home in South Africa to school! But my job before Us in a Bus was as a Business Advisor helping organisations set their goals and then putting plans in place to achieve them.

Q What does your job as Business Development Manager entail?
A My role is focused on raising awareness of the services Us in Bus delivers and the people we support. We’ve been working hard in the last 18 months to ensure that our look and the way we talk about ourselves represents the work we do. You will have seen, as a result of this work, our new logo and we are also about to launch our new website. We’re also using social media a lot more to engage with people and these projects challenge us continually to think about how we describe what we do and the impact we have.

I’m also responsible for raising funds to subsidise the sessions we deliver and to run specific projects like The Bus Stop. As a registered charity we aim to keep our fees down to make sure as many people as possible can access our support. We have a target to raise £80,000 this financial year to enable our sessions and projects to continue running. Most of our donations come from writing Grant Applications but I’m really keen to foster the support of individuals and organisations so more people get to know about the people we support living in our local communities. I’ve just recruited Trina to help with fundraising and we’re always keen to speak to people about what we do and how they can help.

Q What’s the most amazing aspect of your job?
A I love being here at the end of the day when my colleagues come back in the vans from sessions. The energy they have is infectious and hearing about the highs and lows of their day reminds me of the important role I have to play. I also love meeting people and telling them about Us in a Bus – it is the stories and enthusiasm of my colleagues that give me the words I need to talk about our work.

Q What do you do outside of work?
A Outside of Us in a Bus I also work as a Gardener and Garden Designer. I find pottering in my garden good for my soul, and my waistline, and for the last five years I have helped other people create the gardens they dream of. I love plants, and seeing plants, and so an ideal day for me would be visiting a garden and chatting with the owner about their garden. Gardening is in my genes; all my Grandparents gardened and the smell of Sweet Peas or Tomatoes brings back wonderful memories from my childhood.

Q What has been your biggest achievement in life so far?
A Being a Mum is hard to beat, but I was very proud to win Student of the Year when I was studying for my Post-Graduate Diploma – I wasn’t the best academic, but I was the student the teachers thought brought most to the class!

Q Who do you most admire in the world and why?
A My Mum and Dad. They are both unassuming and modest and are kind and thoughtful. They are practical and creative and great problem-solvers. They try things, are curious about the world and love learning. These are things I admire and I strive to be and do.
Spotlight on Fundraising

FLASHMOB SUPPORTS US IN A BUS AT THE BELFRY, REDHILL

£7,500 was raised for local charities through the sale of raffle tickets to win a brand new car, donated by The Belfry Shopping Centre at Redhill, and Us in a Bus raised £204 of this. Steve Parker, Senior Practitioner at Us in a Bus, was at The Belfry to receive the cheque, along with all the other charities.

But as well as selling raffle tickets, some of the Us in a Bus team also joined a group of 16 year olds from The Challenge Network, who performed a Flashmob at the Shopping Centre helping to raise awareness of the charity and the work we do.

Well done and thanks to everyone who supported us!

The Power of a SMILE

In October Us in a Bus launched a new social media campaign on Facebook and Twitter about the power of a SMILE.

A SMILE is a universally recognised experience, an expression of our humanity – shared by people whatever their ability, their language or their culture.

All of us at Us In A Bus are inspired by the universal importance of communication, recognising that for the people in our community who have a profound learning disability, connection and communication is sometimes found in surprising and delightful ways.

A SMILE transcends language, and is a symbol of human joy that costs nothing to give. Whether it’s a SMILE from a care worker, a SMILE from a passer by, or a parent breaking into a SMILE because of something positive that happens to their child - a SMILE is the shortest distance between us all.

So visit us on Facebook and Twitter and share what makes you SMILE, and what it means to you to receive a SMILE

www.facebook.com/UsinaBusUK and twitter.com/UsinABus

“Sometimes your joy is the source of your SMILE, but sometimes your SMILE can be the source of your joy.”

- Thich Nhat Hanh

www.usinabus.org.uk

“We all SMILE in the same language.”
Us in a Bus climbs Kilimanjaro thanks to Doug!

Doug Bennett has done it again for Us in a Bus, setting himself the huge challenge of climbing Mount Kilimanjaro to raise money for us. And raise money he has, with the total when we went to print reaching just over £2,000 and with money still being donated.

Doug and his friends set off on 23 October and it took a week of grueling climbing to reach the summit. And Doug carried the new Us in a Bus flag all the way and proudly wrapped himself in it at the top to celebrate achieving his challenge and raising so much money for us.

Doug told us why he wanted to do this “Following a golf day, a couple of mates said they were doing a jaunt up Kilimanjaro, so I thought, I love a challenge and Kilimanjaro is a good one! And I wanted to raise money for Us in a Bus because I think I’m lucky and they simply need support!”

But it wasn’t just a simple ‘jaunt’, Doug has had months and months of serious training, wearing a special mask to ready himself for the altitude he would be climbing and walking in.

Doug, thank you from everyone at Us in a Bus for your support and the huge amount of money you have raised, and many congratulations on such a fantastic personal achievement!

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A CHALLENGE?

Well, look no further, we have just the challenge for YOU!

Us in a Bus is still looking for five people to run the Brighton Marathon in April 2016 whilst raising as much money as possible for us.

Last year Rozzie completed her first ever marathon for us and raised nearly £2,000 in the process. She told us, "it was an amazing experience, the crowds in Brighton helped me through some really tough parts and I was so proud to have made it to the finish"

Apparently Brighton is one of the fastest marathon courses in the country, so if you are interested in taking one of the places in 2016 reserved for Us in a Bus runners please email renee.canter@usinabus.org.uk
WE HAVE MOVED!

As you will see from our address below, Us in a Bus has now moved to an office block at Redhill Aerodrome. Thanks to Renée for managing the move in very tight timescales and to the team for all their hard work in getting the new offices habitable. It is still work in progress, but when you look at the view all the hard work will be worth it!

Adopted by Concept Financial Planners

We're delighted to announce that we have been adopted as 'Charity of the Year' by Concept Financial Planners. They are a small team of Independent Financial Planners based in Reigate and will be supporting Us in a Bus and another local charity, The Lucy Raynor Foundation, through fundraising events and donations throughout the year. Concept Financial Planners believe in the value of personalised financial planning, backed by tactical and tailored financial advice. They achieve this by focusing unconditionally on their clients and by delivering an outstanding journey and experience. You can read more about them at www.conceptfinancialplanning.co.uk

INSPIRING WORDS

The Inspiring Words we have chosen for this edition of Linking Lives come in the form of a poem from the compilation ‘All That Sunlight” written by the much-loved American children’s author and poet, Charlotte Zolotow

People

Some people talk and talk
And never say a thing.
Some people look at you
And birds begin to sing.

Some people laugh and laugh
And yet you want to cry.
Some people touch your hand
And music fills the sky.

Paper copies of this Newsletter are produced through the kind generosity of Sutton & East Surrey Water

You can find us facebook.com/usinabusuk @UsInABus

Disclaimer
Us in a Bus cannot accept liability for any errors in this publication. No part of this publication can be reproduced, in any form, without the written permission of Us in a Bus

© Us in a Bus
North Block
Redhill Aerodrome
Kings Mill Lane, Redhill
Surrey RH1 5JY
Tel: 01737 764774
www.usinabus.org.uk