**Convention Write Up 2023**

 Convention 2023 celebrated 50 years of BDDG – a landmark milestone and one given the recognition it deserved with increased numbers of delegates and branding celebrating both the half century plus 40 years of the BDDG families group. The convention was held at the beautiful DeVere Cranage estate in Cheshire which made for a relaxing atmosphere with plenty of space and facilities to engage us when away from convention business.

 Overall our delegate numbers totalled 55, with a healthy overseas contingent (9 delegates) and families group (16 members). This made for a lively atmosphere and lots of new ideas being put forward and it is hoped we can use this momentum for future conventions.

 The convention would not have been possible without generous donations from several sources. The SDT kindly made a donation to cover our audio-visual costs, and donations both from individuals (£720) and groups (£1350) were healthy and ensure bursaries can continue into the future. Donations such as these in the past have allowed us to continue our active bursary scheme, and this year 7 full bursaries and 2 partial bursaries were awarded. Family members are also eligible for bursaries and this year 3 family bursaries were awarded. We made donations to NACOA and to Hazelden Betty Ford, in thanks for their work and presentations within the convention. Overall the convention made a modest profit and we have a healthy fund for next year’s bursary candidates!

 One highlight was the growth of the families programme this year, with feedback from the younger members being incredibly positive – and feedback ABOUT the younger members being equally heartening. It is clear that the families group provide a valuable addition to our convention and we will aim to continue its growth year on year – please encourage your family members to contact the families rep via the website if they would like to get involved!

 The feedback (via online links or QR codes ) seemed to work well and we received a healthy number of suggestions which will help us to shape next year. Themes included more shares, a wider use of breakout rooms and more time for smaller group discussions which are universally found to be helpful. The introduction of a “rainbow meeting” where themes around addiction in the LGBTQ+ community was well received and will be a permanent change to our convention programme, and we will be encouraging more thought towards ensuring the programme is inclusive to all, including those with disabilities such as hearing or visual impairment. Much of the feedback indicated the overall conference length was felt to be too long, feedback which was also given last year and this has already resulted in the decision to slightly shorten the event in 2024.

 Our dates have already been chosen for next year and convention will run from 10-13th Oct. Venue remains in discussion but likely to be central South – home counties or Oxfordshire, so within easy reach of the London airports and of course major rail termini. We have already received lots of offers for help, and suggestions for talks and events within next year’s convention but this is YOUR event and we are always looking for input. Please put these dates in your diary and if you have any suggestions, do get in touch via bddgconvconvenor@bddg.org.

Have a good year all and see you in 2024!

*Charlie H*