

WISHING YOU ALL A MERRY AND PEACEFUL CHRISTMAS, WITH MUCH TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN THE NEW YEAR!

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Dear Parents and Carers,

As I reflect over the last 12 months, I firmly believe, more than ever that ***'there is nothing that cannot be done if we raise our voice as one'***.

This year has been very much about establishing and building a solid relationship with the professionals at Wiltshire Council & NHS. The fact that some of our disabled children, young people and families are already accessing more services than they were this time last year, is surely testament to how effective (and essential!) working in partnership actually is, so time invested in laying those all important foundations has been time well spent. Significantly more of us will benefit in the coming year too!



Happy Christmas
from 'Houdini', his brother
and Bob the dog!

Professionals are not only listening to ***'the voice of parents and carers'*** but they are actively working with us to find a better way forward, to make life better for us all (more on this inside).

Transforming services takes time and much work still needs to be done, but we're off to a flying start. How many of us this time last year were involved in designing regular activity clubs for our disabled children for example, or who listened to our fears for our children as they approach adulthood, much less acted on them? Times are changing, and we at the Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC) would like to **thank you, our parent/carer membership** for your contribution to making this possible. Your input, whether you've come in person to a consultation meeting, responded to a questionnaire, sent a random email or simply made a

telephone call to tell us about your experience with services, has all been as equally important to us and has enabled us, in turn, to highlight common issues with the Local Authorities.

We look forward to your continued support over the coming year, and we warmly welcome those of you who have registered with us more recently (our membership has risen to over 250!).

Before I leave you to read the rest of our news and make notes in your diaries of upcoming events, I would like to personally thank all my colleagues on the WPCC Steering Committee—without your relentless hard work and dedication, as individuals as well as a team, we would not be where we are today. I very much look forward to continuing to work with you all in 2010 and to facing the challenges that lay ahead.

A very special mention also to key professionals we are working closely with on the *Aiming High Team*, namely Susan Tanner, Julia Cramp, Heather Clewitt, Susan Tomes and Karen Hedge, for truly embracing us as part of the 'team'. We can all see first hand, that you all work tirelessly to make a difference and certainly go that extra mile to get the job done!

Last, but by no means least, our thanks are extended to our established colleagues in Early Years and SEN, and to our colleagues from local groups and organizations, ASK, Carers Support N&W Wilts, Kennet Carers, PACT and VAK, to name a few, for their much valued support.

Maurizia Quarta

**Have a great Christmas everyone
and my very best wishes for the New Year**

**Chair & Lead Parent
Wiltshire Parent Carer Council**

SHORT BREAKS update

Regular Activity Clubs & Holiday Schemes 8-18yrs

Where we Started

In October many of you attended one of the 5 Consultation Events we organised across the County to discuss in detail what good Activity Clubs and Holiday Schemes should look like in future. Others will have completed our online questionnaire, and some of you were consulted via telephone.

Why?

In the past only 70 children were able to access either type of club by assessment and referral from a Social Worker and only to those families who had reached crisis point. We wanted this to change so that more disabled children/young people could enjoy some kind of social life by having regular access to an activity club which would help prevent families reaching crisis point; we didn't want to have to go through a Social Worker for yet another assessment for this to happen! Furthermore, we wanted clubs to be more widely available throughout the county.

What happened Next?

We compiled a report of your feedback which highlighted overall preferences; this included types of activities, session times and frequency, level of support, transport implications, and other factors that are important to us when we entrust other people to look after our children and young people.

[A full copy of our report is available on our website. Click on Short Breaks and go to 'Consultation with Parents', 'Short Breaks Consultation October 2009'.](#)

In November, we presented our report at a meeting of the Disability Group at County Hall, which is attended by senior professionals responsible for providing this type of service to our families. We proposed that those children and young people who have a disability, live in Wiltshire and

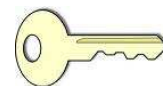
- go to a special school, or
- attend a mainstream school with a specialist learning centre attached, or
- who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs and are receiving 25+hrs support,

should have automatic access to a regular activity club—an extra 524 children/young people!

It was agreed that in order to get the type of service we wanted, it would be best to make the funding available to suitable organisations to bid for. This is called 'going out to tender'. The WPCCC has been heavily involved in putting together the Tender Pack with Wiltshire Council, and a copy of our full consultation report was included when the information about providing this service was sent out to interested parties.

What Now?

Organisations who have shown an interest, will be presenting their ideas to us in January 2010. A panel of parents from the WPCCC and professionals from Wiltshire Council, will evaluate the proposals and decide on the best ones. It is anticipated that new clubs will be in place from April 2010.



The KEY—Database

In October we introduced 'The KEY' to those of you who were able to make it to the consultations. 'The KEY' is Wiltshire Council's new database of children and young people who have a disability or additional needs (full details enclosed).

This was due to be launched in November, however this date has now been postponed until March 2010. And the reason why.....? Because the WPCCC proposed considerable changes in order to make it more parent-friendly, so apologies to you all for the delay and to Wiltshire Council's IT Department for causing them more work! The good news is that several parents have kindly volunteered to test out the database before it goes live, to make sure it's absolutely spot on.

Bridging Projects—13-19yrs

During our consultation in October, we also asked for your feedback on Bridging Projects. These youth clubs are proving very popular with our disabled youngsters, enabling them to enjoy time out with their peers, however, some of you did raise a few concerns around accessibility and personal care.

We have made Youth Services aware of these issues and are currently working with them on several possibilities to overcome these. We will update you on further developments.

[For more information on Bridging Projects, go to our website under the Short Breaks Section.](#)

TRANSITION update

As our disabled young people approach 14yrs of age, we either bury our heads in the sand or feel like we're about to fall off a cliff! We hope to be able to allay your fears and anxieties by holding a Transition Fair in May 2010, in conjunction with Wiltshire Council. We will be inviting all the organisations involved with supporting our young people, during what can often be a difficult time for the whole family, to share information and run workshops, so that we all feel better prepared. More on this in the New Year.

EARLY YEARS update

Our most significant update is that there are now 2 new Speech and Language Therapists in place which is fantastic news as there were 450 children on the waiting list for referrals this summer—this has now been reduced to just 40! This progress is largely due to Open Clinics that triage children which is working really well.

[For more information, go to www.wiltshirepct.nhs.uk/SpeechandLanguageTherapy](http://www.wiltshirepct.nhs.uk/SpeechandLanguageTherapy)

SEN update

We had an overwhelming response to our survey on Special Educational Needs—THANK YOU. The results have supported a review which is currently underway, to look at **MQ to insert** and will have more to tell you in the New Year.

WPCC is Aiming High with  **Wiltshire Council**
Where everybody matters.



Carolyn Godfrey
Director, Department of
Children & Education

Thursday 26th November 2009, County Hall, Trowbridge

It was a real pleasure for the WPCC to meet Carolyn Godfrey, Director, Department of Children & Education and to have the opportunity to personally update her on the progress of our work.

She was very interested to hear first hand how the voice of parents and carers has influenced the design of the new activity clubs that will be in place across Wiltshire from April 2010.....so much so, that she has invited the WPCC to talk about its involvement in developing the tender for this service at the next meeting of the Cabinet.

'Cabinet' is the ruling body of the Local Authority and Carolyn Godfrey is to present the paper for these much needed short breaks for disabled children and young people, for approval by Senior Councillors, on 15th December.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Consultation with PARENTS + CARERS

Consultation with parents is one of **THE most effective ways to influence change**. By gathering information about the problems you are facing with current services, we can raise common issues with the Local Authorities, and work with them to look at finding better solutions.

See Dates below for our upcoming Consultations and Events
Full Details and Booking Forms are enclosed

JANUARY 2010

Monday 11th Jan	10am-2.00pm	Short Breaks Update + Key Speakers Trowbridge-County Hall
Wednesday 20th Jan	10.30am-1.30pm	Consultation: Social Workers and Direct Payments DEVIZES-Corn Exchange
Saturday 26th Feb	10.30am-3.30pm	Cherhill C. of E. Primary School Information & Training Day

**Remember that *YOUR VOICE*
 WILL HELP to improve services!**



www.wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk

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**PARENTS
& CARERS**

Please continue to let us know about your experiences of services you and your family receive. Tell us what is working well and what needs improving!

Remember issues raised are conveyed anonymously on your behalf.

PROFESSIONALS

Work with us to look at improving services for this client group.
 Access parents and carers for consultation about the services you provide. Contact us directly, or email the Parent Participation Officer, at Wiltshire Council, Karen Hedge at karen.hedge@wiltshire.gov.uk.



Working in Partnership

Wiltshire Council
 Where everybody matters