



June 2009 Newsletter

Dear Parents and Carers

Following the launch of our group in March 2009, we are thrilled to have

- Over 150 parents and carers registered with our group (and more registering by the day!)
- a Steering Committee of 12 (parents and carers) who will manage the group's business

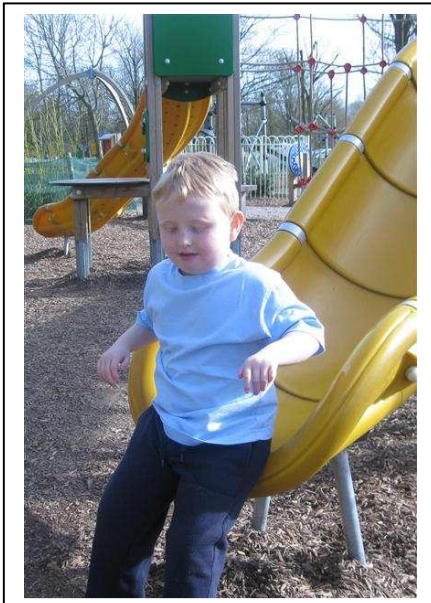
Team Brief – 25th March

Parents who indicated on their registration form, an interest in helping to manage the group, were invited to attend a meeting on the 25th March, with the purpose of setting up a Committee for the group. We discussed a structure for our Committee and, after much consideration, felt the best way forward would be to work in teams, pretty much the way Wiltshire Council work. This helps to share the workload and means that each team will be able to dedicate their time to specific service areas, gaining considerable knowledge along the way.

Ongoing Opportunities

Those of you who were not able to attend that day but are still interested in being part of the Committee, there will be further opportunities as our portfolio develops. We are currently working with teams at Wiltshire Council on Short Breaks, Transitions, Early Years and Special Educational Needs (SEN). We are also in the process of introducing ourselves to other Heads of Services within the local authority.

Although independent of Wiltshire Council, you will be pleased to know that we are also working very closely with 'ask', specifically on the special educational needs aspect of their work, called The Parent Partnership Service (formerly SENSS). Many of you have raised issues in this area and we anticipate organizing some events in conjunction with ask from September 2009. More on this as it develops.



Focus Session : Short Breaks – 30th March

We had a good turn out for this event, so thank you to those who were able to come along.

We had a good turn out for this event, so thank you to those who were able to come along. Parents and carers had the opportunity to meet Susan Tanner, the person responsible at Wiltshire Council for designing [Short Break Services](#). Susan had drafted a [Strategic Vision](#) (an idea of what good services should look like) which she shared with the group. Parents and carers were encouraged to ask

questions or to raise any queries, and have them answered there and then!

[Click here](#) to view a summary of the Short Breaks session.

Focus Session : Transitions – 30th March

Most of the parents who attended the short breaks session, stayed on for the transitions focus group. Parents and carers were introduced to Susan Tomes, the person responsible at Wiltshire Council for **Transitions**. Susan shared the *Multi-Agency Protocol* (a document proposing which agencies should be involved – and how – in a young person's progression into adulthood). Again, parents and carers had the opportunity to voice their opinions and have any queries answered.

[Click here](#) to view a summary of the Transition session.

Parents who attended these events : we really would welcome [your comments](#) on your experience of these sessions, the good points, and anything you feel we could do to improve them for the future.

Training on Parent Participation : 22/23 April

Members of the Committee underwent a 2-day training session with Anna Walker. Anna was one of the founders of the Cornwall Parent Carer Council (a similar group to ours). More importantly, Anna was instrumental in securing funding from the Government to enable parent participation groups to set up all across the UK!

Needless to say, we all came away totally invigorated and with a much better understanding of the task ahead and with 'tools' on how best to negotiate with the powers that be!

Funding Allocation for Wiltshire

We are delighted to have received confirmation from Wiltshire Council that they have received the FULL ALLOCATION set aside for Aiming High (a transformation in short break provision) for 2009/10 – FANTASTIC NEWS.

A proposal on how this money should be spent was put together by the Short Breaks Commissioning Group - made up of 4 professionals from Wiltshire Council and 4 Parent Representatives from our Committee (short breaks team).



The proposal of the **spend for short breaks for 2009/10** (called the *Commissioning Strategy for Short Breaks*) was put before the Trust Board Disability Group on the 14th April

for approval, and was then presented to the Children & Young People's Trust Board the following week, where it was 'signed off' (agreed).

Based on what parents have said, we are pleased to reveal that the following has been proposed and agreed:

Saturday Clubs

Saturday Clubs have been really popular with parents and children and young people alike but not enough places have been made available in the past. The commissioning strategy is going to provide funding to develop them so that they are held in a minimum of five locations across Wiltshire for a minimum of five hours a session twice a month in each location. This is an increase in locations from 4 to 5, and in regularity from once a month to twice. The aim is to work towards making this service available to all children and young people with a disability aged 5+ in the County without assessment, and as a right by 2011.

Holiday Provision

Holiday Clubs have also been very popular, but again places have been limited. The commissioning strategy is going to make a significant investment so that the number of children and young people able to access this service will increase from around 60 to 180. Each child/ young person will be able to access a minimum of two sessions a week (currently only one per week), for a minimum of 6 weeks a year (or the equivalent).

Further Investments Proposed

- Direct Payments
- Bridging Projects (for young people aged 13+)
- Peer Mentoring Scheme (for young people who want to participate in universal services but who need some initial support to do so)
- Family Link Scheme
- Specialist Learning Disability Nurse (providing specialist support to parents and carers, family link carers and other service providers)
- Information – a 'one-stop' website for families with a child or young person with a disability



Name Change In line with other parent groups around the country (not all, but certainly most of the pilot groups), the Committee decided to change our name from Parent & Carers Power Group to the **Wiltshire Parent Carer Council**.

Funding for Phase 2

Our funds for Phase 1 came to an end on 31st March. We kept within budget and accounts were submitted to Together for Disabled Children – who are rolling out the funding on behalf of the Government.

We applied for funding to sustain our group, for Phase 2 (covering the period May 09-April 10) for a total of £10,000. We hope to have word on the success of our application around mid June...so fingers crossed!

What's going on behind the scenes now/coming up soon

The idea of parents being involved in the decision-making process with local authorities is a fairly new concept, so, it is inevitable that there are going to be some teething problems along the way, as much for us as for our colleagues at Wiltshire Council!

We remain very encouraged by the positive response and support from colleagues at Wiltshire Council to date. Having gained some experience of working together, we felt the time was right to reflect on progress and to address any 'grey' areas. For instance, we felt we should have more notice to be able to consult with our parent/carer membership, and further clarity was needed on our level of involvement across all agencies within the local authority. These kinds of things were discussed in a meeting on 12th May between the Wiltshire Parent Carers Council and colleagues at Wiltshire Council. As a result, an 'agreement' on how we will work together is being drawn up and will be agreed - this document is referred to as a '*Participation Strategy*'.

Parents & Carers You will have the opportunity to participate in consultations soon. Discussions will be focused around various services and issues which some of you have already highlighted as areas of concern or in need of improvement.

To this end, members of the Committee are already in discussions with colleagues at Wiltshire Council about organizing a series of consultation events in the coming months. As soon as we have more details – we will give you ample notice so you can come and have your say!

We would also like to hold a series of 'information days' so that parents and carers can learn more, for example, on direct payments, eligibility criteria, the family link carer service, Saturday clubs, holiday provision, the CAF assessment, bridging projects, peer-mentoring scheme, to name but a few.

Sessions will be held during school term time and in various locations, between 10am-2pm (so around school runs) for those available to attend on weekdays. We also want to cater for working parents, so we are proposing to run condensed sessions over one or two evenings or on Saturdays, depending on preference and numbers.

Thank You!

I think that just about covers everything for now. Very many heartfelt thanks to each and everyone of you, for all your feedback and support to date.

It may feel sometimes that things are moving at the pace of a snail but rest assured our disabled children and young people WILL enjoy the fruits of your perseverance and hard work in securing better services in Wiltshire. We can already see how effective a united voice can be, evident for example with the improvements underway for the provision for short breaks, and in the proposals put forward on how the agencies involved with young

people during their progression into adulthood, can best work together to ensure a smooth transition.

So, please continue to spread the word by talking to other parents and carers about our group and get them to register with us through our website, or by giving me a call on 01672-569300. This way, they too will be able to get their voice heard.....the more of us there are, the stronger the voice!

As always, if you have any queries, do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes to you all

Maurizia Quarta

Lead Parent & Chair

Wiltshire Parent Carer Council

(Formerly Parent & Carers Power Group)