

Hello Everyone!

I hope you all enjoyed the summer break, or should I say 'survived' it? I have just about recovered from the disappearance of my 'Houdini' son, safely returned to me by the Wiltshire Constabulary-I guess hanging out with the Alpacas in a nearby field was far more interesting than what was going on at home?

Much has been going on since our last update, members of the Committee have been talking to and meeting with all the right people; we are now regularly involved not only in meetings around Short Breaks, Transition and SEN but are also working with Early Years, Speech & Language and, just this week, we were invited to our first meeting with Wheelchair Services. See updates inside for further information.

We recently had some leaflets printed to help promote the group, which gives details on how parents/carers can get their voice heard by registering with us, and invites professionals to work with us to look at improving the services they provide. If you would like some leaflets to pass on to family or friends, or indeed are aware of groups or organizations in your area that might be interested in hearing about us, please let us know and we'll pop some in the post to you.

Our website has had a bit of a make-over and is now updated on an ongoing basis, so do keep checking in. We hope you find it helpful and easy to use-if you have any suggestions on how we can improve on this please let us know.

We will be updating our database shortly (210 families currently registered) with the aim of gathering further information. This will help identify what type of services are needed the most and where, and will go some way to ensuring that funds on improving services are spent in the best possible way.

We haven't seen many of you since March and we are sorry about that-it's taken a lot longer than anticipated to get certain things in place. The good news is that we have now organized a series of consultation meetings in October, when we hope to see as many of you as possible (more details inside).

Until then, my very best wishes

Maurizia Quarta

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Aiming High : RAISING OUR PROFILE

Friday 28th August., Ludgershall

We were delighted to have an opportunity to introduce the WPCC to local MP, the Rt Hon Michael Ancram.

Chair, Maurizia Quarta, met with the MP at the Memorial Hall during one of his surgeries. Mr Ancram was briefed on the aims of the group and brought up to speed on recent developments and achievements to date. He was told that whilst, parental involvement in the decision-making process has been welcomed across departments within the local authority, attitudes of some were slow to change.

On a positive note, Mr Ancram was informed that the injection of 'Aiming High' funding over the summer meant that more families had benefited from having a short break during the long school holidays, and initial feedback from those families who were able to access extra provision, described the service as 'nothing short of a lifeline'.

Mr Ancram was pleased to learn that parents and carers have a 'voice' through the WPCC, and that families of disabled children and young people are being represented on the Children & Young People's Trust Board, the Disability Group and Transition Partnership Board. He also commented that, through his surgeries, he often comes into contact with families of disabled children who experience various difficulties and said he would be sure to flag up the Wiltshire Parent Carer Council to them in future.



SHORT BREAKS update

Holiday Schemes/Saturday Clubs 8-18yrs

Some of you will have benefited from the extra holiday schemes that were put in place across the county this summer running at leisure centres, schools and other venues. However, there were not enough of them and many were only offered to children who already had a place on a scheme or attended a school where a club was running. We, and Wiltshire Council, are acutely aware that whilst this was an improvement on what was previously available, we can do better! Many more families are in need of a break, so we are working tirelessly with Wiltshire Council NOW, to ensure as many of you as possible have access to one near you in the future.

From April next year, a lot of money is available to invest in Saturday and Holiday clubs but a lot of thought and preparation goes into setting these up so we **MUST PLAN NOW**. Parent and carers are invited to help design this service and you can do this by attending one of the consultation events we are running in October (see enclosed for full details).

Bridging Projects—13-19yrs

Bridging Projects have been popping up all over Wiltshire these last few months, 10 in total at Marlborough, Salisbury, Warminster, Trowbridge, Devizes, Pewsey, Malmesbury, Calne, Durrington and Tisbury! Bridging Projects are social-type clubs where disabled young people have an opportunity to make new friends, engage in positive activities such as sports, learn life skills and simply have fun with their non-disabled peers. More details on what's available and where is enclosed.

EARLY YEARS update

Parents, overall, are very happy with the support available to families of young disabled children but this does not mean that the professionals working in Early Years are at all complacent about this. We are working very closely with them by providing feedback from you all on issues you have raised.

Most recently, we have highlighted the mystery surrounding ISMS! Parents and carers are unclear as to what these are, whether they are supposed to be involved in them and, if so, how they can prepare for them. ISMS are Inclusion Support Meetings which come in various shapes and forms TISMS (Transition Inclusion Support Meetings, LISMS (Local Inclusion Support Meetings). There are currently discussions around how more information can be given to parents and carers about ISMS, and consideration is being given to producing leaflets on these. We'll keep you posted with developments as they unfold.

We are delighted to report that we had 30 new parents register with us, purely through our visits to children centres across Wiltshire.

SEN update

There has probably never been a more important time for parents of children with Special Needs to keep their collective eye on the ball - such are the ongoing challenges lying ahead.

Nationally, there is unprecedented pressure on spending, and central governments of all persuasions always tighten the screw on local authorities to diffuse the effect of spending cuts/tax rises. It is, of course, at this local end where our special children become the most vulnerable to any cuts in SEN spending.

Locally, there is a new man at the top of Special Educational Needs at Wiltshire Council, and we have already had a detailed meeting with the new Head of Services.

The publication of a major government-funded survey on education involving 18,000 primary and secondary schoolchildren produced the worrying conclusion that educational outcomes are diminished for children the more one-to-one TA support they receive.

TRANSITION update

We are enjoying an excellent partnership with the Local Authority Program Lead for Transition who involves us fully in decisions and we in turn are keen to represent your voice in affecting change and improving services.

We now have a member of the WPCCC attending regular Transition Partnership Board meetings. This is a fantastic opportunity because as well as enabling us to gain information first hand, we are in the position of being able to feed the views of our parent members back to the Local Authority to shape changes at ground level.

To date, one of the biggest projects we have been involved in is discussing the current Transition program for Year 9 children in Wiltshire and looking at alternative systems in other Authorities. One system that has been particularly well received by many Authorities is something called *Person Centered Reviews*. This looks at the whole needs of the child or young person rather than just their educational provision and plans for their future needs as they move closer to adult life, transferring from Child Social Services to Adult Social Services. Although much work is yet to be done to make this dream a reality, the Local Authority is hopeful that a few influential schools will be keen to pilot these Person Centered Reviews and ultimately change the system across Wiltshire, with the aim of transforming and enhancing the current process and provision for our children and young people.

Multi Agency Protocol

This is a document that has been written by the Local Authority in collaboration with all other agencies that would or could be involved in addressing the needs of young people who need additional support. The Protocol has been written to provide a clear transition process for young people from Year 9 onwards through something called a Transition Pathway. It emphasizes the importance of all agencies such as schools, Connexions, Health Services, Social Services (both child and adult) working closely together with the young person and their families and carers.

The Protocol starts in Year 9 when the young person is approximately 14 and can continue until they reach their 25th birthday. The Protocol covers those young people who have a disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), have a statement of Special Educational Needs or are registered as School Action plus and identified by the school as requiring additional support with their transition.

This is an exciting document as it highlights the importance of the young person as central to any decisions made about their provision now and in the future. The young person, wherever possible, will be fully involved in all actions and decisions that affect them, they will be entitled to an independent advocate who can support them, represent and express their views. Furthermore, parents and carers will work in partnership with all relevant agencies who will be expected to respect the parents'/ carers' expertise. The document goes on to highlight the importance of beginning to shape provision for the young person at an early age with the future in mind so that transition from child to adult social services should be smooth and all necessary support is available when needed as it has been planned for in advance.

**The Multi Agency Protocol is now publicly available
from our website where the full copy can be accessed in the Transition Section
wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk**

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

CONSULTATION with PARENTS + CARERS

Consultation with parents is one of **THE most effective ways to influence change**. By gathering information on your experiences and the problems you are facing with current provision, representatives of the Wiltshire Parent Carer Council can raise issues, highlight gaps in provision and put forward any great ideas you may have to make things better.

See Dates below for our next Consultation Event Full Details and Booking Form enclosed

If, for whatever reason, you are unable to make any of the dates/venues below but would still like to be involved, please contact us and we will endeavor to make alternative arrangements with you.

OCTOBER 2009

Tuesday	13 Oct	WOOTTEN BASSET—Civic Centre	10am-1.30pm
Wednesday	14 Oct	SALISBURY—City Hall	10am-1.30pm
Thursday	15 Oct	TROWBRIDGE—Fieldways Hotel	10am-1.30pm
Friday	16 Oct	DEVIZES—St John Parish Rooms	10.30am-1.45pm
Monday	19 Oct	PEWSEY—Bouverie Hall	10am-1.30pm
Tuesday	20 Oct	WARMINSTER—Assembly Rooms	10am-1.30pm

Remember that ***YOUR VOICE COUNTS***
and is fundamental to improving services
for your children now and in the future!



www.wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk

Parents and Carers, **THANK YOU** for letting us know about your experiences of the services you receive. With **YOUR INPUT** we can really ensure the needs of disabled children are fully met. The WPCCC will continue to take your views to our meetings with the professionals, as well as your words of appreciation where support is working well!

Remember all issues raised are conveyed anonymously on your behalf.

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