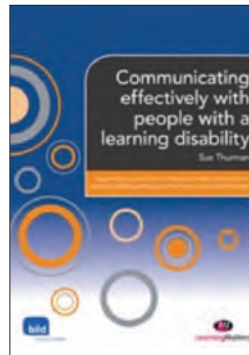


VOICEBOX BOOK CLUB

EVERY ISSUE WE WILL SHARE A SELECTION OF NEW BOOKS WITH YOU. PLEASE SEND US ANY OF YOUR OWN REVIEWS ON SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE BOOKS YOU WOULD LIKE INCLUDED TOO.



Communicating effectively with people with a learning disability

Sue Thurman

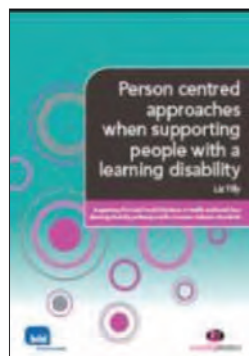
This book will support your learning about communication for the Common Induction Standards and the diploma units:

- Level 2 – Introduction to communication in health and social care or children's and young people's settings.
- Level 3 – Promote communication in health and social care or children's and young people's settings.

This book introduces the central importance of communication in all support for people with a learning disability. It explores how to meet the communication and language needs and preferences of a person and how to overcome barriers to communication. In addition the book looks at how to communicate in ways that respect equality and diversity as well as the principles of confidentiality at work.

Price: £13.00

The book can be ordered by telephone on 0845 370 0067



Person Centred Approaches when Supporting People with a Learning Disability

Liz Tilly

Supporting the Level 2 and 3 Diplomas in Health and Social Care (learning disability pathway) and the Common Induction Standards Health and safety for learning disability workers.

This book will support your learning about person centred approaches for the Common Induction Standards and the diploma units:

- Level 2 - Implement person centred approaches in health and social care.
- Level 3 - Promote person centred approaches in health and social care.

If you are starting work with people with a learning disability and are undertaking your induction, studying for the level 2 or 3 diplomas in health and social care, or you want the right information to help your personal development, then Person centred approaches when supporting people with a learning disability is for you.

This book puts the person with a learning disability at the centre of the support you give. It uses real life stories, activities and thinking points to cover all of the learning outcomes and is full of practical examples of how to apply the ideas to the support that you provide.

Price: £15.00

The book can be ordered by telephone on 0845 370 0067

David Cameron launches the UK's first Accessible Video Games Centre

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DEMENTIA NOT TAKEN SERIOUSLY ENOUGH!

National Personal Budget Survey



Front seat ticket to best view in the world >> Prepare for Social Care to get worse before it gets better >>

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Welcome

AN INTRODUCTION FROM THE GROUP EDITOR



Dear Colleagues,

I hope you're having an enjoyable summer and have managed to have had a holiday or have one still to look forward to! In the Summer issue of Voicebox we look at a traditional break in the South at The Olde Bull Inn and for the more adventurous a trek across the Incas and a walk along the Jurassic coast. If you've had any exciting holidays or have any holidays you'd like us to feature then send them over.

We take a in depth look at the Dilnot Commission and hear from key spokespeople within the industry and there is some positive news from North Yorkshire and Wirrals social care teams. Let us know how you are finding the current climate?

We feature on The Oaklea Trust and look at why they have many reasons to celebrate. There are some exciting events and workshops across the UK this autumn so be sure to book your place early to avoid disappointment.

Finally we have launched a new website so please visit us at www.voicemarketing.org.uk and there are some exciting developments in the next issue of Voicebox.

Enjoy the magazine.

Kind regards

Catherine Titherington
 Group Editor

**We welcome your feedback, comment and contributions .
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DAVID CAMERON LAUNCHES THE UK'S FIRST ACCESSIBLE VIDEO GAMES CENTRE

The Accessible Video Games Centre, created by video games charity SpecialEffect, develops bespoke video gaming equipment for people with disabilities and serious illnesses, enhancing people's lives by helping them to enjoy and experience video games and leisure technology.

Prime Minister David Cameron was in his constituency of Witney, West Oxfordshire with SpecialEffect Patron Matt Hampson to open the UK's first fully accessible Video Games Visitor Centre. The Centre is the first of its kind and has been created by video games charity SpecialEffect. SpecialEffect strive to enhance people's lives by helping them access video games and leisure technology. The centre will be a central hub for SpecialEffect to develop accessible video games for people in the local area and across the UK.

David Cameron, MP for Witney said: "The work of SpecialEffect brings together three things that I am passionate about: helping those with disabilities, the innovative use of technology and corporate social responsibility. I began supporting SpecialEffect when I attended their launch in 2008 and I've been continually impressed with their commitment to helping disabled people. This new centre will enhance the quality of life for some of the most severely disabled people across the UK and I will continue to support SpecialEffect as their local MP. It's also good to see SpecialEffect working so closely with the UK's video games industry – it's a great example of how even a small input from business can help support the fantastic work that SpecialEffect do."

Matt Hampson, Patron of SpecialEffect said: "Following my rugby injury, I was totally paralysed. SpecialEffect's support

adapted a computer that I could operate just by moving my head. This not only had a massive positive impact on my leisure time but I also believe it helped to build up my neck muscles, too. Like me, many other people with disabilities are interested to find out about the benefits of games and leisure technology for socialisation, rehabilitation and, of



course, fun. Now they drop into a friendly centre and can see what it can do for them."

Dr Mick Donegan, SpecialEffect's Director, said, "The SpecialEffect Charity already helps a wide range of people with disabilities to discover how to use specialist technology through its website, roadshows, working with hospitals and home visits. The only thing missing was a central hub for people to visit. The new centre offers them the opportunity to arrange to try out a range of cutting edge games and leisure software and hardware, with the advice and support of specialist professionals."

Andy Payne, Chairman of GamesAid and Chairman of UKIE (The UK Association for Interactive Entertainment), said: "Working with video games charity GamesAid, SpecialEffect have reached out to the video games industry and generated a huge amount of interest and support. Their use of the latest technology and commitment to

developing bespoke equipment allows disabled people of all ages to interact with their peers on a completely level playing field, via the medium of video games. The establishment of the UK's first Accessible Video Games Centre is a real achievement and we look forward to working closely with Special Effect on this exciting project. The video games industry often wrongly gets a bad rap. However, video games can have many positive social, cultural and health benefits and

the work of SpecialEffect shows just a small part of the good work the video games industry does to improve people's lives. The centre is just the beginning and with further advancements in technology, the future of video games for people with disabilities is an incredibly exciting field to be involved with. SpecialEffect have the games industry's full support and we look forward to continuing to work closely with them going into the future."

For more information on the Accessible Video Games Centre and SpecialEffect visit www.specialeeffect.org.uk and www.gamebase.info

DILNOT TO FIX A BROKEN SOCIAL CARE SYSTEM

FOR MOST OF THE LAST YEAR, WE HAVE BEEN CLOSELY FOLLOWING THE WORK OF THE DILNOT COMMISSION WHO HAVE BEEN LOOKING AT THE FUNDING OF CARE AND SUPPORT. WHILST SOCIAL CARE IS GENERALLY MISUNDERSTOOD BY THE GENERAL POPULATION, ANYONE WHO COMES INTO CONTACT WITH THE SYSTEM SOON BECOMES AWARE THAT IT IS HARD TO UNDERSTAND, MOSTLY UNFAIR AND HUGELY UNDERFUNDED.

On 4th July, the Dilnot Commission announced its recommendations for a better and fairer funded care and support system.

- Additional public funding - with an ageing population and people living longer with illness and disability, more money is needed just to maintain current levels of service. But, in addition to meeting growing demand, if we want to raise standards to a quality we would all expect, then the social care system will require substantial new money.
- A system which recognises the needs and costs of younger disabled adults as well as older people.
- Clarity about costs – capping the costs of care removes the risk that families will face catastrophic care costs as they get older or if they are affected by illness or disability. This will also enable people to plan better for the costs of care.
- Currently, where you live determines what care you get and how much it costs. Proposals to introduce a national system of assessments and eligibility would reduce administration, confusion and complexity.
- A universal advice and information 'offer' for families. Whether their care needs develop suddenly or over time, we know that many people struggle to get advice and information on where to get support.
- Recognition of the contribution of families who care - often at significant cost to their own jobs, health, income and well-being.
- Recognition that universal benefits, such as Attendance Allowance for older people, need to be retained. These benefits provide flexible support for older and disabled people which can be spent on what individuals need most.

The key to the Commission's proposals is a dramatic increase in funding. It is widely recognised that social care has been under funded for many years. In the UK around £110 billion is spent on the NHS whilst only £16 billion is spent on social care. If the Commission's proposals are to make a real difference to the social care system, the Government must go beyond just meeting the needs of the changing population; it must also make a



Imelda Redmond CBE

long term commitment to better, fairer funding. Even in the current financial climate, this is not an unrealistic ask. As a nation, we are four times richer than we were when we made a commitment to establish the NHS. We can't afford not to fund a reformed social care system.

Speaking at the launch of the Dilnot report, Carers UK Chief Executive Imelda Redmond CBE commented:

"The current social care system is broken. The 6.4 million carers in the UK are too often let down by a system which is

complex, costly and unfair. Family members end up sacrificing their careers, finances and their own health to care for ill or disabled loved ones, yet get little or no help from the social care system or find that services are poor quality and expensive.

Our health and social care services could not function without the contribution of the unpaid care provided by families – which we estimate to be the equivalent of £119 billion a year. We welcome the Commission's acknowledgement of carers as the 'foundation of the care and support system'. The report recognises the need to support families so that caring is manageable and family members are able to live their lives and work alongside caring.

The proposals have been welcomed across the social care sector. Twenty three members of the Care & Support Alliance have released a joint statement welcoming the report as a 'strong foundation on which to build reform of the social care system'.

In a joint statement, they said:

"For too long the social care system has been chronically underfunded, leaving disabled and older people and their families with an outdated care system which is not fit for purpose. A lack of awareness of the costs of care and the complexity of the system have left individuals and families confused and frustrated at the difficulty in trying to get help and facing huge and unexpected bills.

It is now vital that Government sets out a clear timetable for change and does so quickly. What we need is a long term solution that can weather political and economic change and meets everyone's needs – from young adults with disabilities to older people".

'Prepare for adult social care to get worse before it gets better'

That was the stark message given to senior health service personnel as the social care sector digested the reactions to the report of the Dilnot Commission into funding and supporting adult care.

Speaking at the annual conference of the NHS Confederation, ADASS President Peter Hay revealed the details of a straw poll conducted by the Association close on the heels of a survey undertaken earlier this year which showed that nearly £1 billion was due to be taken out of social care budgets in the current financial year (April 2011 - March 2012).

Initial findings from the new poll, carried out in June 2011, show that, although significant variations will occur across the country* slightly more than £1 billion of savings are due to be made by local authority adult social care departments next year - between April 2012 to March 2013.

According to Peter Hay: "There will be a very wide range of financial experiences next year, some authorities will not see large cuts at all, but some authorities are going to be hit very hard indeed without having at their disposal some of the important mechanisms they traditionally have to help alleviate the pressures."

The survey is not all bad news. It shows that where additional funds have been due to be transferred to local authorities from the NHS, it has been duly transferred. The key point, however, of the work done by ADASS is to highlight the fact that this money is perhaps not being used for radical enough changes.

According to Mr Hay: "This backs the core message from NHS Confederation about the need to rally behind tough and difficult decisions that are more about changing how we deliver care than simply tinkering at the edges."

Elsewhere he insists that the implementation stage of Dilnot should be brought on as quickly as possible. "We have heard the government's timetable for consulting on the Commission's report, and the conditions any response need to

meet. But we must also bear in mind that while delay is understandable, uncertainty about the future will have inevitable and unfortunate consequences.

"We must prepare for the worst to come. We must enhance and accelerate the pace of integration between these two great

pillars of the coming age of wellbeing: social care and health care. Great social care and great health care, are unambiguously interdependent: the one simply cannot occur without the other in the lives of so many of the citizens we jointly support.

"The sooner both separate arms of this emerging consensus realise that, the better. We need to use the reality of the budgetary position to solve our problems together."



DEMENTIA NOT TAKEN SERIOUSLY ENOUGH ACCORDING TO POLL

DEMENTIA IS THE MOST JOKED ABOUT MEDICAL CONDITION ACCORDING TO AN ALZHEIMER'S SOCIETY COMMISSIONED POLL.

Almost a quarter of people say they hear jokes about dementia the most compared to other conditions including autism and cancer. This is despite the fact only 8% per cent of people believe it is acceptable to make fun of dementia.

The YouGov survey - released to mark Dementia Awareness Week™ - found that more than half of people believe dementia is not taken seriously enough in society highlighting that even though awareness of the condition has improved there still remains much stigma.

The poll also found that one in ten people think it is acceptable to say someone with dementia has 'lost their marbles'; for 'senile' it was 22 per cent and a third said it is acceptable to say someone with the condition is 'having a senior moment'.

Alzheimer's Society Ambassador, Duncan Preston, well known for his roles in comedy classics such as Acorn Antiques and Dinnerladies, said:

'I have worked in comedy for many years and love a good joke. I know laughter is

the best medicine but it is not on to make fun of dementia. A million people will develop this devastating condition in the next ten years so it is likely to touch all our lives at some point. This Dementia Awareness Week, join me in laughing with people with dementia not at them.'

Jeremy Hughes, Chief Executive of Alzheimer's Society, said:

'These are shocking findings and show that dementia is still a condition for which some people think it is ok to joke about. It is not. Dementia is a devastating condition which can happen to anyone. We must tackle this lack of understanding if we are to ensure people with dementia are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.'

Paul Burstow, Care Services Minister, said:

'Fear of dementia can trap people leaving them isolated and unsupported. That is why we have to challenge the stigma. We must look beyond the diagnosis to see the person.'

Heather Roberts, 56, from Derby has Alzheimer's disease. She is married with two children and grandchildren, and was diagnosed about five years ago. Heather said:

'It makes me angry to hear that people find dementia funny however I think people react this way because they're frightened of it. We need to be open and honest and educate people that younger people like me get it, too, and that life does not end with the diagnosis.'



Paul Burstow

Brandon Trust Launch 100 People: 100 Voices

100 people: 100 voices; the first ever conference for people with learning disabilities was held by the charity Brandon Trust on Saturday, 2nd July, at the BAWA Centre in Bristol.

The Conference was named 100 People:100 Voices because the voice of every single participant was important to the process. The big voice of disability activist Kaliya Franklin (of Benefit Scrounging Scum and The Broken of Britain fame) was also heard, through her key-note speech.

People supported by learning disability charity Brandon Trust had already said there were four topics they wanted to talk about. These were presented by delegates and voted on. The results were

as follows: 1st Employment, 2nd Transport, 3rd Social Lives, 4th Green Issues.

At the end of the conference Brandon Trust committed to taking forward Employment for people with learning disabilities as one of its key issues over the coming year.

- How can people with learning disabilities be given greater opportunity in the jobs market?
- Can commercial business, government

and the social care sector work together to create viable and sustainable jobs for people with learning disabilities?

- What role does voluntary work, part-time work and flexible working patterns have in increasing opportunities?

Next year the charity will hold a similar conference to review the progress made and discuss further issues. For more information visit their website www.brandontrust.org

Social Care is safe in our hands

Social care providers in North Yorkshire are reassuring the public that the service is in safe hands in the county.

A joint statement issued by the Independent Care Group (York and North Yorkshire) and Adult and Community Services of North Yorkshire County Council say that stories currently highlighted in the media are creating a distorted picture of social care. And they say that social care in their county has an excellent record.

Recent media stories around the future of a large-scale private care provider, a television documentary exposing abuse at a home and a report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission have thrust social care into the spotlight.

But Mike Padgham, chair of the Independent Care Group (York and North Yorkshire) said that these media stories were creating a misleading picture.

"Social care is in extremely safe hands here in North Yorkshire," he said. "The majority of care is provided by the independent sector and they have an excellent record in providing high quality, innovative care that put the clients' independence, dignity and quality of life at the very top of our priorities.

"We have an excellent relationship with North Yorkshire County Council and we work hard together to ensure that care is delivered to an extremely high standard."



Derek Law, Director of Adult and Community Services, North Yorkshire County Council, said: "People in North Yorkshire can have tremendous confidence that social care in this county is of a very good quality and is of a professional nature," he said.

"We work very closely with the independent sector to maintain and improve standards, endeavour that is borne out by results when care provision is regularly inspected.

"For our own part we also have rigorous procedures in place to monitor the quality of that care."

Across the country, the percentage of people supported in "good" or "excellent" care homes has risen from 75% to 86% and the percentage of people supported by home care agencies rated good or excellent rose from 87% to 93%.

Mr Padgham warned that current media stories were masking the real issue currently facing the sector.

"Everyone wants to see standards of care improve but as a society we cannot expect that to happen if we put less and less funding into social care. Social care has never been properly funded, even in more prosperous times and now that spending is being slashed the situation has reached breaking point."

He pointed to Age UK's recent report which warned that by 2014 we will be spending, in real terms, £250m less on older people's care than we did 10 years ago. If things go on as at present, within four years a million people who need care may well be getting no funding support.

People 4 People hits first year targets

People 4 People is delighted to announce that it has achieved its first year targets of matching 30 PAs to customers requiring support.

The service, which was launched in June last year but officially opened for business in September, has generated huge interest from PAs across the partnership London Boroughs of Havering, Barking & Dagenham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest.

Manager of People 4 People, Jeff Downey, comments: "People 4 People's unique approach to carefully matching PAs with people requiring support at home has proved extremely successful - 95% of customers selected their PAs from the first shortlist provided which shows that the individual, personal approach really works.

"Many customers are supported by a team of two or three PAs, working on a rota basis, which also works well. We have had some fantastic feedback from both customers and PAs and a lot of interest in the service from other London boroughs."

Further achievements for this innovative service include the development of excellent handbooks for both PAs and customers, the launch of a website (www.people4people.org.uk) and more than 50 presentations delivered throughout the year.

"A figure of 30 was set as our target for the first year as the service is in its



Jeff Downey

infancy. Now that word is beginning to spread and our marketing efforts are showing results, we are confident of achieving our targets for next year. We already have a large bank of PAs and several more matches in the pipeline," says Jeff Downey.

As a result of this promising start, The People 4 People service is expanding (from September 2011) to include two added value products: Individual Support Service, whereby PAs are managed for customers; and online day opportunities marketplace.

DIRECT PAYMENTS HAVE STALLED

DIRECT PAYMENT LEVELS IN ENGLAND HAVE STALLED IN THE PAST YEAR DESPITE EVIDENCE THAT THEY ARE ASSOCIATED WITH BETTER OUTCOMES THAN COUNCIL-MANAGED PERSONAL BUDGETS, MAJOR RESEARCH INTO PERSONALISATION HAS SHOWN.

While personal budgets are generally having a positive impact for most users, there are wide variations between councils in both take-up and user outcomes.

The findings come from two major studies into the state of personalisation: an ADASS survey of progress at 132 of England's 152 councils and the Personal Budgets Outcome Evaluation Tool (Poet) survey.

While personal budget numbers in England doubled from April 2010 to March 2011, to almost 340,000 – 35% of eligible users and carers – nearly all of the 2010-11 increase came in the form of council-managed budgets, found Adass.

The Adass findings sparked concerns that some councils were allocating people nominal personal budgets without offering them choice and control.

Care services minister Paul Burstow urged councils to do "much more to ensure that as many people as possible are receiving

their personal budget as a direct payment", in line with government policy.

In Control chief executive Julie Stansfield said: "It is critical that local authorities remember that personal budgets will only deliver good outcomes for people if they truly offer choice and control and do not simply become a 'box ticking' exercise."

However, the survey, which received significant responses from users and

having more than half of eligible users and carers on personal budgets and 14% of councils having take-up of less than a fifth, found Adass.

"Progress is varied and it's time for all councils to step up to the plate if we are to achieve the government's target of having all users on personal budgets by April 2013," said Adass president Peter Hay.

"Progress is varied and it's time for all councils to step up to the plate if we are to achieve the government's target of having all users on personal budgets by April 2013"

carers in 10 local authority areas, found a "pervasive variation across councils in the outcomes reported by personal budget holders and carers."

Outcomes were better where service users were informed about the value of their personal budget, fully involved in the support planning process, alongside family carers, and relatively free of constraints and bureaucracy.

However, the proportion of users who were told the value of their personal budget per week ranged from 61% to 92% across local authorities.

There are also wide variations in take-up, with 20% of authorities

"There can now be no doubt that for the most people, personal budgets can and do work, particularly as direct payments and especially when implemented well by councils," said Think Local Act Personal chairs Richard Jones and Miranda Wixon. "At the same time, continuing and urgent action is needed to ensure all can benefit – wherever you live and whatever your needs – and that expensive and restrictive processes are streamlined to improve experiences and efficiencies."

"The current situation is very challenging, given significant financial pressures. However, this makes effective delivery of personal budgets even more important – use of resources must be optimised to improve outcomes, choice and control."

National Personal Budget Survey

A new social care survey of over 2,000 people released in June reveals that for a majority, personal budgets have a positive impact on people's lives, meaning they are supported with dignity and respect, stay independent, in control of their support and get that support when they need it.

The National Personal Budget Survey, carried out between January and April this year, also found that people are more likely to experience better outcomes if the personal budgets process keeps people fully informed, and in control of the personal budget and how it is spent; while supporting them without undue constraint and bureaucracy, and fully involving carers.

However, the survey results also found that councils need to provide better quality systems and processes if they are to help continue to transform the lives of older and disabled adults and achieve the best results.

Undertaken for The Think Local, Act Personal Partnership by In Control and the Centre for Disability Research at Lancaster University, the survey aimed to identify the outcomes and experiences of people using personal budgets - and those of their family carers - so the adult social care sector can build on the positives and better understand what improvements are needed.

Other implications that can be drawn from the survey results include:

- Personal budgets work better for older people than you might expect and direct payments work just as well for older people as everyone else.
- The processes used for delivering personal budgets are more difficult than they need to be and that impacts badly on carers and on personal budget recipients.
- More work needs to be done to make direct payments more accessible.
- There is a need to simplify and clarify the rules and regulations surrounding personal budgets.

The current Coalition government has said it is committed to ensuring personal budgets are available to all recipients of ongoing state funded social care by 2013 as a response to rising public expectations of choice and quality and increasing demand.

"More work needs to be done to make direct payments more accessible"

Every year nearly one and a half million people in England look to their local authority for personal care and support due to their age or disability. Almost 6 million adults in the UK are believed to spend time caring for disabled or older family members.

In Control Chief Executive Julie Stansfield said:

"These findings show the huge potential for personal budgets but they also signal a warning that they will only make a difference to people's lives if implemented by councils in the right way and if this doesn't simply become a 'box-ticking' exercise. With council's expected to have 100% of people on personal budgets by 2013 it's critical that they take the opportunity to review their progress to date, build on the positives, and identify ways to make improvements."

Southern Cross landlords to take over all homes

Stricken care home chain Southern Cross is being broken up after attempts to rescue the company floundered.

Britain's largest operator of care homes told the City that its 750 homes are being taken over by its landlords, a move which brings more uncertainty for some of its residents. The decision also means that shareholders in the company will be wiped out.

Under this plan, 250 of Southern Cross's homes will be transferred to landlords who are either care operators already or

who have "strong links" to firms who provide such services. The owners of the remaining 500 homes, though, are still "finalising their plans", which could involve homes being sold.

"My objective, and that of my team, is to continue to provide excellent care to every resident and to manage the programme of transition professionally," said chief executive Jamie Buchan.

Southern Cross had hoped to hammer out a deal with its landlords that would have allowed the company to keep operating but admitted on Monday that all landlords had said they would leave the group – as predicted last month. Southern Cross itself will therefore cease to be a care provider once the handover has been completed.



WIRRAL NOW AMONG BEST IN THE COUNTRY FOR ROLLING OUT PERSONAL BUDGETS

THE RESULTS OF A NEW SURVEY HAS REVEALED THAT WIRRAL IS AMONG THE BEST PERFORMING LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE COUNTRY FOR ROLLING OUT PERSONAL BUDGETS - A MARKED IMPROVEMENT FROM SIX MONTHS PREVIOUSLY WHEN THE COUNCIL WAS AMONG THE WORST FIVE.

The survey – carried out by the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADASS) – shows that more than 40 percent of eligible people in Wirral are now receiving a personal budget, putting Wirral in the top third of local authorities across the country.

Wirral has been trialling personal budgets since January 2009 and in November last year, it was agreed to roll them out to all eligible service users across Wirral. By the end of March this year, the target was for 3,000 people to have been offered a personal budget; these latest figures reveal that the Council has exceeded this target, with 5,919 people who are eligible now receiving them.

The ADASS 'Putting People First Personal Budgets' facts and figures report outlined how councils in England are going with rolling out personal budgets between last September and April this year. It showed that Wirral was the 41st authority from the top out of 153, in the top third, with an average of 37 per cent of eligible people now receiving personal budgets.



Howard Cooper

"We want to make sure people have better choice, control and experiences through a broadening of what is available in the market to help them."

Said Cllr Anne McArdle, Wirral's Cabinet Member for Social Care and Inclusion: 'The results of the survey are impressive enough, and the picture is improving all the time.'

'This is particularly gratifying because it means that Wirral has exceeded the national 30 per cent target, and because the figures show such a marked improvement on the last time the survey was carried out. They reflect a real determination in Adult Social Services to both broaden and hasten the delivery of Personal Budgets.'

'Personalisation represents a major change in the way social care is accessed and provided, however it will be important to review progress, make adjustments where necessary, and build on this initial success.'

Said Howard Cooper, Wirral's Interim Director of Adult Social Services: 'Getting money to individuals and ensuring everyone has the help and information to identify their needs and find potential solutions strongly remains the key goals

for transforming adult social care in Wirral. We want to make sure people have better choice, control and experiences through a broadening of what is available in the market to help them.'



Anne McArdle



YOUR FRONT SEAT TICKET FOR THE 'BEST VIEW IN THE WORLD'

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR YOUR NEXT CHALLENGE BUT AFTER SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT? ONE WHERE YOUR FRIENDS ARE GENUINELY IMPRESSED BY WHAT YOU ARE DOING BUT THINK YOU ARE 'MORE THAN A LITTLE CRAZY'? THEN WHY NOT JOIN ASPIRE IN SWIMMING THE ENGLISH CHANNEL IN 2012?

If you thought previous challenges were tough, think again; swimming the Channel as part of an Aspire relay will probably be the hardest thing you will ever attempt. The rewards are fantastic and worth every ounce of effort. Aspire will support you from sign up and throughout your training, to the moment you pop your toe in the water. The team camaraderie as you prepare for your crossing is second to none and nothing quite beats that feeling of finally arriving in France, but don't just take their word for it, this is what the swimmers have to say...

Gail, The Reserve

Gail is currently a Reserve for 2011, hoping to swim in 2012, she says, "It really is absolutely amazing to be part of this year's challenge; so inspiring and I can't wait for next year. Seeing people overcome challenges in training and preparing for their crossing is just the best thing ever."

Tarkan, The Accountant

Tarkan is part of a team from accountants SRLV (due to swim in mid September.) He has completed his two hour swim and says "I realised over the weekend that the 2 hour swim is not just a physical challenge but a mental challenge as well. In the spirit of Wimbledon I will use a tennis analogy; on the Saturday I went into the sea as Andy Murray, physically capable but not mentally. On the Sunday I was much more Djokovic, physically AND mentally capable. I also realised this is a team event and with the team together as a unit we can definitely succeed."

The 2011 Story so far...

Five Aspire relay teams have been training hard since January and as soon as the weather warmed up training moved to the coast, with regular trips to Brighton and Dover. The final, and possibly most important, part of training happened last weekend when all swimmers were required to complete a two hour open water swim in water of less than 16 degrees to comply with Channel swim regulations. Clearly training paid off as by Sunday afternoon they were a group of tired and happy swimmers. Next stop France!

To find out more about joining the Aspire team call Andrew on 020 8420 8951



NO ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT



The Oaklea Trust a provider of care and support for disabled and disadvantaged people in the community has reason to celebrate after receiving a glowing report from the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

The Oaklea Trust, whose North East office is based at the Derwentside Business Centre, Villa Real, underwent a comprehensive review from the CQC in April. The Trust cares for young adults up to senior citizens in the community, providing support for some of society's most vulnerable individuals including those with mental health problems, learning or physical disabilities. It has charitable company status and employs in excess of 300 employees.

The CQC review looked into the very heart of the care provision and services of The Oaklea Trust, the people who work for the organisation and the people they support, with key outcomes in:

- Respecting and involving people who use services;
- The care and welfare of the people who are cared for;
- The safeguarding of customers from abuse;
- Assessing and monitoring the quality of the services provided.

"We proudly state that 'the customer is at the heart of everything we do' and the CQC review demonstrates that these aren't just words – we practice this person-centred approach every single day."

"Any organisation being subjected to such an in-depth and rigorous appraisal would naturally expect there to be some feedback covering areas which may need review, but that was the one thing which notable by its absence." continues Clive Wigley, Chief Executive at The Oaklea Trust.

"At the very conclusion, where the CQC state what actions they would like the care provider to take, was simply one word: None."

"This is a massive boost for everyone working in the organisation. Most importantly, this sends out a reassuring message to those we support, their family and friends, that The Oaklea Trust are providing very high levels of customer service, something which we'll work hard to continue in the future."

'Roman with a Heart' Stands Guard for Boris

London Mayor Boris Johnson will be in very safe hands as the capital celebrates the city's history at a prestigious event at the London Guildhall in July, thanks to a guard of honour with a difference.

Amidst events taking place in some of the most historic surroundings, Boris will be escorted by a number of Roman Legionnaires, one of which being Paul Roberts from Staveley.

Paul, who works as a Lifestyle Coordinator for Kendal-based charity The Oaklea Trust, is involved in the re-enactment of historical events and is an active member of the Roman Military Research Society, and on Saturday 30th and Sunday 31st July he was one of just six chosen to stand guard over Boris Johnson and other VIPs.

"My interest in historical military started about ten years ago," explains Paul from his home in Staveley.

"It was actually through one of the young people with learning disabilities I

was helping to support: he had shown a great interest in the subject and so we decided to take him along to a 'battle' which was being performed locally. Incredibly, this really brought him out of himself, quite a transformation for the better and even something which his family would have never imagined."

In those early days, Paul supported a customer with a learning disability and, together, they took part in re-enactments of the ancient Greeks for over three years, travelling to events around the country, meeting new people, learning skills such as camping and outdoor living as well as discovering more about Greek history – an experience which was to deliver great benefits to the young man.

Paul's work for The Oaklea Trust involves supporting young people with learning disabilities.

"Paul the Roman" is also makes an appearance at local schools, definitely a highlight of any historical curriculum. Paul is also involved with Starlight, a charity which helps brighten the lives of seriously and terminally ill children throughout the UK, where Paul is on call to dress up in his full Roman legionnaire outfit for moral-boosting hospital visits with a difference.

"Paul really is a charismatic character," comments Sue Green, Director at The Oaklea Trust. "Our customers warm to him and many families personally request that he supports their relatives so we're sure that the London Mayor will be well looked after by this kindly Roman Legionnaire!"



for North East Care Provider

THE OAKLEA TRUST AT WORK WITH THE DANCE AND DRAMA GROUP



Young people with learning disabilities from a Kendal arts and social group are performing through the summer.

The 'Dance and Drama Group' was developed by Cumbria County Council as part of the Short Breaks for Disabled Children programme in conjunction with The Oaklea Trust, with the aim to offer a fun and safe environment for young people with learning disabilities to express themselves.

Jennifer Hone, from The Oaklea Trust, explains further: "Right from the start, the group has been really well attended and is a great experience for these young people. The drama and dance helps with confidence building and the group has really gone from strength to strength."

The club, which currently has twelve young people aged between 8 and 19, meets every Thursday during school term times at the Castle Street Centre in Kendal and so far the group has performed two showcases for their friends

and family: Oliver and High School Musical were both chosen by the children themselves, with High School Musical in particular featuring some very special interpretations of some of the songs.

"One member of the group has speech difficulties and mainly communicates through sign language," continues Jen Hone, "She taught the rest of the group how to sign the lyrics and the whole group performed by both singing and signing – it really was quite an achievement for everyone and simply brilliant to see!"

Helen Moffitt, Dance Development Officer at the Brewery Arts Centre, says "The sense of achievement in creating new work as a team and then hearing the applause for your efforts builds confidence and is in no way a competition (after all, there is enough

competition in life!) but a chance to share new ideas and enjoy working and performing together."

The funding for the Dance and Drama Group is due to end in September and The Oaklea Trust are looking at all avenues to support this group past September "Obviously we'd like to continue and are looking at every avenue to raise the necessary funds. If any organisation or company would like to help us out, in any way they can, it really would be greatly appreciated."

In the meantime, there are a number of available spaces for children with learning or physical disabilities who would like to become part of the Group, with volunteers also welcome to come and lend a hand.

Please contact Jen Hone at The Oaklea Trust on 01539 735 025 for more details.

REAL LIFE REQUEST

NETBUDDY HAVE BEEN ASKED TO FIND FAMILIES OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN WHO WOULD BE PREPARED TO TAKE PART IN A MAJOR 3-PART SERIES ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT FOR THE BBC.

The series will explore how child development is affected by three developmental disorders, including autism. It will be presented by child psychologist Laverne Antrobus and will attempt to view the world through the eyes of a child affected by autism.

The series producers are looking for two families – one able to talk about how to make living with an autistic child a positive experience. Ideally they should be going through some sort of transition, such as moving to a new school or into residential care.

The second family may be harder to find as the producers want to focus on a child going through the assessment process – ie a family who has yet to receive a diagnosis. Obviously this will be a very sensitive time for most people, but the series makers feel that focusing on this stage will be hugely informative and helpful to other parents.

If you – or any families you know – might like to take part in this series, please call emma on 0208677 7820 or email her at emma@netbuddy.org.uk



12 Hour garden makeover for local residential home

A local residential service for people with learning disabilities has been given a charitable make-over thanks to the global household cleaning company, S C Johnson.

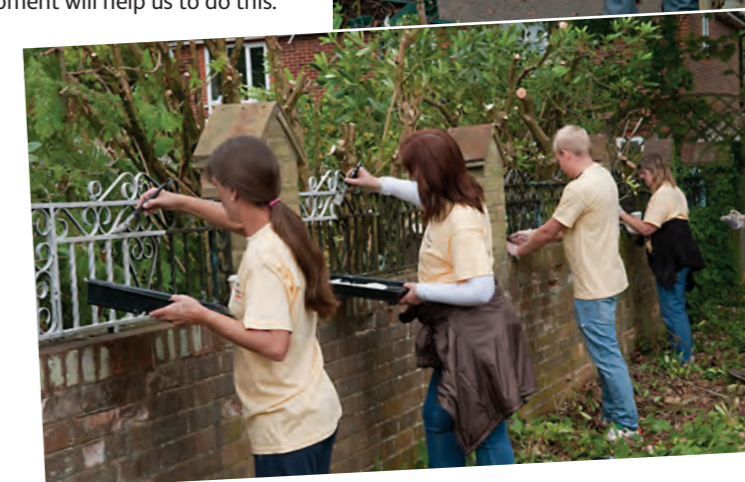
The lucky social care home in Fleet, Hampshire is run by leading autism and learning disability support provider; Dimensions. More than 12 members of staff provide 24 hour support to five adults with learning disabilities, helping them to live the life they choose in a community that meets their needs.

This summer more than 30 SC Johnson U.K. employees from Camberley, spent a day revamping the garden of this Dimensions' house for the benefit of residents. As well as donating their time and labour, the generous volunteers fitted the garden out with new plants, newly painted fences, a more accessible patio area, a repaired and painted garden shed and sensory equipment, including solar powered animals. The entire transformation took 12 hours.

Each year SC Johnson employees carry out charitable projects in their community. This year's garden makeover will have long-lasting positive affects for the residents of the house who use the

garden regularly and will get even more pleasure out of their new and improved surroundings.

Dimensions' Support Worker Jenny Waugh said: "The people who live here and staff are really excited about the new garden and we are thrilled to have been chosen by SC Johnson as benefactors. Dimensions work to support people to live their life in the way they choose to live it and this new improved garden and sensory equipment will help us to do this. On behalf of our residents, I'd like to say thank you."



HOLIDAY FEATURE

THE OLDE BULL HOTEL

Facilitating Respite Short Breaks and Holidays in Suffolk

The Olde Bull is a 16th Century Hotel set in the beautiful Suffolk town of Sudbury that welcomes all visitors, but are particularly welcoming to older people and people with disabilities.

They have worked closely with a local innovative learning disabilities and provider agency to understand what individuals and families require when booking their short breaks and holidays.

The Olde Bull offers a range of leisure and relaxing short breaks for groups of up to ten guests and their carer's, (based on two guests sharing a twin room, with 4 double rooms for carers). They provide a holiday experience for anyone who finds traditional respite in a care home environment too intense.



Call The Olde Bull hotel and let them arrange reasonably priced activity packages based on your interests or simply as a base for you to "do your own thing" and explore the beautiful Suffolk countryside.

Visit www.theoldebullhotel.co.uk or call 01787 374120 to find out how The Olde Bull Hotel can give you a perfect break

KEEFIELD CLOSE UNVEILS NEW SENSORY GARDEN

KEEFIELD CLOSE HAS UNVEILED ITS NEW SENSORY GARDEN. THE RESIDENTIAL HOME FOR DISABLED PEOPLE WAS ABLE TO BUILD THE NEW FEATURE FOR ITS RESIDENTS AFTER A SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN.

Keefield Close, based in Harlow, Essex, is home to 10 residents with a variety of learning and physical disabilities.

The garden was designed to be accessible for all residents, including wheelchair users. The garden allows them to learn about gardening and the growing process. Level paths and raised plant beds ensure that residents can enjoy a new sensory experience in a safe and comfortable environment.

Sandra Wilson, Keefield Close Manager said: "We are delighted that our new sensory garden has become a reality. We wanted to create a beautiful and functional garden that gives our residents a relaxing and fun experience of interacting with plants and flowers. I would like to thank all the local people who generously supported us and allowed us to create this fantastic garden."

Keefield Close is ran by leading disability charity Livability.



Buddy brilliant info packs



The iPad has caused something of a revolution in the world of learning disabilities, but knowing which apps to choose from the thousands available is a task in itself. As a parent or SEN teacher, how do you know which apps will suit the specific needs of your child or classroom?

www.netbuddy has launched an app for the iPad info pack that promises to take the hard work out of getting started. It's full of useful tips and

recommendations provided by people with first-hand experience of learning disability.

The pack is the latest in a number of info packs that have been published on the site, all of which are completely interactive. People are invited to add their own suggestions and information, so the packs are constantly being updated and developed.

Also recently launched is the Holidays info pack which includes personal recommendations from family carers. Planning a holiday that will suit the whole family's needs can be difficult at the best of times, but planning for someone with learning disabilities can be a real challenge. Will the accommodation cater for their needs? Is the environment safe and enclosed? Are there sensory issues that may be a problem, like a noisy disco or a brightly-lit restaurant?

Netbuddy's Holidays info pack lists holidays for people with learning disabilities, both in the UK and abroad, and features accommodation to suit all budgets, tastes and requirements. Again, it's completely interactive, so people can add tips and tell other people about places they've visited.



The Jobs & Training info pack shines the spotlight on an extremely important issue. Only one in 10 people with a learning disability is employed, despite research showing that 65% want to work.

Netbuddy's Jobs & training info pack is full of useful links and resources, designed to help people with learning disabilities find work. Since launching the pack, several new initiatives have been added, and Netbuddy would like to hear from any organisations offering employment or training for people with learning disabilities that have not already been listed.

For further information about these and other info packs, please visit: <http://www.netbuddy.org.uk/info-packs/>

SPOTLIGHT ON BREAKTHROUGH-UK

Breakthrough-UK is a successful social enterprise that uses the social model of disability in its policies and practice. The company has led the way in tackling barriers to employment and independence which many disabled people experience. The company is user led, and two thirds of the staff are disabled people.

Breakthrough UK works to shape the future by influencing policy, locally, regionally and nationally, through the operation of a Policy Think Tank, where membership includes prominent and well-respected disabled people who are experts in their field. The main aims are to influence government, or other strategic bodies, on matters to do with disability, from a 'social model' perspective, and to provide briefings on current matters to do with disability, for general dissemination.

Breakthrough UK delivers employment services in Manchester and Liverpool that support disabled people to access employment, voluntary work or training. Employers and placement providers are supported with information and signposting. In addition, work related training is provided to disabled people in IT, Administration, Retail and Horticulture.

The Training and Consultancy offer, delivered by Breakthrough UK, includes; tailor made disability equality training, delivered by disabled trainers, consultancy on strategy, policies and good practice, speakers, briefings and workshops and skilled researchers.

Breakthrough UK has two Centres for Independent Living. The Trafford based CiL is making a significant impact on the lives of disabled people by delivering information, advocacy, brokerage and support, in line with the principles of Independent Living.

The Breakthrough UK Centre for Independent Living, based a short distance away from Manchester City Centre, is a key partner in the DWP Right to Control Trailblazer.

The CiL works closely with other disabled people's organisations and 5 Greater Manchester Local Authorities to support disabled people who are or may be eligible for the Right to Control. A Design Group of disabled people was developed to help shape how Right to Control would work, resulting in a successful, co-production approach.

The new right is designed to give disabled people aged 18 years and over more choice and control over their social care, housing related support, and employment support related funding to achieve their positive life outcomes.

Each person can choose; a) the support that is offered, b) ask for another form of support from another provider, or c) have the money paid directly to them so that they can arrange their own support.

The Right to Control CiL provides services that promote Independent Living, for customers who choose to have support through their journey, including;

- Support with completing forms, including the Route Finder, a document that aims to replace traditional forms of assessment, and be the primary means of gathering information about the support that customers need
- Advocacy and self advocacy
- Peer Support
- Brokerage and Signposting
- Support for developing creative and innovative Support Plans
- User led Organisation Development
- Information services

Breakthrough UK host a National Independent Living Awards that showcases organisations and individuals that excel in supporting Independent Living and meet category criteria.

This year Breakthrough UK have launched a 'virtual' award ceremony in recognition of the winners. For more information, see the Breakthrough UK website www.breakthrough-uk.co.uk



Help disabled people by taking part in Livability's Jurassic Trek on Friday 16 to Sunday 18 September 2011

WOULD YOU LIKE TO CHALLENGE YOURSELF AND HELP SOME OF THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN THE UK AT THE SAME TIME? THEN WHY NOT TAKE PART IN LIVEABILITY'S JURASSIC TREK AND HELP RAISE MUCH-NEEDED FUNDS TO SUPPORT DISABLED PEOPLE.

The event will take place The Jurassic Coast is England's first Natural World Heritage Site and has the most geologically diverse coastline in the world. The depth of history in this region is staggering and the scenery very diverse. During the challenge you will continually climb and descend the steep hills of the Jurassic Coast, trekking 23 miles in two days while taking in some of its most spectacular scenery.

There is a registration fee of £49 and the minimum sponsorship is £550. For more

information about the trek contact Yvette Gillingham on 0207 452 2115 or email events@livability.org.uk.

Included on the challenge are: All accommodation, meals and camping equipment (except a sleeping bag and sleeping mat). You will have full trip support of experienced Discover Adventure leaders, drivers and cooks. Accommodation is in two person tents at a campsite near Kimmeridge.

Yvette Gillingham, events manager at national disability charity Livability, said,

"Taking part in the Jurassic Trek is a great, fun challenge to take on. You will also make a real difference to many people's lives as all the money raised will help support disabled people in the UK."



SEND US YOUR NEWS

If you have any exciting news releases, upcoming events and real life stories that you would like to be considered for the next edition of Voicebox please contact

editorial@voiceboxmagazine.org.uk or call 01704 821643

If you would like to advertise in Voicebox Magazine please email subscriptions@voiceboxmagazine.org.uk or call 01704 821643

Trek the Inca trail in Peru

THIS TREK TAKES YOU AWAY FROM THE CROWDS INTO THE LARES REGION OF THE PERUVIAN ANDES. YOU WILL PASS GREEN VALLEYS, TRANQUIL MOUNTAIN LAKES AND SNOW-CAPPED PEAKS AS YOU CLIMB UP TO 4,490M. THE VIEWS ARE BREATHTAKING.

The trekkers pass through many small village communities that offer a fascinating insight to traditional Andean life.

The trek ends with a train ride to Aguas Calientes and Machu Picchu, the legendary Lost City of the Incas. There is plenty of time to explore this renowned and fascinating site.

To take part in this challenge you pay a registration fee of £399 and raise a

minimum sponsorship. Flights, food and accommodation and of course an experience of a lifetime are provided for this. To find out more call 0870 417 0192



VALUING PEOPLE - WHAT NEXT?

Birmingham 15th September

A one day conference hosted by Dimensions in association with:

- National Development Team for Inclusion (NDti)
- Helen Sanderson Associates (HSA)
- Inclusion North.

This event follows on from the Valuing People - What Now? conferences in March and June, 2011.

The 15th September aims to provide the opportunity to:

- Build on and share ideas from 'Valuing People - What Now?'
- Hear about and share practical approaches to maintaining locally the momentum created by the Valuing People Now programme
- Work collaboratively with people from neighbouring areas.

Venue: The Studio., Cannon St, Birmingham, B2 5EP

Call 01225 789 135 to book your ticket.

Assistive Technology

21st September 2011

IP-City Centre, Ipswich - 9am - 12.15pm or 1.15pm to 4.30pm

This half day workshop is for individuals (Managers, Team Leaders and Support Workers) who work with people who may benefit from assistive technology, for example older people, people with learning disabilities and mental health issues.

During the workshop we will set out how person-centred approaches can help clients identify whether assistive technology may assist them to maintain their independence

Cost: £80 + VAT
email: catherine@voicemarketing.org.uk

The Time is Now

22nd September 2011

IP-City Centre, Ipswich - 9.30am - 4pm

Self Directed Support and Business Marketing for Social Care Providers
This course offers the opportunity to look at your current business infrastructure and how your existing marketing can change to look

towards the new self directed support agenda by developing an effective focused marketing strategy that is creative and innovative.

Cost: £150 + VAT
email: catherine@voicemarketing.org.uk

Financial Diversification within Personalisation

27th September 2011

Textile Centre of Excellence, Huddersfield - 9.30am - 4pm

This evidence based Financial Diversification interactive workshop prepares Provider and Third Sector Organisations for the new commissioning and procurement circumstances, to ensure they

develop and maintain sustainability in a changing and increasingly demanding funding and contractual environment.

Cost: £150 + VAT
email: catherine@voicemarketing.org.uk

Do you know someone who has learning difficulties or disabilities? Come along to the largest career fair on the Wirral for Young People with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Your Future Your Choice 2011

Tuesday 8th November

Floral Pavilion, New Brighton, 9am - 5pm

This FREE event is a great opportunity to speak to professionals who can help you and your Young Person decide what to do next.

- Meet more than 55 organisations.
- Free advice and guidance.
- Hands-on activities.
- Young people, parents and professionals welcome to drop in throughout the day*

*If parents want time to talk to all of the providers, we would recommend attending during the quieter period which is between 3.30 - 4.30pm

RECRUITMENT

If you have any recruitment needs send through your vacancies to Voicebox Magazine and we will promote for FREE in the next two issues!