The Newsletter of the Exeter Joint Agency for Children with Special Needs

Free Benefits Advice for Families with Children with Special Needs

Devon Welfare Rights Unit (part of Citizens Advice) is currently working with the Joint Agency Team and with other partners to provide benefits and tax credits advice to families with children with special needs. The service is available across the whole of Devon but is currently focussed mainly in Exeter.

The project began in North Devon at the end of last year and so far about 230 people have contacted Devon Welfare Rights Unit (DWRU). Advisers have identified that about 120 of these are entitled to more benefits and, so far, they have helped about 50 people to claim a total of around £200,000. This works out at about £4000 per successful case, taking into account the yearly increase and arrears paid.

One Exeter single parent, whose son has behavioural problems, was helped to claim the middle rate of the care component and the lower rate of the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance after her claim had originally been turned down. An appeal tribunal backdated the award to the date of claim and the family’s income was increased by £58.15 per week. The arrears paid were over £3000.

So far over half of the families on the Exeter Joint Agency Record have been sent a letter inviting them to contact DWRU if they want advice about their benefits and tax credits. The rest of you will receive it in the next few weeks. If you don’t still have the letter and would like to make use of this service, please contact DWRU on 01392 274869.

DWRU is also setting up contacts with some schools and Children’s Centres in Exeter, so look out for information from your school about this service.

DWRU’s aim is to help at least 500 families in Devon to claim additional benefits and the service will be available at least until March 2008.

Vincent Willson
Devon Welfare Rights Unit

Your Local Information Co-ordinator is Ann Owens, Exeter Joint Agency Team for children with special needs,
George Street, Exeter, EX1 1DA 01392 383732 ann.owens@devon.gov.uk
All Change !!!
By Dennis Platt – DISCplus Local Information Co-ordinator for Exeter

I am moving on, and from this month I will no longer be your DISCplus Local Information Co-ordinator - at least not for a while. I have accepted a six month secondment to head-up Devon’s Children’s Information Service – DISC.

DISCplus is part of DISC, so I will be retaining responsibility for it on a county-wide level. I set up DISCplus three to four years ago so the service will always be close to my heart, and I specifically asked that I could retain this county-wide role so that I can ensure that it continues to flourish and grow.

Exeter will not be left in the lurch though. We have been very lucky that Ann Owens has agreed to join the Exeter team during my absence. Ann is extremely experienced having previously worked in both the East and Mid Devon JATs as a referral co-ordinator, as a key worker support co-ordinator and, indeed, as a local information co-ordinator. This means Ann will be able to be up-and-running in the role after a brief familiarisation with how things are done in Exeter.

The telephone number will not change - 01392 383732, and Ann’s email address will be ann.owens@devon.gov.uk

I wish Ann good luck in the post, and am sure you will all continue to give her just as much support as you have me over the last three years.

Inclusive Playspace

Exeter parent and activist Miriam Gard has been working very hard, along with other parents and local groups, to generate interest and support for an inclusive play park for young people with disabilities, in or near Exeter.

A couple of excellent sites have been identified by the council and an innovative play equipment company has been identified and has offered to give a presentation.

If you are interested in contributing your opinions and ideas to this fantastic project, please come and join us at Ellen Tinkham School on Friday 17th November 10.30 - 12.30.

If you are able to attend, please phone 01392 467168 and leave your name.

Carolyn Purslow
Deputy Head
Ellen Tinkham School

Fairbanks Children's Clothing Shop

The shop is in need of more stock. Any donations of clothes for children aged 0 – 11 years, shoes, books and toys would be gratefully appreciated.

Donations can be delivered direct to Fairbanks Family Centre, 90 Polsloe Road, Exeter anytime between 9am and 5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am and 4pm on Fridays.

01392 423441

Free! Course for Carers
Making Computers Work for You

Tuesday 14 November 10am – 1pm

This relaxed session will explore how to customise the settings and options on a computer to make it more accessible to you.

For more information and a booking form, contact Lynsey Self at Exeter Carers Focus 01392 202055.

You will need to be, or be prepared to become, a member of Exeter Carers Focus.
Get Cookin’

Nick Mann—Assistant Principal Environmental Health Officer, Exeter City Council.

A new six-week course on cooking, nutrition awareness and food hygiene is to be launched by Exeter City Council after the authority received a grant from the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The Environmental Health Service at Exeter City Council submitted a bid for the six week course entitled Get Cookin’. Linking the essential life skills of cooking, nutrition awareness and food hygiene, the course will also provide people with the opportunity to gain related qualifications and work experience.

The initiative is aimed at disadvantaged teenagers (12 yrs to 19 yr olds) living in Exeter and the surrounding area. Each course delivered over six consecutive weeks, comprises a practical 3 hours session in the kitchen during which each student will have the opportunity talk about nutrition and food safety whilst they learn how to make a variety of wholesome meals and desserts - all under the guidance of experienced tutors. Each session will conclude with the candidates and tutor enjoying the meal they have prepared. Whilst many candidates will simply benefit from the introduction to the essential life skill of cooking, it is hoped that a significant proportion of the candidates will be inspired to take the Foundation Certificate in Food Safety and the Award in Nutrition - all costs being met by the funding. A limited number may also be encouraged to return to a learning environment or to pursue a catering qualification. Of course there are many immeasurable benefits for everyone including improving self confidence and self esteem, providing a relaxed environment to learn, socialise and eat in, introducing candidates to working in teams, etc.

At the moment courses are being held at Exeter College and St Sidwells Centre, although other venues may be used in the future.

The funding awarded to the City Council to set up these courses expires in March, although Devon County Council has agreed to provide funding to continue the courses for 14 to 18 yr olds until July 07. In addition, the bid provided for training 10 community food workers to continue the course thereafter so it is hoped that in one form or another, these courses will continue into the foreseeable future.

If you would like to be referred to join one of the courses, please get in touch with your key worker or call 01392 384444 and ask for the JAT duty desk.

ADHD Parents Support Group

Tuesday November 7th, 9:30am - 11:30am

Meet at Beacon Heath Children's Centre, Pendragon House, Beacon Lane, EX4 8LZ. This will be a meeting to plan what we want the group to be/do and establish who is willing and able to help push this forward and get together a planning committee. We will also be sharing information about ADHD and services, so bring along any books, leaflets, videos, DVDs which you have found helpful. There is free on road parking around the centre.

Further details from Jenny Rankin 07800 915 267 or Wendy Ottaway 07800 915 209.

Hospital Experiences Wanted

Margaret Ladbury has been in touch to say that as part of her work with Contact a Family, she will be involved in some training at RD&E Hospital. The training is aimed at giving medical practitioners more insight into how they should best deal with children with special needs.

Margaret would like families to get in touch with her to tell her about your children’s experiences at the hospital – good or bad, as inpatients or outpatients. She wants to use your stories as evidence in the training. Of course no one would be identifiable from what she tells the students.

You can get in touch with Margaret by calling 01392 459720.
New participation e-newsletter  The end of July saw the launch of a new free Contact a Family e-newsletter focussing on issues around parent participation. The newsletter will be out every two months and will be a resource for parents and those working to develop parent participation. Subjects covered include: articles on parent participation work around the UK, funding opportunities, a section to post questions or ask for information/advice from others, legislation/policy updates, good practice, celebrating successes and resources. If you have some news from your participation work which you would like to include, or any comments or suggestions please email liz.ranger@cafamily.org.uk. To receive the e-newsletter go to http://lists.cafamily.org.uk/lists/

Concerned about your child? A new leaflet from Contact a Family – information about feeding, speech, co-ordination, teeth, toilet training, learning, behaviour and sleep. You can download it by visiting the Contact a Family website: www.cafamily.org.uk or ask for a free copy - call 0207 608 8773.

Podcasts
Several Contact a Family publications are now available to download as an audio file in MP3 format or ‘podcast’:

- When Your Child Has Additional Needs www.cafamily.org.uk/whenyourchild.html#podcast
- Fathers factsheet www.cafamily.org.uk/fathers.html#podcast
- Growing Up, Sex and Relationships: A booklet for young disabled people www.cafamily.org.uk/packs.html#podcast1
- Growing Up, Sex and Relationships: A booklet to support parents of young disabled people www.cafamily.org.uk/packs.html#podcast2

Funding Now Available for Holidays at Calvert Trust, Exmoor

Calvert Trust, Exmoor has a new bursary scheme that can help fund holidays.

Between 50% and 90% of the cost of the holiday for the person with a disability and their carer can be funded.

The Calvert Trust, Exmoor is an accessible outdoor adventure centre providing holidays for people with all kinds of special needs together with their families, friends and carers. A choice of fully-catered or self-catering accommodation is available.

Riding, canoeing, kayaking, sailing, rock climbing, abseiling, archery, orienteering.

Indoor swimming pool complex with Jacuzzi and steam room.

3 and 4 night stays available in November, February, March and April.

Call 01598 763221 for more information and an application form.

www.calvert-trust.org.uk
Headway Devon

Headway Devon offers specialist services for people recovering from the effects of brain injury, however acquired.

This autumn, they are starting a new project which offers young people with acquired brain injuries the opportunity to attend a group session. The group will offer support to both the young people and their families, as well as providing activities for the rehabilitation and development of social skills, anger management, self-esteem and cognitive functioning.

Provisionally, the group is aimed at young people aged 11-16. It is hoped to expand the service to children aged 5 to 10.

The sessions take place in Exeter on Saturday mornings. They are open to anyone in Devon who is able to travel there.

For more information contact Rachel Loram 01392 211822.

Headway Devon already offers an Outreach Service to children with acquired brain injuries. This is a community based service, in which specially trained staff work one-to-one in home and community settings on a sessional basis. Through personalised programmes they seek to facilitate return to school or college, and other social activities where appropriate.

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**Autism Alert Cards**

The Autism Alert Card from the National Autistic Society can be carried by a person with autism and enables them to identify their needs in situations where they may find communication difficult. The Autism alert card is designed to tell others who come into contact with people with autism about the condition, and asks them to show respect and tolerance. The card comprises a wallet, which contains a leaflet of key facts about autism, and a credit-card style insert, which can be used to provide emergency contact details. They cost £2.50 each (excluding VAT & p+p). For more details or to order online go to:

www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=624&a=6513
nas@nas.org.uk
020 7833 2299
National Autistic Society, 393 City Road, London, EC1V 1NG

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**Positive Aspects** is a free bi-monthly email bulletin which is for anybody who has an interest in any disability, mental heath issue and/or illness

- law
- useful items
- interesting articles
- holidays
- what's on
- true stories
- requests
- events
- benefits
- useful websites
- and much more!

To subscribe send an email to trudy.1@ntlworld.com with subscribe and the county you live in, in the text of the email.

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George Street, Exeter, EX1 1DA 01392 383732 ann.owens@devon.gov.uk
Exeter & District Mencap are having a follow on day from the one held in June on

**What Are We Educating Our Children For**

10th November 2006

ISCA Centre Bridge Suite
Arena Park, Exeter

10:30am - 3pm

There will be a range of table top resources for parents and carers and people with learning disabilities based around educational and work opportunities, post school and college. Also included will be top table information on leisure resources, support groups, opportunities for supported and independent living and respite.

There will be someone available from Devon Welfare Rights who is willing to check out benefits with carers for those under 18. We also hope to have the police diversity team attend and people from health.

The learning disability team at Franklyn are co-joining with us and have arranged for the Get Changed Theatre Group, the Billy Yappa Show to perform a sketch on Person Centred Planning.

This day will be of interest to all parents concerned about the future possibilities for their children when they eventually leave school.

Contact Anne Brand 01392-494694 or Alan Kerswell 01392-278197 for further information.

There will be refreshments, but we will need to know numbers.

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**Clare Key**

now works in Exeter JAT as Referrals Co-ordinator every morning and as Direct Payments Co-ordinator every afternoon.

In the mornings she is available on

01392 383764

and in the afternoons

01392 380410.

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**Makaton**

Are you interested in doing an informal course in basic Makaton signing to help you communicate with your child?

Yes? Then get in touch with Clare Brooks

07870 184955

msclarebrooks@aol.com

Clare is chair of Exeter Parent Carers’ Voice.

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**Milky Way Adventure Park**

Free evening of activities for children with special needs and their families

Clovelly, North Devon

01237 431255

Friday October 20th

5pm onwards

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Your Local Information Co-ordinator is Ann Owens, Exeter Joint Agency Team for children with special needs,

George Street, Exeter, EX1 1DA 01392 383732 ann.owens@devon.gov.uk
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has a special need or disability. This will be a local “Face 2 Face” Scheme, backed by the Face 2 Face scheme supported by Scope. Volunteer parents are trained to “befriend” and offer emotional support to parents in the early days following diagnosis or discovery that their child has a special need or disability.

I am Trish Oliver and I have been recruited to establish and run the scheme in Exeter, Mid and East Devon. I live in Exeter with my husband and three teenage sons, one of who has an autistic spectrum disorder.

Since starting my post on 4th September this year, I have been busy making preparations, and lots of people have shown interest in training to become befrienders. They know that help from a professional is appreciated, but cannot replace support from someone who has been through a similar experience. If you would like to use your experience to support another parent, please consider becoming a Face2Face befriender. I will happily chat to you and explain more about it, you can phone me on 01392 219950 or 07786531735.

Lots of people have been working really hard in Devon, setting up and raising funds for “A Brighter Tomorrow”. The charity has now teamed up with the Primary Care Trust and the Joint Agency Teams, to provide a new service for parents discovering that their child has a special need or disability.

Parents United is a charity based in Exeter which currently funds several activity schemes for children and young people with special needs. The Monday Youth Club and Saturday Club, together with the Activities Club which ran for the first time during the summer holidays, are now all to be known as the KOOLKLUBS.

Some reorganisation is taking place, but it is envisaged that the Kool Youth Klub and Kool Saturday Klub will continue to run as before, with the addition of the Kool Activities Klub during autumn half-term and the Christmas Holidays. A KOOLKLUBS website, which is currently being developed at www.koolklub.org.uk, will have more detailed information available in the future.

Parents United hold regular meetings for all those interested in what they do, and information about the dates, times and venues will be available online in the near future through the KOOLKLUBS website.

Parents United can be contacted either via email at admin@koolklub.org.uk or by phone on 01392 208355 at the Parents United office, Ashclyst Centre, Whipton Hospital, Hospital Lane, Exeter EX1 3RB.
In law:

- You must wear a seat belt in cars and goods vehicles where one is fitted. There are very few exceptions to this. The driver is liable to prosecution if a child under 14 years does not wear a seat belt or child restraint.
- You must not carry an unrestrained child in the front seat of any vehicle.
- Children up to 135cms in height must use the appropriate child restraint when traveling in any car, van or goods vehicle - there are very few exceptions.
- A child may use an adult belt when they reach 135cm or the age of 12.

In buses and coaches with seat belts fitted, passengers aged 3 years and above must use them. Child restraints must be used if they are available in the vehicle. Passengers on vehicles used for public fare-paying passengers on 30mph roads are exempt.

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>FRONT SEAT</th>
<th>REAR SEAT</th>
<th>WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>Seat belt must be worn if fitted</td>
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<td>Driver</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child under 3 years of age</td>
<td>Correct child restraint must be used</td>
<td>Correct child restraint must be used. If one is not available in a taxi, may travel unrestrained.</td>
<td>Driver</td>
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| Child from 3rd birthday up to 135cms in height (or 12th birthday, whichever they reach first) | Correct child restraint must be used | Correct child restraint must be used where seat belts fitted. Must use adult belt in rear seat if correct child restraint not available:  
  • In a taxi  
  • For a short distance in an unexpected necessity  
  • If 2 occupied child restraints prevent fitting of a 3rd | Driver                |
| Child 12 or 13, or over 135cms in height | Adult seat belt must be worn if available | Adult seat belt must be worn if available | Driver                |
| Adult passengers | Seat belt must be worn if available            | Seat belt must be worn if available      | Passenger             |

To find out what correct child restraints are look at www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk/campaigns/childcarseats/pdf/sbcr-july2006.pdf or ask your local information co-ordinator to send you a copy.
**Bugzi**

Bugzi is a small powered wheelchair for very young children. It is designed to meet the needs of children aged 1 to 5 (up to 25 kg in weight). It is brightly coloured and designed to look more like a toy to make it as appealing as possible to young children.

For more information call 020 8770 8286 or visit www.bugzi.org.uk

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**Handsel Trust’s Sleep Study**

Do you remember, a while ago, we told you about a study The Handsel Trust was doing into the effect on families with disabled children of disturbed sleep patterns? Some of you may have contributed to it by filling in their survey.

They are now searching for information about good practice to support children and families with sleep issues.

- Please let them know if you have been helped by a particular professional or service.
- Tell them about useful literature and other resources to help families.
- Are you involved with a sleep clinic? Please tell them about it.

Handsel Trust, 9 Pitt Avenue, Worcester, WR4 0PL
01905 23255
p.limbrick@virgin.net
www.handseltrust.org

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**Carers Win the ‘Right to Request’ Flexible Working**

In June, The Work and Families Bill became law which means carers have, at last, won the right to request flexible working from their employer. The Act will come into force in April next year.

Imelda Redmond, Chief Executive of Carers UK says,

“Gaining the right to request flexible working will have a huge impact on the 4.8 million carers in the UK of working age, 3 million of whom already combine work and care. We know that the vast majority of working age carers want to work, and this helps provide them with a life outside their caring role, and a valuable source of income. Having this right to request some flexibility will make it easier for carers who are currently in employment to stay in work, and for more carers to take that vital step into employment.”

For more information see www.carersuk.org or ask your local information co-ordinator.

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**Second Space** is a new charity with a truly inspirational idea as its premise - people with second homes offer one week a year to the charity.

Second Space in turn offers these weeks to parents who are carers of children who are either disabled or terminally ill, so that they might benefit from a respite holiday with or without their child depending on circumstances.

They are currently looking to increase their list of second homeowners with homes in this country, who are happy to donate a week, for this cause. The ultimate aim is to establish a national register where people can register their home enabling Second Space to organise a greater number respite breaks at home and abroad. For more information:
020 7792 9043
amanda.sidwell@secondspace.net
clare.finham@secondspace.net
www.secondspace.net
Child Trust Fund

- Do you have a child born on or after 1st September 2002?
- Do you want free independent financial advice about how to invest your Child Trust Fund voucher?

Every family whose child was born on or after 1st September 2002 is entitled to a Child Trust Fund voucher from the Government worth at least £250. But lots of families don't do anything with the voucher when it arrives - and lose valuable interest as a result. The Government eventually chooses an account for you at random which may not be the best one.

From 7th August 2006, Contact a Family has secured some funding to pay for families to receive an hour's confidential, free, independent financial advice over the telephone about which would be the right Child Trust Fund account for your family.

Contact a Family will pay an experienced investment adviser to give you this advice. If you haven't made a decision about what to do with your voucher, or you think you may have made the wrong decision, call the Contact a Family helpline 0808 808 3555 to book a telephone appointment or e-mail helpline@cafamily.org.uk

Family Fund

The Family Fund can consider applications from families caring for a child (aged 15 or under) with a severe disability or serious illness for help towards providing a family holiday. The Fund will consider applications from families whose gross earned income is less than £23,000, and where savings are less than £18,000. Families whose income is entirely from benefits are eligible for consideration.

Any holiday grant would be over and above any grant awarded by the Family Fund for any other purpose in any particular year. In other words – if you have already received money from the Family Fund this year to buy something like a washing machine, you can still apply for money towards a holiday.

The amount of the grant is a standard amount, which is reviewed on a regular basis and is subject to available funding.

The Fund provides holidays through its travel service partner Barrhead Travel. They are responsible for giving advice and booking holidays for families awarded a holiday grant by the Fund. The Family Fund opens an account with Barrhead travel for you and pays the money into it. Families then contact Barrhead Travel to arrange and book the holiday. The money can be used towards the cost of the holiday and insurance.

There is no restriction on the type of holiday families can take, or the destination. However, the family is responsible for ensuring that they have adequate travel insurance to cover any emergency situations.

Look at www.familyfund.org.uk for more information.

Family Fund application forms are available from your local information co-ordinator.
Your Local Information Co-ordinator is Ann Owens, Exeter Joint Agency Team for children with special needs, George Street, Exeter, EX1 1DA 01392 383732 ann.owens@devon.gov.uk

Wukwashi Wa Nzambi

Do you have any......
Old Pedro boots, three wheel buggies, educational toys (not soft toys), or other things your children have finished using that you would like to donate to a project in Africa?

One local O.T. is setting up a project for Children with Special Needs in Zambia. Wukwashi Wa Nzambi works to improve the mobility and independence of children with special needs. Local volunteers are ready to put time and effort into the project and the parents are thrilled with the help they have received. Seeing their children standing or being able to take them to the doctors in a buggy has made such a difference: especially as they have grown too big to be carried in the traditional sling.

Drugs, x-rays and operations are not free, so the project also helps by transporting children to Mission Hospitals where they can get help for free. Up to now, 40 children are receiving help, but there are many more.

Please contact your local information co-ordinator if you have donations. The OTs will be back in the UK in December 2006.

Autism

The National Autistic Society has added a new area called Diagnosis to their website. It aims to provide useful information and advice to people who have just received a diagnosis of ASD themselves, parents of children who have recently been diagnosed, and those who are considering getting a diagnosis.

www.autism.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=1031

Living With Aspergers DVD – by members of the ASGMA Aspirations project. Various members talk about life with Asperger syndrome from their own individual perspectives – giving a fascinating insight into the difficulties they encounter and how they cope. Copies are available at £8 each. If you are interested, please send a cheque payable to ASGMA, to the: Autistic Society of Greater Manchester, 1114 Chester Road, Stretford, Manchester M32 0HL Or call 0161 866 8483 www.asgma.org.uk

Going to the Shops – a guide for parents of children with ASD. Written by one of the team at NAS. £1. Order online at:

www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=538&a=8656 or call 0845 458 9911

Parent to Parent by Ann Boushéy
Information and inspiration for parents dealing with autism and Asperger’s Syndrome. Published by Jessica Kingsley. ISBN 1843107740 £13.95 www.jkp.co

help!2 is a series of seminars for parents and carers who have some basic knowledge of ASD. The seminars focus on practical topics such as anger management, helping siblings, making and using visual supports, writing Social Stories, and anti-bullying tips.

NAS are running three help!2 courses in the Devon and Cornwall area in November. The provisional dates and titles are:
• Positive Behaviour Management using low arousal techniques 6 November, Redruth
• Making and Using Visual Supports 7 November, Bodmin
• How to Write Social Stories 23 November, Exeter

For more information and to book a place please call Maria 0117 974 8414. help!2 is free to parents carers of children and young people with an ASD.
Changing Places

The Changing Places Consortium has launched a campaign on behalf of the thousands of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and their carers, and the many other disabled people who cannot use standard accessible toilets.

They need Changing Places toilets. These are toilets with enough space for disabled people and their carers, and the right equipment, including a height adjustable changing bench and a hoist.

There are almost no public Changing Places toilets in the UK. Providing these toilets in public places would make a dramatic difference to the lives of thousands of people who desperately need these facilities. Sometimes you just need to change one thing to open up a world of possibility.

What are Changing Places toilets?

Standard disabled toilets do not meet the needs of all people with a disability – or their carers. Changing Places toilets are different to standard disabled toilets.

Changing Places toilets provide:

The right equipment -
- A height adjustable changing bench
- A tracking hoist system, or mobile hoist

Enough space -
- Adequate space in the changing area for the disabled person and up to two carers
- A centrally placed toilet with room either side for the carers
- A screen or curtain to allow the disabled person and carer some privacy

A safe and clean environment -
- Wide tear off paper roll to cover the bench
- A large waste bin for disposable pads
- A non-slip floor

Changing Places needs your support to get toilets in public places.

For more information call 020 7696 6019 or look at www.changing-places.org

For Diversity Against Discrimination

European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007

wants to make people in the EU more aware of their rights to enjoy equal treatment and a life free of discrimination.

The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All in 2007 has three key aims:

1. making European Union citizens aware of their right to non-discrimination and equal treatment
2. promoting equal opportunities for all – access to employment, education, in the workplace or in the healthcare sector
3. promoting the benefits of diversity for the European Union.


Free ½ hour sessions of Shiatsu and Massage available to carers in Exeter, Teignbridge and East Devon

- Massage with Carla Miller – Wednesday mornings
- Shiatsu with Nic Florey – Thursday mornings

Available weekly at the Westbank Healthy Living Centre, until July 2007. To book just call reception on 01392 824752.

Westbank is easy to get to with ample parking as well as being conveniently situated on the 85/85a bus route from Exeter Bus Station.

Westbank Healthy Living Centre, Farm House Rise, Exminster, EX6 8AT.

Both Carla and Nic also offer full treatment sessions at a reduced rate to carers.

This project is made possible with support from Westbank and UnLtd.

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Transition to Adult Services

**Progress magazine** is a guide for young people with special needs aged 13 - 25. It is designed to help with the transition process by providing all the information needed to make positive, informed, key lifestyle decisions about such things as education, employment and housing.

This biannual magazine is used by young adults, parents, carers and professional advisers alike. Transition planning information is often difficult to find in one place, Progress fills a distinct information gap and makes a positive contribution to the lives of young people.

To get your FREE copy of Progress call Contact a Family helpline 0808 808 3555 or order online at www.cafamily.org.uk/helpline.html#pro-forma

**Information about Transition**

Are you starting to think about services post-18?

There is a lot of information on the DISCplus website:

www.devon.gov.uk/transition13plus

If you are still thinking about having a holiday this year, but haven’t got round to it yet visit www.accessatlast.com/disabled-holiday/offers/

There you will find some excellent last minute deals in accommodation which has access facilities listed.

**Easy Going Dartmoor** provides a wealth of access information on a wide range of sites within the National Park area that can be enjoyed by people with limited mobility, including wheelchair users, families with pushchairs and young children, and people who are visually impaired. This publication can be downloaded for free or can be bought for £3 online or from any Dartmoor National Park Information Centre, www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk

**Enable Holidays** have just launched their winter 06/summer 07 brochure. It has lots of overseas holidays in wheelchair accessible hotels. For a copy of the brochure please call 0871 222 4939 www.enableholidays.com

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Parent/Carer Keyworkers

Are you a Parent/Carer Keyworker? Would you like to share your experience of this important role with other families in Devon?

Get in touch with your local information co-ordinator.
Direct Payments

Written by Louise Smith, County Direct Payments Advisor

Good news for families living in the Teignbridge, South Hams and West Devon area as Jeanette Lee will be starting as the new direct payments support working on the 16th Oct!

Su O’Leary is the new Information Co-ordinator for Direct Payments and in the future will be helping to develop a ‘direct payments newsletter’, and in time, updating the Devon County Council website information. If you have any information, experiences, advice etc. you would like added to the newsletter please call her on 01392 381124, email her at su.o'leary@devon.gov.uk, or write to her at Alexandra Lodge, 5 Old Road, Tiverton, EX164HQ

In the past I have been the part time Mid Devon Direct Payments advisor, meeting families to discuss all their Direct Payments requirements. I have also been the part time County Direct Payments Advisor attempting to co-ordinate the myriad of information that families and Devon County Council need to be aware of. I now have a 3 month secondment to an OT post so will not able to do the Mid Direct payments advisor role. At present we will not be filling this post with another worker. Instead if families need any advice about employment/self employment then I will be able to talk to them. However all other aspects of arranging the Direct Payment will be completed by the keyworker (with my help if they need it).

For Direct Payments queries or general information please call your local Direct Payments worker:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact Name</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Devon</td>
<td>Julia Forrester</td>
<td>01271 341538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Devon</td>
<td>Sarah Dixon, Liz Mallon</td>
<td>01392 384442, 01392 384482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>Clare Key</td>
<td>01392 383764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South/West Devon and Teignbridge</td>
<td>Jeanette Lee</td>
<td>01803 869300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Devon</td>
<td>No one in post but if you need information about employing call Louise Smith</td>
<td>01392 381116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Direct Payments Advisor</td>
<td>Louise Smith</td>
<td>01392 381116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For general information about direct payments contact your keyworker.
**Odds & Ends!**

Channel 4 teletext page 176 is dedicated to disability news and issues.

The Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (ASBAH) has launched a new national helpline. 0845 450 7755 or visit www.asbah.org for more information.

Portaramp offer a simple and cost effective solution to many of the access problems encountered today. They have a comprehensive range of products to suit any type of entrance; alternatively they can quickly design and manufacture a Portaramp to your own specification. For more details call 01953 714 599, email sales@portaramp.co.uk or visit www.portaramp.co.uk

The Chillow® is designed to keep your pillow cool. This device produces a lasting, cool and comforting sensation without blowing air, making noise, or costing money to operate. There is no other product like it on the market. Activate it one time and leave it in your pillow. The soothing, relaxing effect will give you superior sleep night after night. Never too hot, never too cold... the user is always perfectly comfortable. It is a flexible, leak proof, cushioned pad that provides unique support with thermal regulating characteristics not present in dry foam, gel filled or basic water-filled products. www.chillow.net

The Down's Syndrome Association is holding a conference for people concerned with the education of primary school age children with Down’s and their parents/carers. It will be at the Gloucester County Cricket Club, Bristol on 9th November. The cost is £20. Please book online at www.downs-syndrome.org.uk, or call Lesley Alabaf at the Down's Syndrome Association on 0845 230 0372, or email lesley.alabaf@downs-syndrome.org.uk

Widgit Regional Contact Day, 1st December 10.00am – 3.15pm. Free! Notre Dame RC School, Looseleigh Lane, Derriford, Plymouth. Experience for yourself the very latest materials and software Widgit, the producers of Writing with Symbols, has to offer. Further details and registration www.widgit.com/events/contactday.htm

New eating disorders unit opens. Based at Wonford House Hospital in Exeter, the 12-bed Haldon Unit is a joint initiative between the mental health providers in Cornwall, Devon and Plymouth and is the first of its kind in the peninsula to offer a specialist inpatient service for eating disorders.

New online Blue Badge parking bay map launched - A new interactive online service has been launched on Directgov, which will make it much easier for disabled people to find Blue Badge scheme parking bays in 64 cities across the UK. This mapping facility is the first of its kind and will enable people to search by postcode or town/area name for designated Blue Badge parking bays, parking bays that fall on red routes in London and accessible petrol stations. The service will also outline any time restrictions or special notices that apply to individual allocated Blue Badge parking bays. For further information see http://bluebadge.direct.gov.uk/

ERIC (education and resources for improving childhood continence) have launched a new webshop to purchase products and literature. www.ericshop.org.uk
DISCplus – DISCuss  You are invited to contact the newsletter with your questions. We will do our best to find the answers. Please send your letters to the address at the bottom of the page.

We received this poem from Allen, a parent in Tavistock.

This Key Unlocks!

What are we doing wrong? My wife said to me.
He screams day and night, I drink gallons of tea.
The flapping the spinning, those long empty looks.
It seems all that interests him are those darn Thomas books!
We went for help and were sent here and there.
'It's Autism we're sorry, you will pull out your hair!'
I got on the computer to search for a cure.
But after five years you see Autism is pure.
That gang in America have given us the key,
They have opened our eyes and now we all see.
To copy and mirror was their clever break through.
It worked in front of our eyes and now he says 'POO'.
So its onwards and upwards until we reach the top.
As I know now one day he will tell me when to stop!

Mr and Mrs G from Honiton have written “Our grandson has ASD, it is his birthday soon and we would like to celebrate it with something a little bit special. Do you have any ideas?”

Record-a-card is a greeting card which allows you to record a 10 second message - perfect for anyone who has difficulty with the written word. There are 6 designs plus a blank version so you can decorate it with his favourite children’s character or hobby. The fantastic cards are all re-recordable so can be used over and over again.
The cards cost £4.99 each, pack of 3 blanks £13.99. (£3.95 p&p)
For more information contact Talking Products Ltd. 01794516677
www.talkingproducts.com

Top Tips From You

Elaine from Totnes wanted to let other parents know how useful she found the ‘My future choice’ website. www.transitioninfonetwork.org.uk It covers many aspects of the transition from childhood to adulthood.

Mrs P a parent from the South Hams area wrote in with this suggestion: “If you are looking for a car that will take a large electric wheelchair without dismantling it, we did some extensive research last year and found that in the small MPV (multi Person Vehicles) type cars the Fiat Doblo has a whole four inches more boot space back to front than comparable models. In this case size matters!”

I am looking for more tips from you so please send them to me — You are the experts!
Insider Information - Can you help?

Questions from you

We have had several requests for information about music teachers with experience of teaching children with special needs either on a 1:1 basis or in small groups. If you know of any please do let us know, we will print the answers in the next newsletter.

Back at the beginning of the summer Laura from South Hams contacted us to say that she is the parent of a child with a visual impairment and is interested in meeting up with other parents/guardians of children of any age with similar problems. Rachel in Tavistock has also contacted us as she has a preschool child with physical disabilities and was hoping to meet up with others in a similar situation.

So far no one has contacted us to pass on their details to Rachel or Laura. If you would be interested in meeting up for a chat, a moan, a chance to share ideas etc please contact me at the address below and I will pass your details on.

If you can help in any way with answering these questions get in touch. If you have any questions please let me know and I will put them in the next newsletter. My contact details are at the bottom of the page.

Answers from you responses to the questions in the last newsletter

A family from Tavistock have called to say that they have had a really positive experience with swimming teachers at Meadowlands pool. They said the staff have really taken time to work with both of their children who have special needs. Meadowlands can be contacted on 01822 617774.

A parent in Exeter called to let us know how highly she recommends Richard Trout a swimming teacher at Northbrook Swimming Pool. Richard has experience of teaching children with visual impairment, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, Autism and hearing impairment. Lessons can be in a small group or on a 1:1 basis. Individual lessons cost £12.50 per half hour. Richard can be contacted on 01392 667020 or by email at richardtrout@dcleisure.co.uk
Your Local Information Co-ordinator is Ann Owens, Exeter Joint Agency Team for children with special needs, George Street, Exeter, EX1 1DA 01392 383732 ann.owens@devon.gov.uk

Make it Work for You is a new guide for working parents of disabled children from Working Families. Based on interviews with the experts – parents who already combine working and caring – this book gives practical advice on how to make the juggling act work. Price to parents £5.50. Order online at www.workingfamilies.org.uk, contact your local information co-ordinator for an order form or make a payment by card by calling 020 7253 7243.

Dyslexia Pocket Book by Julie Bennett - Julie sees dyslexia as a learning difference rather than a learning disability. Price £6.99 - visit: www.pocketbook.co.uk/pocket/display.asp?isb=1903776686&cid=teachers&tag

Altered Images: Becoming Parents of our Disabled Children - A group of parents from Ryedale Special Families, a parent led self help group, have written a book to help other parents drawing on their own experiences and challenges from babies in special care through to autism, Down’s syndrome, cerebral palsy and other learning disabilities. It costs £12.99 - visit: www.word-power.co.uk/catalogue/0955214602


My sister is different - Sarah Tamsin Hunter - the ups and downs of life with a sister who has autism, written and illustrated by ten-year-old Sarah who has an autistic spectrum disorder. An entertaining read aimed at young children of all ages. Price £4.99 plus p&p. Visit: www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=431&a=10238


Accessible South West
www.accessiblesouthwest.co.uk

Accessible South West is a new directory designed to assist visitors with disabilities travelling to the South West of England find suitable places to stay and visit. The directory includes access information on accommodation, attractions and other places of interest, places to eat, public toilets, and beaches. There is also information on disability groups and organisations that can assist the disabled traveller whilst staying away from home, and local suppliers of accessibility equipment to hire.

Accessible South West is owned and operated by South West Tourism Ltd, Woodwater Park, Exeter, EX2 5WT 01392 360050

csmith@swtourism.co.uk

Books

Internet Access

Nowadays much of the information available to you, which may be available in other forms, is on the internet. In these cases we will always give the web address so that you can access it directly and get all the extra information you want.

If you do not have internet access at home, remember there are other ways to get on the net. Devon County Council has now achieved their long-held aim that everyone living in the county is within 3 miles of a public access PC. These are in all libraries, but also many community centres and village halls, and even in post offices, local pubs and shops.

In libraries access is free for at least the first 30 minutes.

Alternatively your local information co-ordinator can print out information from the web and send it to you. Look at the bottom of each page for contact information.

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**County Forum**

A meeting of the County Parent Carers’ Voice was held on 19th September in Tiverton. Bob Mead’s resignation was announced and thanks were expressed to him for his work as Co-Chair of the Forum, Chair of his locality forum and his representation on the Children’s Trust Board. Best wishes were extended to him in his return to work.

Each of the six localities attending presented a report about what is happening within their areas and the issues raised were discussed.

The County Chair is presently writing a paper on the provision of Speech and Language Therapy across the County which will be presented to the Children’s Trust Board at a later date.

If you have any comments to make contact:
Jeanette Kemlo 01271 328508
jkemlo@aol.com

A paper is also being prepared on the type of equipment Disability Living Allowance should be spent on.

Future County Meetings will be more focused. One specific issue will be looked at in more depth, pulling together evidence from all over the County which then will put together in ‘jargon free’ language and present to the Children’s Trust Board.

John Shaw (Lead Officer, Strategy and Development Joint Agency Services) gave a briefing about Devon Carers’ Breaks Development Programme. He also talked about Carers’ Assessment and checked that the method of reimbursing carers’ claims was working.

The next meeting of the County Forum will be on Wednesday 22nd November from 10.00-1.00. This meeting is open to nominated representatives from the local groups. Emie Lloyd Assistant Education Officer - Exclusions and Alternative Provision will be speaking at this meeting. Any comments about exclusion to be addressed at this meeting should come through your local Parent Carers’ Voice groups or addressed to your local development worker.

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**Exeter Forum**

We held our locality meeting on 13th September. At the meeting Frank O’Friel, Manager of the Exeter JAT, explained what is happening in Exeter. He also talked about the issues that parents had identified at the parent workshop session in April and what progress had been made to address them. He was keen to hold a similar workshop session again for parents/carers, possibly in November, and suggested that this time it look at one issue of particular importance to parents. Those present felt that transport would be a suitable topic.

During the meeting there were discussions about what equipment people felt parents should be expected to provide out of the DLA and what should be provided for them. It was felt that items identified by an OT, and over and above that needed for an average child, should be provided by the store.

The issue of speech and language provision was also discussed. Generally it was agreed that the quality of provision was good but that accessing it was increasingly difficult and that children were not able to receive the support that many felt was needed.

At the November meeting there will be a talk by one of the School Nurses on puberty, adolescence and sexual health matters for children with special needs and the problems that parents may encounter at this time. All parents/carers are welcome to attend and there will be an opportunity to ask questions.

Dates of future meetings - all carers welcome -

**Formal meetings**
Friday 3rd November 10.00am – 12.30pm
Exeter CVS, King William Street, Exeter

**‘Air and Share’ informal meetings**
Thursday 12th October 12.00noon – 1.30pm
Whipton Children’s Centre
Tuesday 14th November 12.00noon – 1.30pm
Beacon Heath Children’s Centre

For further details please contact
Nicky Ruane, Parent Carers’ Voice, Exeter CVS, King William Street, Exeter, EX4 6PD
01392 201572 nicky.ruane@exetercvs.org.uk

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 Devon Parent Partnership Service

At long last the Devon Parent Partnership Service has a new co-ordinator. Joan Tremblett took up her new post late in the summer. Having moved from Plymouth, she is busy finding her feet in Devon and is trying to make contact with as many parents as possible by attending Parent Carer Voice meetings around the County.

In the meantime contact telephone numbers remain the same:

 Teignbridge
 Liz Batchelor 01803 527849

South Hams, West & North Devon
 Maddalena Cawse 01752 872799

Exeter & East Devon
 Peter Holman 01626 364128

Mid Devon
 Cathy Butland 01566 784986

The Parent Partnership Development Workers are there to inform you of your options in special educational provision, and to support you in dealing with the system and the authorities.

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure details are correct, Devon County Council and the healthcare community cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions in this publication. We do not endorse or recommend any services, organisations, products, events or publications mentioned. Any opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those held by DCC or the healthcare community.

If you do not wish to continue receiving this newsletter contact your Local Information Co-ordinator. If you move house please remember to inform your Joint Agency Team.

Do you have any information you would like to see in the next newsletter? Would you like to write an article for it?

Get in touch with me by the end of December -
Contact details below.

This supplement is available on request in a range of languages and formats including large print, Braille and on audio tape. Get in touch with your Local Information Co-ordinator for details.

DISCplus
Exeter JAT
George Street
Exeter
EX1 1DA

Phone 01392 383732
Fax 01392 3837

This newsletter, along with the newsletters of all the other localities and all the back copies, can be seen on the DISCplus website –
www.devon.gov.uk/newsletter

we’re on the web
www.devon.gov.uk/discplus

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