

News from Red2Green

Consultation deadline looms on mental health cuts

The consultation deadline looms for proposed changes to local mental health services. One hundred and six people have so far submitted written responses to the Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Primary Care Trusts' Boards, and over 200 have attended four public consultation meetings.

The two PCTs are over-spending by more than £4 million in mental health. The Boards have considered proposals which would, if implemented, result in cost reductions of £3 million over the next three years.

Already, a number of temporary emergency measures within the Partnership Trusts' Community Psychiatric Rehabilitation Service have been implemented, and in July it:

- temporarily halted admissions or transfers of patients to No 1 The Drive and the Cedars, Fulbourn Hospital
- planned temporary closure of No 1 The Drive at the earliest possible date pending consultation on permanent closure as part of an accelerated resettlement programme

- developed resettlement plans to enable the closure of Cedars during 2006.

The Boards state that "if the consultation results in identification of alternative and more effective ways of achieving the level of reduction required, then we will of course listen". The deadline for comments is Friday 13 January 2006.

For a copy of the consultation see www.camcityandsouthcambspcts.nhs.uk/ or call 01223 885717

New legal duty could open doors for disabled work force

Employment rights for people with disabilities are to be improved from December 2006, and will hopefully create thousands of job opportunities across the country. This will directly affect government departments, local authorities and the voluntary sector who will have a legal duty to integrate needs of people with disabilities into their plans.

These new employment rights are part of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. Campaigners are hoping this will encourage local authorities to take a more inclusive approach to recruiting applicants with disabilities and to make the workplace a more desirable place to work.

Stephen Moir, the County Council's Director of Human Resources, commented: "Cambridgeshire County Council fully supports the extension of the DDA and has been working for some time to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities within our workforce. The Council operates recruitment practices in accordance with the *Two Tick* standard, which guarantees job applicants with disabilities an interview if they meet the role's essential criteria. We also have a Disabled Staff Support Group to ensure that we are able to address issues for employees with disabilities in a constructive way, but also to be challenged about our

employment practices and ensure that we continue to review and update our approach constantly".



New doors could be opened

Poorly served by transport

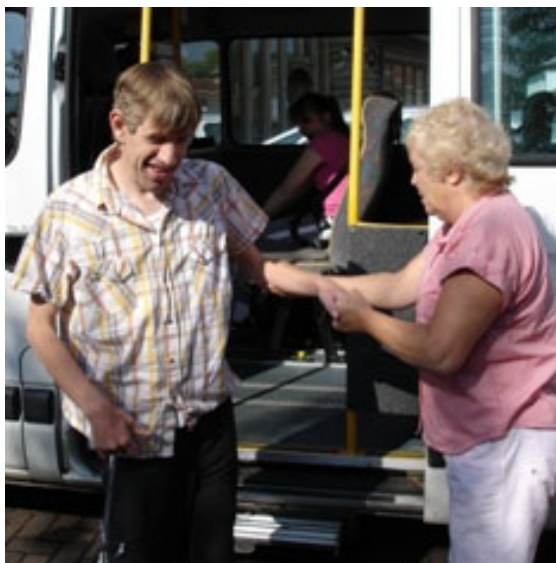
Readers of the last edition of **News from Red2Green** will recall that the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) is hosting a Disability Debate to develop a new agenda for action to ensure equality for people with disabilities.

One of Red2Green's submissions highlighted the issue of transport, and how inaccessible or inappropriate facilities impact on the choices disabled people can make.

Public transport is notoriously patchy in rural Cambridgeshire, and many villages are not on a rail network, and buses are infrequent or inaccessible. Public transport is rarely a viable option for our learners if they want to travel independently.

Many of our learners consequently have to rely on good will to attend Red2Green's classes and work placements, with families providing a 'chauffeuring' service. One of our work placement trainees, for example, feels unable to handle public transport, and his family pay £40 per day for him to travel in by taxi. This is more than his salary. He works fewer but longer days to minimise expenditure and while Red2Green is happy to offer flexible working arrangements, many employers would not.

Transport is a particular issue for the learners on our Aspirations programme for young adults with social communication disorders, including Aspergers Syndrome. There is little learning provision nationally for this group who often need specialist support to develop their social and communication skills. This means many



Red2Green's essential transport service

have to travel miles to attend our lessons, some trying to enrol from neighbouring counties.

For the vast majority of learners transport is a problem; taking a 'straw poll' during one recent Aspirations lesson, we discovered that the learners present travelled between seven and thirteen miles to attend.

Sometimes the alternatives to mainstream transport that do exist are not able to fulfil people's needs. It is Red2Green's experience that provision such as Dial-a-Ride simply does not have the capacity to provide regular transport support. Red2Green has never been able to secure a Dial-a-Ride or Community Care Service journey for any of its clients.

Red2Green is trying to influence change by getting involved in local debates on transport issues (see page 3), and hopes that we may be able to influence some change on a local level, while national bodies such as the DRC campaign on a wider front. In the meantime we try to ensure our clients get where they want to be by hook or by crook or by any means possible.

Red2Green round up

"making great strides"

Richard Broughton from Job Centre Plus interviewed Red2Green's Midpoint work trainees on 17 October, and afterwards said: "It has been very heartening to learn of the opportunities and the real value Midpoint has brought to people's lives".

"Clearly Red2Green has been crucial in supporting those important steps towards eventual employment. Every comment heard was extremely positive. When individuals themselves are able to tell me of the great strides they have seen in their own development then you know the formula in place is right".

Red2Green has been running the Midpoint project, under contract with JobCentre Plus Business Link, offering clients work placements for up to 50 weeks, for which they get paid and receive training and support to search for employment.

Anna Wallis' describes her experience of Midpoint. on page 6.

Review of last year

For the first time Red2Green has produced a 'glossy' annual report giving a snapshot of last year's achievements. Copies available online at www.red2green.org or by calling 01223 811662.



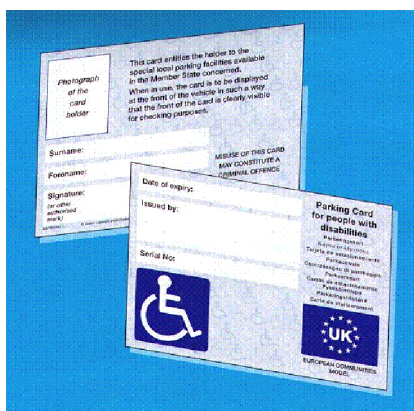
End of blue badge parking in Cambridge City Centre?

Following Red2Green's submission to the Cambridge City Core Traffic Scheme consultation, Samantha Sherratt and Sharon Knight were invited by the Council to a meeting in September to discuss the issues further, along with Gerri Bird from Cambridge Forum for Disability.

The main talking point was disabled parking around St Andrews Street where heavy use by buses, taxis, off loading lorries, cyclists and blue badge parking is leading to congestion. The Council representatives at the meeting indicated that the situation is unlikely to improve and disabled parking may be the one to move.

This led to discussions as to where the parking spaces could be moved to, and whether people

with disabilities could be more encouraged to use car parks and Park & Ride. Problems highlighted included the difficulties in using buses and getting around town from the car parks. Possible solutions put forward included an accessible shuttle bus travelling from each car park, and making the Park & Ride scheme fully accessible.



Demographic change indicates that there will be more pressure on allocated spaces. One suggestion was introducing different coloured badges depending on the severity of the disability.

If you have thoughts on these proposals, please see the article below from Susan Mills at the Council. Red2Green has been invited to further meetings to progress the consultation further.

Getting in and around Cambridge

Do you have a disability and park on the street in the city centre? If so, do you like the arrangements or would you like to see improvement? Would you prefer to leave the car at home or outside of the busy central area? Is there anything Cambridgeshire County Council could do to help?

The County Council is already planning changes to Emmanuel Street, Drummer Street and St Andrews Street to improve conditions for bus travel with easier boarding and alighting, clearer information for passengers and less congestion. If you are already a regular bus user, you

may want to join the new bus forum being set up to gather the views of regular users on a wide range of issues. The Forum would meet twice a year and the first meeting will be in January. Members would also be sent an e-questionnaire to monitor their experiences of bus travel every couple of months.

If you would like to know more or let County Council know your views, do email cambridge.projects@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Susan Mills, Cambridge Projects Senior Engineer

Red2Green round up

Funding for fitness

Fitness is now firmly on Options' agenda, thanks to a grant from Sport Relief. The grant, received in December, means Options' clients with profound learning disabilities will now regularly be able to take part in horse-riding, tai chi, swimming and keep-fit.

Delving into local history

Red2Green's Aspirations students, with social communication disorders, will be investigating the history of Harvey's Barn and its locality, thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The research will involve recreating aspects of the barn, reviewing archives and an open day presentation. This will help boost learners' confidence and social skills.



Harvey's Barn, under investigation

Sad farewell to Kurt

Readers will recall how, in the last edition of **News from Red2Green**, we focused on Reboot, a fledging computer recycling project being set up by Kurt Doe. Sadly, Kurt died in a car crash on 2 December. Our thoughts are with his family, and we will remember Kurt often, and with great fondness. We hope to continue Kurt's work by progressing his social enterprise. His family has requested donations be made to Red2Green, which we will use for Reboot in his memory.

Investing in communities

December saw the release of 'Investing in Greater Cambridge communities' - the business plan of the East of England Development Agency's (EEDA) Investing in Communities programme. The weighty 99 page document sets out a 10 year programme to address social exclusion in the county and create a vibrant economy.



Preparing for work with Red2Green's Aspirations project

In the report, it was estimated that one in five of the working age population in the four districts of Greater Cambridge is disabled and that 11200 disabled people are in receipt of Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disability Allowance. This rises to 14900 with Fenland.

The authors highlight that disabled people are recognised as being a valuable under-used and under-valued resource who could make a greater contribution to the local economy if barriers to work could be removed. However, discrimination and lack of employer awareness remain as barriers to disabled people entering the workplace.

To address these inequalities the Greater Cambridge Partnership is recommending five strategic interventions:

- Support an early intervention for people with mental health needs through appointment of three advisory support managers with vocational, psychological and social advice at three different doctors surgeries across Cambridgeshire. The objective being to reduce the time off work

and break the potential benefit dependency culture which can so quickly set in.

- Further engage with employers to remove discrimination and open up more employment opportunities.
- To enable disabled people to promote benefits and access advice across Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire.
- To support the feasible development of an innovative and flexible social enterprise 'Staffing agency' with huge potential to create part time work and serve the group needs of the community.
- Investment is sought to build on the research undertaken with regard to people with mental health needs to determine the barriers faced by disabled people with physical and/or sensory impairments.

EEDA will be making a formal decision as to what it is able to support in late January. At that time it will be the start to mobilise resources to deliver the initiatives to create greatest impact and meet most need.

Red2Green round up

Fun and friendships

Guests from Red2Green's projects and our sister organisations experienced a festive extravaganza on 8 December. The event was superbly organised; Aspirations' students designed the invitation, Options' clients made mulled wine and Christmas decorations for party bags, and Options' staff ensured a full programme of dancing, eating, singing and lots of great cheer.

Chelsea feedback

The last **News from Red2Green** reported that Red2Greenhouse had submitted a design for the Chelsea Flower Show next year. The Royal Horticultural Society gave us very enthusiastic and warm feedback, commending us on our design, and though our bid this time was unsuccessful, we were invited to show at The Malvern Spring Show instead. This is an enormous achievement for the students and clients involved. While it would clearly be an honour to display at Malvern, we decided to concentrate on resubmitting for Chelsea in 2007. Red2Green would like to say "well done" to Bottisham Village College students, Rebecca Boulder and Tom Wells, aged 15, for what is clearly an excellent design, and we look forward to resubmitting to Chelsea next year.



Time now for a short breather

More support for isolated people

Red2Green is now able to support even more isolated people in the county, after successfully winning an award from the Big Lottery Fund. The three year grant is for our Health for Life project, which helps vulnerable or isolated people regain their health and independence.



More support across more of the county

Health for Life operates in rural Cambridgeshire, re-connecting isolated people with their communities by supporting them into local education classes and clubs. During their activities they meet new friends, learn new skills and start feeling better.

With the grant of £137,673, Health for Life is able to expand into new parts of the county offering more support to more people. Pat Dutton, Health for Life's Co-ordinator, said: "We are ecstatic

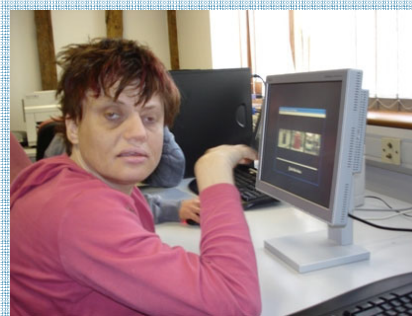
about the Big Lottery Fund's grant. We've historically had a good presence in the east of the county and parts of South Cambridgeshire. With these funds we will be able to employ a new member of staff to support clients in the remaining areas of the South, where the need is clearly proven to exist".



Red2Green round up

Skills for Life

Red2Green has won a contract with the CP Learning Trust to run 12 Skills for Life taster sessions with clients in our Options Day Service who have profound learning disabilities. Personal development which result from these sessions, is focusing around IT, communication, numeracy and literacy, and will also count as evidence towards clients' Open College Network accreditation, which the Day Service is trialling.



Rachel in an IT taster session

RaW book review

RaW is the BBC's biggest adult literacy campaign, hoping to inspire the 12 million adults in the country who struggle every day with reading and writing. Red2Green has already signed up and has become a RaW centre for our clients, and we will be unrolling a series of activities over the three year campaign.

'A child called It', by Dave Pelzer, recommended by RaW and reviewed by Red2Green's Anna Wallis

This book is Dave Pelzer's own story of his childhood. A child beaten and starved by his mother, Dave was not considered a person, but an "it". His bed was an old army cot in the basement and when he was allowed food it was scraps from the dogs' bowl. Yet he always dreamed he would

find a loving and caring family. This is a gripping book of determination and survival.

"I'm not much of a reader but I found myself unable to put this book down once I had started; I found it gripping. I found the story upsetting to know what Dave Pelzer had gone through, but I was always wanting to know more about the story and how Dave Pelzer saw things. It was upsetting to read, but I was keen to learn what he had lived through and what happened next".

Orion Publishing Group, ISBN: 752837508. Don't forget to try your library for a copy—many are running RaW campaigns too.



European excellence

Five members of staff went to Portugal in October as part of the Grundtvig study which is taking place between Red2Green and similarly minded partners in Greece, Slovenia and Portugal. On this visit we examined the draft manual, DVD and website being compiled to help share ideas on the best ways to support people with profound learning and physical disabilities, so they can reach their fullest potential. The website, our contribution to the project, is being laid out by Peter Hacking, one of our Midpoint trainees.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all our clients, supporters, partners and colleagues from all at Red2Green.

My story

Anna Wallis has progressed through Red2Green's Open Minded and Midpoint projects* and is now a permanent member of staff. Here is her story....

"I had a serious car accident in 2000 and sustained a major head injury. After extensive rehabilitation and help to return to my previous job as a travel agent, in November 2003 I was told 'we are terminating your employment'. I didn't know what I would do or what I would be good at. I started getting depressed because of my head injury and my situation.

My social worker introduced me to Red2Green and I started volunteering, doing some office duties, when the Manager suggested the Midpoint project to me. In July 2004, I started a Midpoint work placement at Red2Green's main office, working in an administration role. I started working 21 hours per week, as I hadn't worked full time since my accident. I had very little confidence as I hadn't really worked in an office before. I was given the opportunity of starting an NVQ to give me qualifications



in Administration. This was something I was keen on doing as I had no formal qualifications to show that I could do a good job. I started to increase my hours from 21 until I reached 35 hours a week. I have gained confidence and enjoy the work I am doing.

I was scared to start with because it was a job I'd never done before and somewhere that was unfamiliar to me, but I would have found these problems with a new job anyway. It was a good opportunity for me and one that has worked out in my case because at the end of my Midpoint contract Red2Green employed me as their Receptionist/Administration Assistant.

I'm only too keen and excited about anyone considering joining similar projects (Midpoint finishes in March 06). There is nothing like the satisfaction I get when I go to the cash point and I'm withdrawing money I have earned myself. I have built new friendships and I now feel more positive about myself and the abilities I have. The project is something that can and does work, not only for me, but I have seen the work



Anna Wallis, Red2Green's Receptionist

that takes place with others. Their confidence increases and that can have more of an impact than anyone really understands. You can't give someone confidence but it can be helped with a non-threatening environment and the support to grow as an individual. My abilities are what are focused on and things that are difficult for me I'm given opportunity to try while being helped to do so.

Midpoint for me is about taking people off their benefit and really helping to give them a direction, this helps them to stay off benefit and join the diverse labour market. There are opportunities for everyone somewhere and this project helps you find what you may be good at".

**See the next News from Red2Green for details of our new preparation for employment project, Advance.*

About Red2Green

Red2Green increases opportunities in education, training, work and leisure for people with a wide range of disabilities across Cambridgeshire. We also raise awareness of the potential of people with disabilities to make positive contributions to society.

News from Red2Green is a quar-

terly email newsletter to keep our supporters, partners and decision makers up to date with what is happening within the organisation, as well as the context in which we work. Copies can be made available in large print, Braille or on disc. Editors: **Sharon Knight** and **Samantha Sherratt**

Red2Green
Harvey's Barn
Park End
Swaffham Bulbeck
Cambridge, CB5 0NA
Tel: 01223 811662
www.red2green.org
Registered charity no:1079547