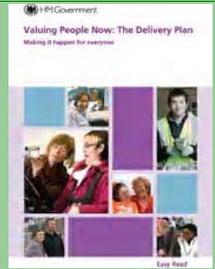


Issue 1

December 2009

Valuing People Team South West Newsletter



A Message from Sue Turner – Valuing People Regional Lead for the South West

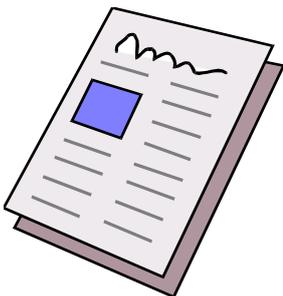


Welcome to the first Valuing People Now newsletter from the South West Making it Happen group. Each region has a group to help make Valuing People Now happen and support Partnership Boards. We have written a plan about how we are going to do this. The plan is on the Valuing People Now South West webpage with other information about the group – <http://valuingpeople.gov.uk>



At the Valuing People Now South West launch in March, Partnership Boards voted on what the regional priority should be. Most Partnership Boards chose relationships. We know there are lots of good things happening about relationships in the South West. The Making it Happen group said it would share information about some of the good things that are happening in a newsletter. We would like to thank everyone who sent us information. We hope this will be helpful for everyone.

We are also having a big event about relationships on the 20th January in Taunton. For more information please contact Judith McDonagh on 0117 900 1764 or Judith.mcdonagh@gosw.gsi.gov.uk



We are planning to write more newsletters. The next one will be in the spring and will be about health. If you want to share anything about what you are doing about health please email Judith.mcdonagh@gosw.gsi.gov.uk



Upcoming Events

Take a look at our upcoming events. Please contact Judith McDonagh on 0117 900 1764 or Judith.mcdonagh@gosw.gsi.gov.uk if you would like to attend any of these events.

January



Sub regional meeting for family carers on partnership boards – Bristol



Person Centred Planning Meeting – Exeter



Relationships Meeting – Taunton



Quality Network Meeting



Sub regional meeting for family carers on partnership boards – Sherborne, Dorset

February



Employment network meeting – Taunton

March



Partnership Board Leads follow up day – Taunton



South West Hate Crime Meeting - Bristol



Housing Network Meeting - Taunton



Regional Leads Meeting – Taunton



Family Carer event - Taunton

Our Regional Priority – Relationships Stars in the Sky



At a Bristol and South Gloucestershire People First information day about friends and relationships, people said they wanted support to get a boyfriend or girlfriend.

We thought a Dating Agency was a good idea.

We contacted Stars in the Sky in London. They said we could set up a Stars in the Sky in Bristol.

Stars in the Sky is a dating and friendship agency for adults with learning difficulties.

Stars in the Sky is about

- Having fun
- Making new friends
- Starting a new relationship

We have been very busy over the summer. We have been going out every month doing lots of things. There are over 300 members in Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

Here are just some of the things we have done this year:

- We meet regularly, in the day, in the evening and sometimes at the weekend.
- We have been 10 pin bowling.
- We had lots of fun.
- Some of us made new friends and some of us caught up with old friends.
- There were lots of us there and we bought drinks and food.
- We went and saw High School Musical on stage at the Hippodrome. There were over 50 members and for some, this was their first trip out without a family member.



It was a good night out with many members asking to come back for part two in February 2010.



At the end of the night we gave out raffle prizes of a High School Musical DVD and a CD.

30 of us went to Weston-Super-Mare on the train. It was raining but we still did lots of things. Some people went on the Big Wheel, some went shopping and others went to the pub.

We all had something to eat and a few of us went to the arcades before we left.



We have lots of new members who are looking for a new girlfriend or boyfriend.

We have even more members looking to make new friends.

We meet every month as a group and members meet each other whenever they like.



Stars in the Sky has a coordinator. His name is Vin. He books the events and visits new members to find out what they like and what sort of person they would like to meet.

He also writes the newsletter and updates the membership database.

Membership for Stars in the Sky is £10 a year.



This year some people did not renew. Some did not renew because they did not want to and some because they forgot.



We talk to Wendy and Alex.

Wendy and Alex are members of Stars in the Sky.

From the adverts in the Stars in the Sky Newsletter, Alex asked about information about a lady member.

This turned out to be Wendy. He got Wendy's phone number from Vin, the Stars In The Sky Coordinator, as he wanted to introduce himself.

Things went sour as Alex could not get through to Wendy on the phone.

"I can laugh about it now" says Alex. "I was giving up hope of ever finding a partner."

Shortly after Wendy phoned Vin at BSGPF office and told him she had changed her telephone number. This turned out to be why Alex could not contact Wendy.

"Vin phoned me", Alex said about the change of Wendy's phone number and asked me would I like to have another try with Wendy to meet up.

Alex said yes and got the right details from Vin.

"When Alex phoned me" Wendy said "I felt nervous but Alex sounded very nice".

"Anyway we both agreed to meet up for a meal at the Hole in the Wall which had nice surroundings and made us both feel comfortable".

"From talking to each other we found out we had the same interests. We both thought this relationship would work".

"We took turns phoning each other with confidence".





“We have been to London on a day trip together. This felt great and we were relaxed with each other”. “We have been to a lot of the events that Stars in the Sky have organised, which were great and have helped us bond as we really enjoyed them”.

Being with each other has helped us get over our shyness”.



“We are both looking forward to the Queen musical, We Will Rock You that Stars in the Sky have organised on at the Bristol Hippodrome”.

Wendy said she is planning to stay at Alex’s place over Christmas and hopes to meet Alex’s mum. “Alex said this will make me very happy.”

Alex laughed and said “I am staying at Wendy’s for the New Year celebration.”



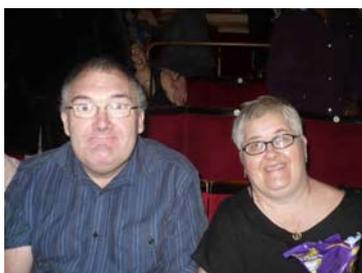
Wendy and Alex have made plans to go on holiday to the Isle of Wight next June and Wendy will introduce Alex to her parents then.

Joining Stars in the Sky has given us both confidence. We have been together since May.

Alex said, “I have not been out in the evenings for 15 years. Wendy said she has not been out for 7 years”.

“Stars in the Sky has made us both feel happy and safe they said”.

“Because we joined Stars in the Sky, we both have made new friends who we talk to”. “We were shy when we talked to other people before and we have begun talking more to other people outside of Stars in the Sky”.



To Stars in the Sky, “thank you very much from us for bringing us together”.

Friendship Club – Dorset



What is it?

This is a member led club.

It is different in each area because members want different things and different areas have different pubs, clubs and things to do.

Some of the things members do

The club started with meeting up in pubs but now does other things depending on what members want. Things include ten pin bowling, café drop ins, Karaoke, Skittles, a Hawaiian night, talks from different people such as community police, a Rockabilly night (260 people) and line dancing.



Some tips

Tackle problems and issues as they come up – don't anticipate them.

Taxi sharing is cheaper

Use volunteer groups

Behave well in the community – community responds well



How is it paid for?

This year it was paid for by Learning Disability Development Fund money (£40,000)

The club is working towards paying for itself. Members pay £1. Individual budgets could be used.



What next?

More publicity

Volunteer co-ordinator

Working towards sustainability (volunteer led)

Funding for office admin and a database

Links with activity based clubs (people supported by volunteers)

Own website?

Radio slot?

Volunteering at festivals

Short breaks



Changing Places – Helping people to use their local communities and meet other people.

Taken from the Exeter Echo Newspaper on Wednesday 19th August 2009



PEOPLE with profound physical and learning disabilities will soon be able to enjoy a day out in the city without having to worry about convenience breaks.

A new toilet and changing facility will be created in Princesshay, thanks to a long-running campaign by the Changing Places Consortium, supported by Mencap.

It will replace an existing disabled toilet and baby changing room at St Stephen's House, in Catherine Street and will be the first of its kind in the city.

Denise Clarke, of Kipling Drive, Exeter, is full-time carer for her 13-year-old son Liam, who has profound and multiple learning disabilities.



She said: "It's brilliant news, it will give me much more freedom. At present if I go out with Liam and he gets wet, I have to come home because I can't lift a 9st child. It's going to make so many people's lives easier."

The facility, which will include a changing table, electric hoist and hygienic paper roll, is being funded by Devon County Council, with £14,000 from the sale of Exeter International Airport, in partnership with Mencap.

Land Securities, owner of the Princesshay development, is also contributing to the project.

The area will have enough space for a disabled person and two carers and will help people enjoy shopping, meeting friends, going to the cinema or eating out.

Learning disability health and social care service manager Sue Foxton-Price said: "At present, for some people with profound disabilities, these activities are



not possible, because there are no adequately equipped facilities.”

Changing Places is Mencap’s national campaign this year and Wendy Gardner, the charity’s community-based adviser, is extremely pleased with its success.



She said: “We have had such great support since the day we started this campaign.

“This is a fantastic example of how organisations can work together to resolve issues.”

Princesshay’s centre director Wayne Pearce said: “We know the provision of these specially adapted toilets will make a huge difference to people’s lives.”

Devon County Councilor Stuart Barker, who has responsibility for adults’ social care services, said: “Some carers have had to use the floors of public toilets as changing areas for people they are caring for; this is unacceptable.



“I am delighted that Land Securities have agreed to create this facility for Exeter. It will make such a difference to people who need it.”

Work is expected to start as soon as possible and will take several weeks to complete.

For more information visit www.changing-places.org.

And another reason to celebrate...

A new Changing Places toilet was opened in Bridport, Dorset.

We had good press coverage, including an interview with Richard Maxfield and Paul St Quintin on Wessex F.M radio station.



The Changing Places website will add details of this to their map of facilities across the country.



Nick Neale, manager at Bridport Leisure Centre who was very involved in getting the work done "on the ground"



Tim Rose (one of our co-chairs and himself a family carer) with Richard Maxfield cutting the ribbon



The rather special cake we had to celebrate!

Just Say



What is 'Just Say'?

Just Say is a project at Dorset People First, to support young people aged between 13 and 25 years who are disabled to set up and run Speaking up groups, to talk about anything that is important to them. The groups help the young people to develop listening and communication skills, working together and to increase confidence and self esteem.



How are we funded?

'Just Say' is funded through Connexions by Dorset County Council and Poole Borough Council.

What do we do?

There are 10 Speaking up groups in Schools and one College. The groups are supported by the Groups Coordinator. There are currently 3 young people who volunteer on the Project, and we also work with volunteers through Vinvolved.



The young people from the speaking up groups have just held their 4th 'Independence Day', where all of the young people from the groups met up, and had their voices heard by a panel of decision makers from 3 local authorities. This year the day was about Activities. The groups had planned the questions they wanted to ask and discussed their favourite activities, who they like to do them with, as well as where and when they like to meet with their friends. The young people in the groups put together a film about their favourite activities and questions they wanted to ask the panel.

Some things the groups have discussed are:

- What they feel about Bullying and what can they do about it.
- Friendships and relationships
- Leaving school and moving on – hopes for the future
- Communication skills
- Transport

Young people have also given presentations, recently they gave one at a Conference called 'Listen to Me', to help professionals improve meetings so that the young person has their voice heard.





The future of 'Just Say'

'Just Say' will continue to support young people to be more involved in decision making and support them to achieve their goals for their adult lives.

For more information on 'Just Say' please visit www.dorsetpeoplefirst.co.uk

Razzle Dazzle!

Becky Goodey (Clinical Psychologist, Cornwall Learning Disability Service) worked with Trifle Gathering, a Cornish Cabaret Company and the Priory Day Service in Bodmin, for 18 months to plan two Hollywood style balls for adults with learning disabilities, their families and their carers in Cornwall.



Becky and Trifle Gathering worked hard to make sure these events would give people with learning disabilities magical and fun nights out, to be remembered for a long time. The aim was to give people a chance to celebrate.

Balls took place on Wednesday 7th July at the Shire Suite, Bodmin and on Friday 10th July at the Penventon Hotel, Redruth.



The events were very good and were attended by people with learning disabilities, their families, carers and staff from Cornwall Partnership Trust Community Learning Disability Teams.

Over 180 people came to the events. The mayor attended the balls, and the press came to record and photograph the fun that was had by all.



The people who came to the balls walked a Red Carpet and were greeted by various characters, including a bag piper and stilt walker.

The evening had cabaret acts from Trifle Gathering, a disco, line dancing and a raffle with prizes from local



businesses. Local talent also included Shallal, which is a Dance and Movement Company for People with learning disabilities from Penzance.

The balls were a true celebration of the inclusion of people with learning disabilities in enjoying a great night out, which included dancing, very funny cabaret, disco, drinks and a meal.

Everyone dressed up in their most glamorous clothes. The events were magical occasions, and will be remembered by all for a long time.

Everyone who attended these balls has been asking when the next ones will be. The plan is to make these events annual occasions!

Organiser Becky Goodey says “It was absolutely magical to spend both evenings with so many wonderful people. I am very grateful to all the effort everyone made as these efforts helped to make them memorable events. I would also like to say thank you to everyone who took the time to let us know how much they enjoyed the evening. We definitely want to do more so watch this space...”

People made a big effort and the feedback since has been very good. We welcome this opportunity to thank everyone who lent their support.

Trifle Gathering will soon be touring around Cornwall with their Charity Shop Cabaret so if anyone is interested in seeing more of the work then contact triflegatheringproductions@yahoo.co.uk



An example from Swindon



A senior community nurse has told us of how she and others are supporting people to get out and about and develop relationships.



In Swindon, a couple of people with learning disabilities wish to live together. One lives with little support and the other in a care home. Working with the couple themselves and their families, a care manager, an occupational therapist, & care home staff have done assessments, and helped the couple to do a "social story" around their move and what will change and what will be needed.



The team have regular meetings with everyone together and with the couple to make sure they get the support they want and need.



The day service is also doing public transport teaching which helps the person in the care home to move between day centre and future home. The couple are spending 2 nights a week together and are going to spend more time together in the future.



The community nurse also helps run a social meeting place in a pub in the town centre which has a bar and disco. She has a few volunteers on hand to offer people support especially around relationships.

Valuing Employment Now



We launched Valuing Employment Now in the South West on 26th November in Plymouth. 120 people came to the launch. Tammy Peapell and Dot Goldsworthy, our National Forum reps opened the event and Scott Watkin and Susan Allot gave a really good talk about why jobs are so important for people with learning disabilities.



We heard from someone with learning disabilities and their employers about how it works in practice. We also heard from a family carer who has been part of our Family Led Jobs project.



The Misfits theatre company gave a great performance about work after lunch. We heard about the role of Job Centre Plus and there were lots of workshops to choose from. We hope that the day will help more people with Learning Disabilities in the South West get jobs.



Thank you for reading the newsletter. We hope it was helpful.

Happy New Year from the Making It Happen Group.