



Changing **Perspectives**

Communities

Issue 2 • March 2009

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Content: Communities

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Front cover photography by Mike Harding, Robert Owen Communities.

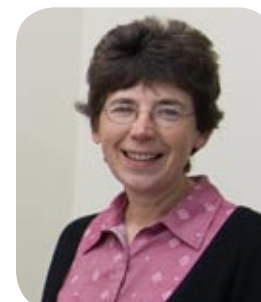
This image has been selected from the shortlisted entries to the ARC Focus 2008 competition. We will be featuring other shortlisted entries in future issues of *Changing Perspectives*. All entries are available to view on the ARC website.

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Editor's letter



What is community?

What does being part of a community mean?

How can we enable people with a learning disability to be a real and active member of their local communities?

All these are challenging questions, which the *Banking My Time Too* team put to a group of people meeting in Oxford towards the end of 2007. The discussion led us to realise that there was a lot more to be done to help us understand the issues.

A bit more investigation demonstrated that we were not the only ones asking these questions, but that there was also a lot of really good work going on to try to put the concepts into practice.

The articles in this issue of *Changing Perspectives* are just a taster, but show that not only are ARC members and others working hard to support people with a learning disability to be truly included as equal members and citizens of their communities, but that the people they support are leading the way in demanding change to make their lives better.

As part of the *Banking My Time Too* project, we shared eight standards, which were first developed by Helen Sanderson, to demonstrate inclusion:

- I have people who love me and who I love
- I have friends and I have chosen them
- I contribute to my community
- I know people in my neighbourhood
- I know people with common interests
- I am a citizen

- I feel valued and included
- I can follow my religious or cultural beliefs in my community

We found these really helped to focus our thinking during the *Friends and Neighbours* workshops, which Rod Landman describes. It is interesting to reflect that people such as Olivia, who have worked at becoming part of their communities talk about the same issues.

Most people with a learning disability now live in the community, but many still struggle to develop social networks. Yet as the people in Tweeddale emphasise, really want to be able to become active citizens and make a difference.

The challenge is to make inclusion a reality for people with the whole spectrum of disabilities. We have tried to give you a taste of some possibilities, and hopefully inspire you to interesting and imaginative work within your own communities. •

Jane Livingstone



Leading the Way

Changing Perspectives asked organisations in Scotland to talk about their efforts to include people with learning disabilities in their communities.



Miriam Leighton, Development Worker Promoting Active Citizenship, from ARK Housing Association writes about the Tweeddale Safety Group and how **people with learning disabilities can influence change and achieve positive results.**



In 2004, the Tweeddale Safety Group was formed by a group of people with learning disabilities from Peebles who wanted to improve

road safety in their local area. In 2007, following some success in getting changes made to cobblestones and pavements in the town, the group decided to focus on one specific issue. The Old Town road in Peebles is a busy thoroughfare for commuters and lorries on the main route to and from Glasgow. The group members and others in the local community, such as families with young children, have experienced difficulties on this particular road as there is no safe place to cross.

The group enlisted the support of Jeremy Purvis MSP, who was contacted in 2007 and agreed to back the campaign. They then held an awareness raising day in November 2007, to promote their work and canvas other local people's views about road safety on the Old Town. Brightly coloured



Group members Cathy and Roy Sterricks on the bridge near the Old Town road in Peebles

banners were prepared and free hot drinks and biscuits, in order to attract public interest, were generously donated by Scot-Mid. On the day, 100 leaflets were handed out and over 80 signatures with comments were gathered from passing pedestrians. The Peeblesshire News also covered the event and printed a centre-spread article. A few weeks later, the group conducted their own consultation with Old Town businesses, wrote a detailed report about their findings and then



Roy Sterricks and Alistair Fleming having just completed banners for the awareness raising day

formally presented the report to councillors at the council's Local Area Committee meeting. The group received ongoing assistance through ARK Housing Association, and latterly also from organisations including Leonard Cheshire Disability and ARC Scotland. ARK was able to provide input from a development worker as part of its 3 year long 'Promoting Active Citizenship' project, funded by Big Lottery since 2006.

The lottery project is now nearly complete and the work undertaken by the Tweeddale Safety Group is perhaps the best example from the project of how people with learning disabilities can take on a community activism role and influence change in a way which benefits not only themselves, but also the wider community. The group have received some very positive feedback within the local press and from local councillors, one of whom recently stated that *'they got through a fantastic amount of work and have canvassed a remarkable number of views on the issue... this shows that there is a significant role for those with learning disabilities to play in our communities.'*

Whilst recognising the group's hard work and contribution, it is also important to consider the factors which helped to make the campaign a success. Although, within both national and local government there are policy-level commitments towards increasing public engagement and

promoting the involvement of harder to reach groups, it can often still be challenging when trying to make this happen in practise. People with learning disabilities are only marginally represented within local democratic processes. The reasons for this include a lack of education amongst key professional staff of the various practical strategies which can help people to participate, an historical lack of opportunity and therefore awareness amongst people with learning disabilities around citizenship and participation, and also the continuing social perception that it is virtually impossible for people with learning disabilities to participate fully and in a meaningful way as community members.



The campaign captured local people's interest.

Initiatives which appeal to the wider community and address issues of concern to a range of stakeholders are an effective way of demonstrating that engagement with people with learning disabilities is in fact possible, and worthwhile. Group member Roy Sterricks explains that the group's work has been successful, *'because of the support and help we got, for example from the worker from the Council and the MSP.'* Roy's wife Cathy similarly takes the view that the use of a range of different support people was key, and that the worker from Leonard Cheshire who got involved with the group in 2008 has been a great help. ➤



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➤ Here are some other factors which have influenced the group's work and helped them to achieve positive outcomes:

- Focusing on a specific, 'real' issue, with clearly identifiable solutions.
- Focusing on an issue which was meaningful for the group members.
- Consistently high levels of commitment and motivation within the group.
- A designated person to help the group push their campaign forward.
- Gathering a wide range of views about the issue of concern, including those of local business owners.
- Making use of informal community supports - asking for backing and input from local businesses and utilising community resources.
- Involving local press and politicians/councillors.
- Making use of the council staff's expert advice in order to develop realistic suggestions for change.
- Small-town setting - people are often well known to each other and willing to help each other out informally.
- Finding a regular time and place which worked for all the group members.
- Keeping it fun (the group members met in the local pub and always enjoyed a drink and some food during meetings).

Hopefully, other groups who are thinking of launching their own campaign will find the information in this article helpful. It has taken the Tweeddale Safety Group a year and a half to construct a strong case for changes to improve safety on the Old Town. It's been a long time coming and has required dedication. However the group's work has paid off. The road is to be



The group did what was necessary in order to gain the views of pedestrians!

altered in spring 2009 so that it includes at least one built out pavement and also a speed reactive sign which will remind drivers on the road to slow down. There may also be a number of other smaller changes, however, the group is currently awaiting details of final plans from council staff.

The group are happy to be contacted by anyone who would like more information about their work. They are also interested in any other examples of positive work around road safety.

Please contact miriam.leighton@arkha.org.uk or alex.thorburn@lcdisability.org if you wish to get in touch. •

Additional Information

- Click here to visit the **ARK Housing Association** website: www.arkha.org.uk
- To learn more about **Active Citizenship** click here: www.arkha.org.uk/citizenship.asp
- Read a report on the success of the campaign from **Peeblesshire News** here: www.peebleshirenews.com/articles/1/32923

Supported by
The National Lottery
through the Big Lottery Fund



Kathy Hunter, Employment and Development Manager, from ENABLE Scotland tells *Changing Perspectives* about the campaign for older family carers and **collective advocacy in Castle Douglas and North Ayrshire.**

ENABLE Scotland has a network of 60 voluntary branches across Scotland bringing people together to support each other. What we do is, in fact, a good example of collective advocacy although we tend to describe our activities as campaigning on behalf of people with learning disabilities and their carers.

Many people with learning disabilities still live at home with parents or family members who are ageing and failing in their own health. As a group, older families are less likely to shout for help and so often their problems go unnoticed, as they get by as best they can.

As members of Castle Douglas and District and North Ayrshire branches of ENABLE Scotland, we have been increasingly conscious of the lack of support and services available to older family carers. At local branch meetings, our members would tell us stories of their ongoing frustrations when dealing with services and their grave concerns for their future and that of their sons and daughters.



We wanted to campaign about this injustice. We knew from past experience that in order for us to be listened to we would need to have the right information. We knew also that it would take time and money to gather our facts. ➤



➤ Campaigning against injustice

We found out about the Scottish Community Action Research Fund (SCARF). SCARF, funded by the Scottish Government, gives community groups grants to carry out their own research. We decided that we wanted to find out from older family carers what kind of supports and services they required at present and in the future. We also wanted to:

- Improve communication links between planners and people who use services.
- Influence future planning and delivery of local services, as well as promoting meaningful involvement with planners.

SCARF funding also provided us with a mentor who helped us make a project plan and gave us advice throughout the process. This was such a help to our group and gave us the confidence in our ability to carry out the research.

We selected four key methods to carry out our plan. These were:

- Identifying older family carers
- Conducting focus groups
- Conducting semi-structured interviews
- Making a DVD based on “A Day in the Life”.

Three focus groups were held involving a total of 26 older family carers. Each focus group was facilitated independently and graphically recorded. We carried out a total of 20 interviews involving 33 older family carers. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcripts typed.



Research findings

We asked people what it would take to help them plan for the future. The main things older family carers want are:

- A bigger say in the services being provided which would include better consultation.
- Their views to be listened to and acknowledged as having relevance.
- Having access to good quality information on a range of issues that affect them.
- Being encouraged to think about the future in a positive way.



We produced a report based on our findings, called **Living from Day to Day**. It recommends that Local Authorities in Castle Douglas and North Ayrshire need to identify older carers, prioritise their needs and improve emergency planning.

We held two dissemination events in North Ayrshire and Castle Douglas which were attended by older family carers, councillors and other agencies.



We have since distributed all of our reports across Scotland. We have also used the DVD to highlight the issues that many older family carers are facing at workshops and other events including the Festival of Politics.



What happens next?

It would be very easy to sit back and relax now that we have our research but we know this is just the first step. Our campaign is growing and other branches of ENABLE Scotland are now getting involved. With the help of our mentor, we have taken the time to sit down and plan what we need to do next. By working together and having one voice however, we are confident that we will continue highlight the concerns that older families of have now and in the future. •

Additional Information

- Click here to visit the **ENABLE Scotland** website: www.enable.org.uk
- **Living from day to day** – the report based on ENABLE’s research can be downloaded from their website: www.enable.org.uk/publications.php?id=1
- Click here to learn more about SCARF: www.scdc.org.uk/scarf

Community connections

There are so many different ways that organisations across the UK are trying to involve people with learning disabilities in their local community. We asked **Darren Cannan**, Project Co-ordinator Connecting People, from Grapevine (Coventry and Warwickshire) Ltd and **Helen Wilson**, from Envision to give *Changing Perspectives* an insight into building community connections.



Grapevine is a Coventry charity that is run in partnership with people with learning disabilities to bring about change in their lives. It works with people with learning disabilities to feel as much a part of Coventry's diverse community as anyone else. The community connections project was established with that purpose in mind.

Loneliness and isolation are potent feelings that create a very different world for people with learning disabilities. Community connecting is about working with someone to carefully unpick the segregated life which has built up around them. Connections work means supporting a person to grow a completely personal, bespoke life based on their joys, passions and wishes.

Warm and vibrant connections are found not in services but in a person's neighbourhood, in activities, in social networks and relationships. Fundamentally the work is about people and the

richness of their lives. Grapevine's approach to connecting has four stages.

Stage One: Getting to know the local community

It is key that you carefully listen and observe for this phase of connecting. Fine tune your investigation skills and really get to grips with what community activity is happening in the area you are working in. Firstly, you should make a map of the organisations and focal points in that area. Secondly, use your networks and the networks of others to share local knowledge of an area to find out about the less visible aspects of community life such as shared interest groups.

Be bold and creative! Take time to go to places you haven't been to for a while, speak to friends and associates about what's happening in their lives. What about the cafe on the corner or the family friend who waves at you when you walk by? Immerse yourself in the places you are working in and identify the key contacts – people who know everything and everyone and

who care about the community. These people are an invaluable resource for making links and gaining credibility in the heart of the community. Community is not only a physical concept of roads and neighbourhoods, it can also be on the internet or an interest group made up of people in different areas.

Stage Two: Getting to know the individual

Investigating the community runs alongside getting to know the person you are connecting. Grapevine uses a person centred planning exercise called identity mapping to find out about the person's character, skills, gifts and interests. Again, listening and understanding are key skills to really getting to know someone and it will guarantee you are better equipped to connect them in a successful way. Knowing about people's passions and gifts is important. Having something to offer or a shared passion or interest can be a hook into making a connection. Always keep in mind you are looking for passions and interests and ensure you spend lots of quality time with the person in their local area too, finding out what life is like for them.

Stage Three: Connecting people to their local community

So, you know what is happening in the community and your relationship with the person you are connecting is at a point where you understand their passions and interests, the next stage is to combine these two aspects and make a connection!

Connecting is not designed to fill time or to make sure a timetable of activities is extended. It is about finding a meaningful role, a position of community worth; it should be an opportunity not only to meet people willing to support the individual, but for the individual to support other people too. Not every connection we make in our lives lasts and that's the same for the connections you are involved in building. The natural course of a connection with a group or person may fade away. It is not unusual if you meet someone that you just don't click with and never speak to them again, alternatively sometimes you meet a friend that you will know for life. We just keep trying and see what happens.

Your role at this stage is to introduce the connection and then do as little as possible but as much as needed to make it work. Make sure that the person is supported in the ways they need; but remain in the background as much as possible so that people don't rely on you to maintain the bond. ➤



Above: **Symon Whithouse** (left)
Anoop Bakshi (right)

"I worked with Anoop to connect him to the Coventry & North Warwickshire Hockey Club and now he attends games and practice sessions and has a role at the club as a zone hockey recruitment officer."

Symon is the Club Secretary.



e n v i s i o n

➤ **Stage Four: Support the connection to grow**

At this stage, you are working towards people experiencing those feelings of inclusion – confidence, of being liked. It's not enough to introduce two people and then hope that they get on, because it's often this stage which can be the hardest. It's vital a connections worker supports the individual to recognise the unspoken rules of the group, for example remembering what you said you would do, being on time and being tidy, offering to buy a round instead of always having it bought for you. The unsaid social rules will be different in every context and don't take it for granted that the person you are supporting will automatically see their significance. As the person gains confidence in the group, then the support will grow from the other group members and your role can be reduced over time.

The one-to-one connecting you are doing has a legacy where the people you are working with will find themselves thought about in a more positive way as an active and respected neighbourhood member.

What about risk?

The work is done in a person-centred way at a pace they are comfortable with, with the support that they need and responding to their directions. The benefit of having someone to assist in the connecting process is to ensure the person is being supported to make the most from a connection and to prevent the person from being at risk from harm. Obviously risk assessments will be done but this is not about people being shielded away from opportunities to develop their lives. Risk is part of life for everyone, so it is not a

question of whether there's a risk, rather is this something worth taking a risk for? Is the outcome a greater reward than the likeliness and seriousness of the risk?

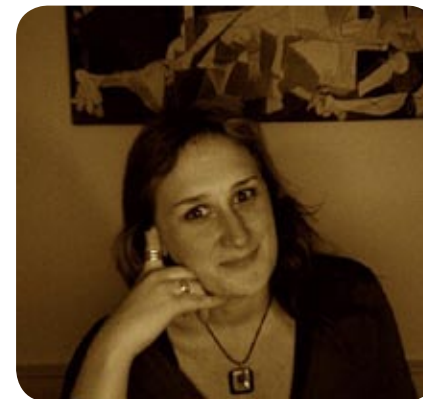
When people are isolated then they are at more risk from abuse and attack because no one is looking out for them, so by increasing their connections in a neighbourhood they will increase their protection rather than opening themselves up to new risks.

How will you know what is happening when you stop supporting a person?

Stay in touch with the connection work and see it as a journey not an end. Things will change and may require some kind of support at different stages. The basic aim of connecting is that people at the very least have positive experiences of being involved in meaningful relationships and groups. It is this positive involvement that builds self-esteem so that if the connection ends, they are enthused to try more connections in the future. The goal ultimately is that people will hold valued and respected roles in their community; they will have networks of friends and associates; and they will feel fulfilled in their lives. •

Additional Information

- **If you would like to learn more or share similar experiences then contact Darren Cannan by email: dcannan@grapevinecoventryandwarwickshire.co.uk or telephone: 024 7623 0028**
- **Visit the Grapevine website for more information: www.grapevinecovandwarks.org**



Helen Wilson

From 1999 – 2002, the Edinburgh Development Group employed **Helen Wilson** as a Community Connector. Her task was largely to work with people who had moved out of institutions into community settings and to support them through person centred planning processes to build connections in community.

There is an enormous qualitative difference between being 'in' and being included: not just being present but actively participating, contributing, being and feeling valued by others. Achieving real inclusion was the main focus of Helen's work.

Here, based on her own work and on work she has undertaken to support staff to take on community connecting approaches, she offers some tips for anyone taking on the role of Community Connector.

Top Tips for community connectors



1 Think Positive

John McKnight advises us to take an 'asset-based view of community' if we want to be successful in building a connected community. Negative labelling and deficiency-focused views are just as damaging to community as they are to people. Community does still exist (contrary to what the media often tells us) and is still rich with possibility for relationship and connection.

2 Expand your definition of community

Don't limit yourself to the purely geographical idea of community. For most of us our experience of community is fundamentally about a sense of belonging and we each encounter this in a different way. For many people geographical community might be important, but for others it might be about a community of interest or a community of relationships. ➤



3 Be intentional

Whether Community Connecting is your whole job or just part of your support working role, you must be clear about the purpose before you begin. If this were easy to achieve, everyone would be well connected already. It's going to take a deliberate focus from you and the person you are supporting.

4 Keep your eyes, ears and mind open

Good Community Connectors are excellent at sourcing information about community opportunities, squirreling away contacts that might be useful in the future. They are always alert to potential connections. Keeping an open mind means remembering that friendship is unpredictable and making assumptions will limit possibilities for connection.

5 Practise Networking

For some people it comes naturally; for others it needs to be learned, but networking is crucial to building connections.

6 Work on presence and regularity

Being in the same place at the same time each week is one of the best ways of making connections, whether it's a formal group or an informal gathering. Becoming a 'regular' pays dividends.

7 Focus on gifts

Giftedness is at the heart of all community building work. Our interests, passions, skills, resources and beliefs are the mainstay of our friendships and relationships, so this is always the best place to start when supporting an individual to build connections.

8 Work in partnership

Most importantly, always work with the person you are supporting and practise unobtrusive support, modelling ways of being with them. In addition, build relationships with other community bridge-builders who may have a similar focus.

9 Celebrate small successes

Community building is about small steps that make a huge difference. Take time to reflect on your work, evaluate how it's going and celebrate every small success along the way.

10 Remember that building lasting connections takes time

Rome wasn't built in a day and neither were your best friendships, so don't be disheartened if there are disappointments along the way. By celebrating every step in the journey, you will keep focused on the ultimate goal. •

Additional Information

➤ With Helen Sanderson and Jo Kennedy, Helen wrote the book *Friendship and Community*, which highlights many of the strategies, which she used to support connections in community, and tells stories of community building work in the UK. Click here to find out more: www.nwtdt.com

➤ Since 2004, Helen has been running Envision, her own training and facilitation practice. For further information about Envision visit: www.envision-uk.org



Social Inclusion Planner



The **National Development Team (NDT)** have been working on a **Social Inclusion Planner** for the last three years. *Changing Perspectives* looks at what the **Social Inclusion Planner (SIP)** is all about.

This initiative, produced by the National Development Team in 2006 with support from the Scottish Executive, North Lanarkshire Council and NHS Lanarkshire, aims to provide support for people working with people with learning disabilities or mental health issues to explore the possibilities to achieve social inclusion in their community.

It's a software package to aid the development of effective plans for social inclusion and is available for both PCs and MACs and offers ways to look at and plan social inclusion. It's also currently free to download from the NDT website and the NDT log users by issuing a code number and password to each one.

There are seven sections:

1. Getting to know the person
2. Getting to know the community
3. Building capacity in health and social care
4. Building capacity in communities
5. Support for other aspects of life
6. Getting there and settling in
7. Sustaining participation



➤ Each section then offers strategies to enable you to achieve the section outcome: each strategy is described with a reference to theory, book, article, or project, an example story to illustrate this, and then some hints and hazards to help you plan and then carry it out. Beside this on the screen is a section where you can fill in what you want in relation to this section and the strategy for the person for whom you are planning.

It is useful in that it prompts you to think of lots of possibilities, think 'outside the box' and the references will point you in the direction of further reading if you wish to do this. To look at all the strategies in the seven sections means you have probably more than 100 possibilities to choose from and would need to familiarise yourself with them in order to make best use of the package.

Once you have selected which pages are for this plan, and entered the detail appropriate to the person then you can identify who will do what, and give a timescale for the work, and then look at an overview of the whole plan. Several plans for one person can be recorded, and several workers can use the SIP to record plans for people.

Following feedback from people who have had some difficulties downloading and using the software, NDT is currently designing a 'low-tech' set of resources (directory of strategies, handy cards to help in combining strategies into an inclusion plan and self-directed study materials). These will be available in hard copy or as PDF downloads shortly. •

Additional Information

- Click here to visit the SIP page on the NDT website:
www.ndt.org.uk/projectsN/TheSIP.htm
- Click here to visit the NDT pages on working to support social inclusion:
www.ndt.org.uk/projectsN/SI.htm
- Special thanks to Maggie Udell and Peter Bates (pictured here) for updating this article.



Being involved

Nic Pattison talked to **Olivia Cross**, a young person with mild learning disabilities from West Yorkshire, and her mum **Kate Cross** about her involvement in the local community.



Olivia Cross

Olivia is very friendly and happy to talk to me about her life. She has a social life that would be the envy of any young person her age as she's literally busy every day.

Olivia attends college twice a week, works 16 hours at Little Chef, Volunteers at D-zone and is studying for her Gold Award at Duke of Edinburgh. Her Mum, Kate, is very supportive and proactive in finding out about activities, projects and various ways Olivia can improve herself, become part of the community, be more independent and enjoy life.

FACT FILE

Age: 24

Hobbies: Dancing, reading, listening to music, shopping, Duke of Edinburgh, the pictures.

Job: Pot Washing / Table laying at Little Chef

Current Studies: Maths, IT, Life Skills at Adult Network

Friends: Lots

What is working at Little Chef like?

Little Chef is alright, the staff are nice and friendly and talk to me, they didn't before but they do now. I do washing up, laying tables I put things away, I do the drying up that's what I do. We have regular customers and they chat to me.

What volunteering do you do?

I go out to D-zone, it's for young people with learning difficulties. I'm a volunteer for people. I help out, we have different activities, like gardening, horticulture, fashion and community. My favourite is doing gardening. I teach them how to do different activities. I also go to the Young Batley Centre. We do Duke of Edinburgh. I've got my Young Batley Award and I've got Bronze and Silver and I'm on the Gold Award.

What do you study at college?

I do Maths and IT. It's a nice place but I don't like maths.



What do you like to do for fun?

Friday night I'm at a club – it's a working man's club in Dewsbury. We go dancing and talking and singing and my Mum and Dad come pick me up at eleven o'clock.

I have lots of friends and we meet at college and we normally go to Huddersfield and we look around the shops. I know them from college. I go out dancing, I read, I listen to music, I go shopping. I like Pirates of the Caribbean; I go to

the pictures with my Mum. We went to see Yes Man with Jim Carrey, it made me laugh.

Do you like to travel?

I go on holiday sometimes. We went to Australia in October. I've also been to Disney World in Florida. Mum and Dad will probably go on holiday but I might not go on holiday because I'm going away. I am going to France and Paris with the D of E. It's for my Gold expedition. It's exciting. We'll probably go out for meals and go up the Eiffel Tower.

Kate Cross

I chatted to Kate to get a few more details about Olivia's life at college, how Olivia became involved in various activities, the support offered by the local area and what future opportunities Kate sees for Olivia.

What sort of things is Olivia involved in?

Olivia volunteers at D-zone, which is the Marina Project, supported by Kirklees, It's connected to the Duke of Edinburgh scheme and part funded by the Safe Anchor Trust. It's for young people with learning disabilities. As Olivia volunteers she benefits as much from it as everyone else.

At college she did entry-level studies, vocational studies for about three years. Olivia was very well supported and she did that five days a week. One of the advantages from Olivia's point of view was that the school she went to used the college's science facilities, so she got used to going into Dewsbury College once a week before she left school. And then when she started at Dewsbury College full-time, they ran a two-week summer school to introduce them to College.

They are very good. It's now called Kirklees College and that's where the Adult Network is. She did three years full time, then she did Adult Network full time for a year and for the past two years has done two days a week, so it's actually providing a lot of support.

Adult Network is aimed at any adults with learning difficulties who are unable to access some of the more vocational courses at college. It's a range of developmental courses and skills that they can still continue to learn. There's IT, everyday communication, everyday number and life skills.

The Young Batley Centre is an open award centre for the Duke of Edinburgh (D of E) Awards. Anyone can go there, and there's a few of them there with learning disabilities.

How does Olivia like to spend her free time?

She goes to a working man's club on a Friday and Saturday night. It's a good little club and they have bands and singers. Quite a few of Olivia's friends go there. The nice thing about it is it's a nice protective environment. Everyone knows her at the club, they chat to her, you know that she's safe there and we take and collect her.

It can be quite hard for people with learning disabilities to get into employment. What sort of work has Olivia done?

Olivia has had a couple of jobs over the years. She worked at McDonalds for four years, she volunteered at the Ponderosa Café, and did three weeks work experience at a small rural zoo. Olivia carried on volunteering at the zoo and worked in the Kirklees Information Point Café to gain some experience. When she got the job at McDonalds, there was someone who worked there who was really very supportive. It was three hours on a Wednesday and three hours on

a Saturday but in the end they didn't really train Olivia well enough; they didn't try and develop her. There came a point where she just spent every Saturday just making the kids' boxes – very dull, very boring. She left McDonalds to work at Little Chef.

Olivia's current job is at Little Chef, what's that like?

Olivia is supported by two organisations at Little Chef. Scope got involved early on when she was registered as unemployed and the Disability Employment Advisor got in touch with Scope and she went on to the Workstep Programme.

REAL (Realistic Employment for Adults with Learning Disabilities), part of Kirklees Council, have been going for quite a while. They support her and when she started at Little Chef she was supported full time. For the 16 hours she had somebody working alongside her like a buddy, then gradually they eased out.

Olivia's hours have changed to two days a week. I think this will be quite tough for Olivia but to justify her retention they need her to work on their busiest shifts. They need to keep Olivia more occupied and want to train her to meet and greet people when there are more customers. The staff there are ever so nice. They said at a recent review, "we love her to bits" which was nice of them and, "she always looks smart and tidy and she's always a good attendant."

How do you help Olivia?

I've tried to back off a little bit because Olivia is supported by Scope and by REAL and I haven't been quite as involved as I might have been which I think is a good thing because you don't want Mum always ringing up. That's where I saw it as being an advantage that she's supported by other organisations as it means I don't have ➤





► to play a part. I do try and give suggestions at home, like when she wasn't quite laying the tables properly, so we practised that at home.

We worked very hard to get this job. Olivia signed on in July/August 2007 and it took us until July 2008 to get a job. She went for lots of interviews. REAL, in the meantime, had her working in a café at the civic centre in Huddersfield and that was like a training café. We contacted REAL off our own backs; someone at college had visited REAL so that's how we heard about it. They have a very good learning disability unit in Dewsbury College.

How did Olivia get involved with the Duke of Edinburgh Awards?

We've always been out there; i've always pushed to find out stuff and I think finding the D of E Awards was through me. It's fantastic and so well supported by the volunteers. They do activities like Judo, there's got to be a physical element, a service element and a skill. The last skill Olivia did was Sign Language. I would honestly say Kirklees is fantastic with their D of E scheme, they have a lot of projects aimed at helping young people with learning difficulties.

Olivia does a lot with her time, how have you managed to help Olivia get involved with all these activities?

I would say we've been very proactive. Olivia has got quite a few friends who don't do as much. It's just knowing what's going on around here, I suppose because I've been a Governor for so many years you keep your ear to the ground and you hear what's going on. I have done ever so much with her to get her where she is now, but she is also very sociable and mixes well, so she enjoys being busy.

I asked Olivia whether she wanted to live independently or with a partner in the future but she seems perfectly happy to continue living with you. What do you see in the future for Olivia?

I think one of our concerns is what the future may hold. If, for instance, there wasn't the opportunity to go to college, or we moved away from Kirklees. At Adult Network, there are still 35 year olds going, so she can keep going. That's the disadvantage of D of E as strictly speaking she'll have to finish at 25. But I do worry what there will be for her when she's thirty or older.

People have said that Olivia would be ideal working in like an outward bounds centre for the week. She likes D of E, she likes being in the countryside and she likes living with other people. So to work in that type of environment would probably be quite fun. It would give her somewhere to live and work all week – perhaps enabling us to do our own thing a little bit more. Olivia has the capacity to do most things.

Our main concern is her ability with money. If she was totally out there by herself budgeting would be very difficult. She would have to have a certain amount of money given to her that she then learns 'I can only spend this.' She can do simple meals: risotto, scrambled eggs, baked potato and bolognese. That's what we do with the spare time at home. Now that she's only working 2 days per week at Little Chef we need to fill the week with other things that develop her skills so we make one day a cooking day. •

I think it is clear from talking to both Kate and Olivia that there's a lot going on in their area that they have been able to tap into. But it seems the winning formula for a fulfilling life, joining in with the local community and being employed seems to be through having a proactive, supportive family, a forward thinking council and lots of opportunities.

Additional Information

- For more information about the Duke of Edinburgh Awards visit their website: www.dofe.org
- For information on Kirklees College (formerly Dewsbury College) click here: www.dewsbury.ac.uk
- For information on the Young Batley Centre click here: www.kirklees.gov.uk/community/localorgs/orgdetails.asp?OrgID=2632
- For information about REAL – Realistic Employment opportunities for Adults with Learning disabilities in the West Yorkshire area click here: www.kirklees.gov.uk/community/health-care/learningdisability/REAL/real2.shtml
- Special thanks to Kate and Olivia Cross for the interview and Olivia's cute cat, Tessa, for making us laugh!



ARC Projects

In each issue we will be featuring a different ARC project related to the topic we are covering. We have many projects in progress at the moment across the UK. In this Communities issue we explore two ARC projects on **community inclusion**, a **BME transitions inclusion Event** and an ARC Scotland project, **Progress Scotland**.



Banking My Time Too 1

Jane Livingstone writes about *Time Banks* and getting people with learning disabilities involved.



banking my
time too

Time Banks are a way of people in the community helping each other without using money. Everyone's time and skills are valued the same. For each hour someone helps they earn a 'Time Credit'. They can use that 'Time Credit' to get help themselves from someone else who is part of the Time Bank.

Time Banks are a good way of sharing what people are good at with a large group of people. They also help people build stronger communities as people get to know each other.

Time Banks enable members to share their time and skills. People with a learning disability traditionally have lots of time to spare, and enjoy sharing this with others. One of the early examples of a Time Bank, which has been developed around

people with a learning disability, is the SCORE project in Hereford, run by TACT which is now a fully integrated time bank. SCORE enables individuals with significant learning disabilities to participate in sport, the arts, leisure, training, voluntary work, employment and social enterprise within their communities. SCORE says:

"The project shapes itself to the individuals involved and follows them along whichever pathway they wish to take, providing support, guidance, friendship and trust. The key to its success is partnership between us and those we work alongside."

Time Banks work on the basis that everyone has skills to offer and also recognises that there are times when we could all do with some extra help.

Time Banks use time as their currency of exchange so for every hour of help given you earn one time credit and for every hour of help received you pay one time credit. No matter what skill is involved everyone's skill is valued equally – you give an hour and you get an hour back and that exchange rate never changes.

Each Time Bank has a co-ordinator (a Time Broker) who matches member's requests for help with other members who can deliver the service. The Time Broker also records all the credits earned and spent on a special Time Bank account. Time Banks are open to people of all ages and abilities. The skills available in a Time Bank are whatever people can offer. These can be simple everyday skills like doing some shopping or gardening or more specialised skills like computer programming or legal advice. But perhaps most importantly Time Banks offer great opportunities to make new friends in your local neighbourhood.

In Autumn 2006, ARC began a new project, called Banking My Time Too, which explored ways in which people with a learning disability can become active members of local time banks and contribute to them.

Research and experience of Time banking UK has identified the benefits of becoming involved in time banking amongst the general population; this includes recognising all people as having something worthwhile to contribute; re-defining work; building positive human relationships; belonging to a mutually supportive network.

One of the objectives of the project was specifically seeking to identify ways in which people with a learning disability can become involved in Time Banks. Through three pilots in

London, Bedfordshire and Gloucestershire, we hoped to test out practical ways in which people with a learning disability can be supported and encouraged to offer their time and their skills to others. During the project we shared the experiences and lessons learned widely amongst both the learning disability and Time Bank communities, through seminars and video.

Although the project has now finished, we have produced a training resource called *Friends and Neighbours* to help people get more involved in their local communities. The project has also written a short guide to help people understand more about both time banking and supporting people with a learning disability in a local time bank. The resource includes a short video made by the Fair Shares Group in Gloucestershire, who were part of the project pilot and had the assistance of a professional filmmaker (paid for with time credits of course!). One of the group said this about their experience with the project:

"Working for Fair Shares is like being with another family. I work at Jo's house then I am given a drink and sit with her and the children. We chat; I enjoy it very much."

Additional Information

- There are over a hundred time banks in the UK, as well as lots more worldwide and you can find your local time bank at: www.timebanking.org
- You can find out more about the project at our blog: www.arctimebanks.blogspot.com and the Friends and Neighbours training from Rod Landman: rod.landman@arcuk.org.uk or Lesley Dean: lesley.dean@arcuk.org.uk



Friends and Neighbours

Changing Perspectives asked **Rod Landman**, the Project Co-ordinator of *Friends and Neighbours*, to tell us more about this social inclusion project.



Friends and Neighbours grew out of *Banking My Time Too*, the Time Banking project we ran last year. During that project we became aware of how few resources existed to support social inclusion for people with learning disabilities.

We built up a good degree of expertise about the practical steps people can take to make inclusion a reality. We built this material into a pilot training day for people with learning disabilities and their supporters and piloted it through the Autumn, in partnership with local self-advocacy groups and services providing good practice across England.

The most exciting part of the project for me was it was the first time I have delivered training to mixed groups of people with learning disabilities, their staff and family carers, and expecting them to participate equally. It was enormously challenging, but it felt like absolutely the right thing to be doing; I couldn't imagine running a workshop about inclusion that wasn't inclusive. It wasn't always successful, and we've learned some lessons, but when it worked it was the most rewarding training I have ever done.

We've tried to capture some of the lessons we learned as part of a trainers' manual, and hope that that might be a springboard to some interesting work on inclusive training. I can't think of any good reasons for not offering most of the training that we currently offer to front line staff in an inclusive way.

It was great to be able to continue working with the local Time Banks who were our partners for that project. They've been doing fantastic work at including people with learning disabilities for years without even thinking about it, and with very little credit. I've met a number of people with learning disabilities whose lives have been transformed by joining their local Time Bank. They have hugely improved social networks, a reason to get up in the morning, they've acquired new skills, and some have found paid employment as a result; which is exactly what we wanted from Friends and Neighbours.

Feedback has been mostly brilliant. People really enjoyed the exercises, and everyone who came to the pilots said they had got something

practical out of it. There was only one person who disagreed with the inclusive format, and I could see where she was coming from, but I do think she missed the point! The vast majority of people got a lot out of working in partnership to identify meaningful options. This has led to a rewrite of the training material, and I've just finished preparing the trainers' manual. Once it is finalised ARC will offer Friends and Neighbours as a taught course, a one-day workshop.

I'll be working on an accompanying DVD soon, which will contain footage from the first pilot. At some point we will be looking at turning it all into a training pack. It would be nice to think we could produce something that was useful for self-advocacy groups, carers' groups, and mainstream leisure services, for example, as well as for ARC members.

In the future there are two main additional aims I'd like to see met. The first is to produce something that is useful for people with more severe and profound learning disabilities, and we've started looking for funding for that. I think that's unlikely to be a straight workshop or training pack. The team has discussed it already and we're looking at a resource for staff and carers which will focus on communication and public interactions. We need to identify techniques which will enable us to identify people's ambitions and their reactions to opportunities. We also need to look at the nitty gritty of what happens when people exhibit challenging behaviour in community situations. The initial reactions of people supporting people with learning disabilities is crucial.

The second thing I'm looking at is some good practice guidelines for trainers wanting to work in an inclusive way. The first stage is gathering people's experiences and tips, so if any *Changing Perspectives* readers can help in any way I'd love to hear from them. •



Additional Information

- If you would like to contact **Rod Landman** to share experiences and tips on inclusion please email him on rod.landman@arcuk.org.uk or telephone 01237 441786
- ARC is holding a good practice day in Chesterfield to gather information on supporting people with severe or profound learning disabilities in social inclusion. To find out more click here: www.arcuk.org.uk/1000292/default/including+people+with+severe+learning+disabilities.html
This event is now full but if you are interested in hosting another event then please email Rod Landman.
- For information on forthcoming workshops and training events please visit our events page on the ARC website: www.arcuk.org.uk/default/events.php
- For more information on ARC projects in detail visit the ARC Project's page on the website: www.arcuk.org.uk





3 Moving On Up Together



Lesley Dean, *Moving On Up Together* project worker, writes about an ARC project that is helping young people learn about the transition to being an adult in a fun, positive, informal way.

The transition from school to life as an adult can be a very exciting or daunting time in anyone's life. There are lots of decisions to make about what to do after leaving school, perhaps thinking about leaving home and how to spend free time. At different ages, there are also different rights as a citizen and all this comes with some degree of responsibility.

So why is this a difficult time for some teenagers, rather than a positive one, with exciting opportunities? I would suggest it is about having the right information and support, to see the changes as exciting, rather than overwhelming.

Consider then how you may feel at this time if you were someone with a learning disability and particularly if you are from a minority community. A number of other factors have to be considered, not least that you may need continued support to be able to have some independence – is that possible?

ARC's *Moving On Up Together* project is focused on the needs of such young people. We are half way through six 'one day' events across the country, aimed at giving the young people some sound information about various aspects of transition – and having some fun at the same time!

On the days they are learning about what it is to be a citizen, to think about friendships and how to retain friends and also to consider

the future, whether looking at employment opportunities or living away from home.

This is only the tip of the iceberg about transition, but they are able to access our Moving On Up website www.movingonup.info for information as they need it on this and other related topics.

Local organisations also come to the day, with information about the services they provide – from college courses to sports facilities and self-advocacy groups.

Like other people with disabilities in the community, no doubt, these young people will find some barriers in accessing local facilities. We hope, after these events (and continued support from school, college, home and Transitions team workers), that they will feel motivated to become more a part of their local community as they become adults, being involved in their areas of interest and, where applicable, defining areas of need for change and helping that happen. •

Additional Information

➤ If you would like to contact **Lesley Dean** please email: lesley.dean@arcuk.org.uk

➤ Visit the **Moving On Up** website for information and resources on transition: www.movingonup.info
This website is currently being updated so check back regularly for new information.

Progress Scotland



Sylvia Crick, *National Co-ordinator for Progress Scotland*, writes about supporting people with learning disabilities to be active and included citizens through the Progress Scotland project.

Progress Scotland began in July 2008 and is a project of ARC Scotland. It's funded by the Big Lottery and Scottish Government to work in Scottish Borders Dumfries and Galloway and Aberdeenshire.

People with learning disabilities tell us time and time again that they want to lead an ordinary life in their community. This includes having the same opportunities for jobs, housing and friendships as anyone else. It also includes being centrally involved and having their voice heard when decisions are being made about the services they receive or how their communities are run.

This view is fully supported by current policy and by provider organisations across the statutory and voluntary sectors. However, research and feedback from people with learning disabilities and those who support them indicates that it is still not happening.

The aims of Progress Scotland are:

- Supporting people to develop and build the skills and confidence to contribute to meetings and other places where decisions that affect them are made.
- Enabling people to engage with Community Planning processes to ensure the planning and delivery of wider community services is inclusive.
- Offering provider organisations access to training, information and networks.
- Ensuring the views of people with learning disabilities are included in the design and

delivery of services through the Community Planning process.

- Offering specialist knowledge and expertise about in Control, Citizen Leadership, Person-Centred Planning and other person-centred ways of working.
- Giving people with learning disabilities information and advice about their finances.

ARC Scotland has spent time meeting with a wide number of service user groups, voluntary, statutory, education and further education sector providers to gather views and we welcome any contributions from member organisations. •

Additional Information

➤ For more information on this project or other ARC Scotland projects visit the ARC Scotland website: www.arcuk.org.uk/scotland

➤ Click here to visit the Progress Scotland webpage on the ARC website: www.arcuk.org.uk/scotland/1000254/en/progress+scotland.html

➤ If you live or work in one of the three local authority areas and would like to comment or hear more about Progress Scotland contact:



Sylvia Crick
sylvia.crick@arcuk.org.uk
(tel: 0131 454 9052)



Or James Fletcher
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HFT Devon: Keeping Safe Pack and Safe Place Scheme

Changing Perspectives is for you, our members, so each issue we will be featuring different member organisations and the various projects you're working on. We want to hear from you about best practice, experience, projects, activities and procedures. This issue we asked **Home Farm Trust** to tell us about how they're including people with a learning disability in their local community and raising awareness.



Carly Everitt from HFT Devon writes about the projects helping people with learning disabilities to be safe in the community in Devon.

Service users and staff within HFT Day Services at Rivendell in Devon are currently involved with a project called The Keeping Safe Pack and the Safe Place Scheme. This project was initiated by the South Devon and Dartmoor Community Safety Partnership. We have been working with a variety of people and organisations to produce a series of booklets to be used as a reference for people with learning disabilities when dealing with difficult situations, such as bullying and abuse, whilst out in their community.

These booklets include:

> Support Services



> Keeping Safe
On-line



> Keeping
yourself safe -
Ambulance,
Fire and Rescue
and Coastguard



> Talking to the
police

> The Law and
Your Rights

Service users at HFT were asked to contribute to the Keeping Safe Pack by producing photo stories for the Keeping Safe On-line and the Fire and Rescue booklets. This involved writing the stories and producing the photographs to accompany them.

Service users are supported by staff to attend Keeping Safe Steering Group meetings. These meetings provide a great opportunity for service users to meet others involved in the project and contribute to something that will help many people and improve safety and independence.

The Safe Place Scheme forms part of the same project and is being supported by Devon and

Cornwall Constabulary. The Police, working in partnership with learning disability organisations, will be rolling this initiative out across Devon, Cornwall and The Isles of Scilly. This involves shops and businesses displaying a Safe Place sticker in their window to show that they are participating in the project. People with learning disabilities who wish to take part in this initiative can be issued with an 'I need help' card with their name and contact details of someone who can help them, on it. If, when out in the community, they experience difficulties they can approach staff within the shop or business displaying the sticker and ask them to contact the person named on the card. This is obviously a great way to involve local communities and build support networks for people with learning disabilities as they go about their daily lives.

We will be working to raise awareness of the Keeping Safe Pack and Safe Place Scheme ensuring that people supported by HFT have access to both initiatives and appropriate training in how to use them. •

Additional Information

- > If you would like to know more about the good work HFT are doing to improve safety in the community please contact Carly Everitt, HFT Devon: carly.everitt@hft.org.uk
- > Visit their website for more information: www.pippack-devonandcornwall.org.uk
- > Or visit the main HFT website: www.hft.org.uk



Community Building: moving into the mainstream

United Response has many interesting and successful Community projects. The following article was first published in **United Response's In Touch** magazine and looks at the right to lead an inclusive lifestyle.



Services for people with learning disabilities or mental health needs have come a long way over the last 30 years. Thankfully, we've said farewell to institutions and their impersonal approaches to support. But as people were moved in their droves to more 'homely' services up and down the country, it became clear in time that while their physical surroundings might have changed, the people residing in those ordinary houses were still very much living isolated lives.

At United Response, person-centred support has allowed them to find out more about the individual hopes and dreams of the people they support. The introduction of their innovative Developing the Way We Work tools have given them practical, structured ways to understand what each person wants and needs from us and the wider world. But they also set the charity a new challenge: to help the people they support to develop and nourish relationships with people outside of their families and paid circle of support. Relationships with people who choose to spend time with them based on shared interests and genuine friendship, rather than obligation.

More and more stories are emerging about how people they support are getting more involved in their community. Good examples include the churchgoer who now takes their turn hosting regular coffee mornings; a sports fan addicted to watching Grandstand every Saturday afternoon, being introduced to the local rugby club by his rugby-playing support workers – and being missed by club members when he's not there. They have also seen some positive results from the Small Sparks grants, and more recently, their work with UnLtd with Firework grants, which are designed to help people hold community events.

Such seemingly small achievements play a huge part in the agenda to breakdown the barriers that segregate society.



This image shows Geoff Flowers who loves his job at the stables so much he works there four days a week.



Changing people's perceptions

When **Julie Walter** oversaw the closure of United Response's Ilkestone day centre in 2007, she had high hopes about the resulting person-centred support her team could now provide. Little did she know that in only seven months, people's lives would change so dramatically, she'd soon be supporting an up-and-coming businessman and a stable-hand, to name but a few!

"When United Response opened the day centre several years ago, it became the daily meeting place for 12 people we support. The centre offered a mixture of activities, from arts and crafts to swimming and bowling, but due to its very nature, it was a bit structured and inflexible. People couldn't choose what activities they wanted to do and had no control over who they were spending their days with. ➤



➤ *As time went on, we realised we could give people a more individual support package if we moved the funding away from the daily running of the centre, such as rent and utility bills, and shifted it into paying for one-on-one support staff.*

We worked with social workers, managers and some of the people we support to find out what kind of things they would like to do if they didn't go to the day centre anymore. We then used **community mapping** to research what resources were available in the area – not specialist services, but mainstream activities that anyone could go to.

At first, some of the staff were anxious that the people they support would struggle without the routine the day centre provided. Others were concerned that for those with challenging behaviour, joining in with community activities might prove too stressful. We deliberated, but decided the potential benefits to the lifestyles of the people we support were too good to pass over.

And boy, did we make the right decision!

Since the day centre closed, everyone gets involved in a much wider range of activities. We've supported people to go to job centres and look for their first jobs. Someone volunteers for the Derby Coalition for Independent Living, handing out leaflets. We've supported people in interviews to become volunteer shoppers for older people. We have people doing dog-walking, helping in the local church... one guy, Geoff, even works four days a week in the stables, which he absolutely adores. Last but not least, one man who is a keen gardener has just been given Lotto funding to start his own gardening business. And every one of these people doesn't speak.

Now when staff see an opportunity for the person they support to try something different, they grab it with both hands. Every day something new happens. And by seeing people with learning disabilities out there, with skills and doing useful things, the perception of the public has improved too. Lives really have been turned around.” ●

Additional Information

- Click here to visit the United Response website: www.unitedresponse.org.uk
- Find out more about United Response and Inclusion: www.unitedresponse.org.uk/what-we-do/inclusion/index.htm
- Special thanks to Anna Kounnou and United Response for allowing us to reproduce this article.



Community Mapping



Community Mapping is a great way for people with learning disabilities to find places, people and resources in their community where their skills and assets will be used and valued.

By sharing their experiences with other people, they can discover new opportunities and make new contacts in their local area in a graphic, three-dimensional way.

Inclusive and engaging, it makes getting connected in the community achievable.

This resource was developed by United Response's Inclusion Team and with people they support and was showcased at Learning Disability Today in Manchester last year.

If you are interested in buying a copy, please contact United Response on 020 8246 5120. ●

Community map copyright of United Response



This image shows Sinead, supported by United Response in Trafford, adding herself to the community map at Learning Disability Today.



ARC In Focus:

A day in the life of our Information Officer...

ARC provides a wealth of information to its members through newsletters, websites and forums and someone has to gather it all. *Changing Perspectives* asked **Nic Pattison**, ARC's new Information Officer to describe a typical day's activities.



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At ARC no two days are the same so I don't really get many typical days. The kind of day I have and the activities I take part in really depends on many factors such as what's happening at ARC or out in the wider world, what events are taking place, how much news there is that day or if something major has happened. What time of the month it is – in relation to how close we are to getting the e-zine out! And the number of publications released that week. My days are busy, challenging and never ever dull – but that's why I love my job!

I usually start around 9 o'clock unless I am going somewhere, there are some special days where I either get the opportunity to network and gather information from an event such as Learning Disability Today or I might be helping out at an event like the Moving on Up Together Days ([click here for more information on the Moving on Up Together project](#)). I generally start off by checking my emails and writing my to do list for that day.

My emails are set up in a way that makes it (hopefully) virtually impossible for vital news to slip me by. I have Google alerts, which come in every day and tell me what news articles have been written about social care, learning disabilities and disabilities in the UK. They are often local news stories – about home closures, clubs, projects or achievements. These go into my News page on the ARC website which I update every week. I also get email updates from The Guardian, CSIP, SCIE and I'm signed up to various other information sharing services. I read through all the stuff that comes across my desk and if it's really important, like the publication of Valuing People Now, then it goes into my newsletter – The Weekly Despatch, which is published every Thursday.

So far I'm not sounding too busy am I?

I am also responsible for the pages on the website, keeping them up-to-date, creating new ones, advertising consultations, events and publications. So if a project is winding down then the report needs to be uploaded, the text altered to reflect the fact it is completed and any links to publications, events or results need to be added so it's all current. I am in the process of revamping the website and I'm starting with projects. We have a lot of projects on the go at ARC and often these lead to new ones, which look at a topic in more detail or one particular

aspect. As I am still new to social care (and ARC) learning about the projects we have is a bit like running through a maze, there's lots of twists and turns and it's easy to get lost! So at the moment any spare time I have is spent gathering information for the website project pages.

I also write for and gather contributions for the ARC e-zine. *Changing Perspectives* is published quarterly which gives me a couple of months working on other things and a final month of running around like a headless chicken, chasing people up and filling in any bits that we're missing!

I'm also responsible for moderating and approving messages on both the Yahoo group and our ARC message board. I upload any important documents, branch meeting minutes and event flyers to the member's area and I assign passwords to any member who wants one!

Project Managers keep me informed as much as they can on developments on their projects and I in turn pass on information that comes across my desk. For example, David Grundy runs the Clear Thoughts project, so any news items, publications and events about mental health and learning disability gets passed straight on to him. Occasionally, Managers may want to know what I think as the 'ear on the street' so I might get invited to sit in on an important meeting. For example, ARC is a strategic partner in the new Transition Support Programme, which is part of ➤



the Aiming High for Disabled Children Project, so over the next few months Bridget Fisher and her team will be very busy. They asked me to come along to the planning meeting so I could learn more about the project, look at their transitions website and come up with ways to improve it.

I am a subscriber to tons of magazines such as *Community Care* and *Charity Times* and you can guarantee something will be in my post box every day. I use 'getting the post' as an excuse to stretch my legs. Often I won't get to the post on the same day as it's usually an event to advertise or a magazine that needs to be read, interesting articles pulled out and referenced and then filed in the library.

I usually finish at about 3 o'clock unless I have a deadline I haven't met or if the website has been causing problems. Thursday is my busiest day as I have to create the newsletter, check all the links are correct and that the images look OK before sending. Even after it has been sent I need to check the bouncing emails and alter my list accordingly.

Thursday is also my day for updating the News page, the Events page and the Monthly Update on the website – which has links from the bottom of the Weekly Despatch.

Friday is my quietest day as (generally) nothing big happens on a Friday so I take my chance to catch up on filing. I add to the Branch Update and check all relevant websites for new publications.

So, as you can see it's been quite hectic getting into the role of Information Officer and a very busy first few months!

Additional Information

- For the Weekly Despatch archives visit the member's area of the website: www.arcuk.org.uk/extranet/newsletters.php
- For more information on 'information services' available to you click here: www.arcuk.org.uk/11/default/why+join+arc.html
- If you (or your colleagues) would like to sign up to the Weekly Despatch please email me for a username and password: nic.pattison@arcuk.org.uk
- To visit the ARC Information Officer's Blog, click here: www.arcinformation.blogspot.com

Resources



Journals and magazines

- **Volume 22 Number 2 Community Living:** www.communityliving.co.uk has an interesting article on anti-social behaviour in Sandwell told by people with learning disabilities.
- **The British Journal of Learning Disabilities**, published by Wiley-Blackwell, Volume 36, Number 4 December 2008 has the article Local area co-ordination: strengthening support for people with learning disabilities in Scotland by Kirsten Ogilvie Stalker, Margaret Malloch, Monica Anne Barry and June Ann Watson. This is the official journal of BILD and for more information or to order back copies visit: www3.interscience.Wiley.com/journal/118514768/home



Communities and Local Government

- **A white paper was published in 2008 on communities; Communities in control: real people, real power** and looks at how people can access power in local communities. Click here for more information: www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communitiesincontrol
- **An article published in The Guardian on 28 October 2008 looks at the doubts expressed over empowering people to be part of their community:** www.guardian.co.uk/society/joepublic/2008/oct/28/communities



Department of Health

- **Valuing People Now** was published in January 2009, there are some recommendations on including people with learning disabilities in the community. To download Valuing People Now or for more information click here: www.dh.gov.uk/en/News/Recentstories/DH_093384



The Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability

- **Have a number of training courses for staff working with people with a learning disability. Their Community Bridge Building course is a 1 or 2 day training course to help organisations achieve community inclusion. Click here for information:** www.sclld.org.uk/what-we-offer/training/courses-for-staff/community-bridge-building.xhtml



ARC

- For information on forthcoming *workshops and training events* please visit our events page on the ARC website: www.arcuk.org.uk/default/events.php
- For information on ARC projects in detail visit our Projects page: www.arcuk.org.uk



Publications

- *At Home in the Community* by Roy McConkey, University of Ulster. Triangle Housing have developed a staff toolkit which focuses on friendships, goal setting, travelling and community. Click here: www.trianglehousing.org.uk/downloads.php and scroll down.



SCIE

- *Guide 16: Community-based day activities and supports for people with learning disabilities* is available to view on their website: www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide16/index.asp
- *SCIE Knowledge review 14: Having a good day? A study of community based day activities for people with learning disabilities.* Available to view on their website: www.scie.org.uk/publications/knowledgereviews/kr14.asp



Projects

- Helen Sanderson and In Control are involved in a project called 'In Community' find out more about it here: www.in-control.org.uk/site/INCO/Templates/GeneralChild.aspx?pageid=449&cc=GB
Or: www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk/Our_Work/Where/Community/In_Community.html
- *The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities* also has a Community-related project: www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/our-work/community-and-inclusion/life-in-the-community



Making Friends

- *Special Friends Online* is a social networking site for people with learning disabilities, by signing up people can make friends from all over the world and improve their IT skills. Visit the website: www.specialfriendsonline.com/public/