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Season's greetings and welcome to your new look Liberty Link

As you can see we have redesigned Liberty Link to make it brighter and easier to read. The change also brings it in line with our redesigned leaflets



SILC booklet, 'Helping people in Surrey use Direct Payments for social care and support'



and the SILC stationery that we will be using from January.

In future issues we hope to be able to include stories about your experiences, both good and bad, of getting and using Direct Payments. If you are happy to share those with us, just contact me at the SILC office and I will happily come and interview you.

I would also love to hear from you about subjects that you would like us to cover in future issues and what you think of our new design and layout.

Best wishes
Kate O'Brien
(SILC Communications Officer)
kate@surreyilc.org.uk

SILC Christmas holidays

The SILC offices will close at 1pm on Wednesday 24th December and reopen at 9am on Monday 5th January. If you have problems with your care and support arrangements during this time, contact Surrey County Council on 03456 009 009

A perfect break at Park House

Chair's report - Brenda Griffiths

Park House is a beautiful old manor house in the grounds of the Sandringham Estate in North Norfolk. It has been adapted as a hotel for people with disabilities, their family and/or carers and it is possible to purchase as much or as little support as you need.

Usually I shy away from hotels that provide 'in house' care facilities. But this year, I decided to try Park House for a week.

I went away with my sister Elizabeth and Personal Assistant Linda in my new Motability VW Caddy. Linda did all the driving and supported me during the day, so I just booked early

morning care from the hotel to give her some time off at the beginning of the day.

Park House was given to the Leonard Cheshire Foundation by HM Queen Elizabeth some years ago and it was where Princess Diana spent much of her childhood.

It is a very comfortable hotel and the food is excellent. We had a lovely relaxing week and visited some fascinating places including Pensthorpe Wildlife Centre and some interesting places in The Fens and - believe it or not - the weather was kind to us too!

Park House contact details

Park House Hotel
Sandringham
King's Lynn
Norfolk
PE35 6EH

T: 01485 543000
F: 01485 540663
E: parkinfo@LCDisability.org
W: www.parkhousehotel.org.uk

Can you help?

With Christmas approaching, there are plenty of valuable things to occupy our time but with so much happening in Surrey, we could really do with more people to get involved with SILC's activities.

If you feel you could spare a little time to help us, please think about joining our Executive Committee. So many people with disabilities have a wealth of experience, expertise and knowledge that is invaluable to others. If you feel you could help, please call Brenda Griffiths on 01372 273595 for an informal chat.



Park House, Sandringham



New number for Surrey County Council

Telephone: 03456 009 009 - calls are charged at the standard local rate.
The old number (08456 009 009) will continue in use for the next 5 years.

A Fairy Tale in Surrey

Once upon a time in the realm of Surrey, England, there lived in the border town of Camberley a man called David and his wife Barbara.

David had Ushers' Syndrome (deaf/blindness) and his wife Cushing's (tumour on the pituitary gland). Neither could drive, so journeys into the deeper realms of Surrey, Berks and Hants had to be planned and were few and far between.

So they lived a quiet and isolated life, only going to London every three months for Barbara's appointment at St Barts. Hospital.

David was able to walk with his dog William but occupied most of his time working in his vegetable garden, apart from outings to SAVI meetings at County Hall, Kingston.

One day, a Fairy Godmother called Georgina of RAD visited them and said that they could go for a weekend away to the seaside town of Eastbourne.

The good fairy continued to visit them and one day informed David that he could be given a Direct Payment to support him. A visit from Cleo from the magical Kingdom of SILC resulted in David receiving a quarterly allowance to spend on a Personal Assistant called Les.

Their lives were transformed and from that time on, they were able to visit garden centres, model and music shops. They also enjoyed trips to the seaside with their granddaughter Charlotte. Barbara also got some funds to help her with shopping and gardening.

Eds note - From that time things have moved on and in October there were over 1200 people receiving Direct Payments to support them in their daily lives.

By David Campling.

Completing an SAQ - help is at hand

In September, a practical workshop was organised by Surrey County Council, Surrey Coalition and SILC in order to find out more about the process of completing a Self Assessment Questionnaire or SAQ. Amongst the attendees were people with various disabilities, older people, carers and those representing voluntary organisations in Surrey. It quickly became clear how differently people reacted to the SAQ, and it became obvious that some people

would need time, support and encouragement in order to complete the questionnaire in a way that would achieve the best result for them. The new style SAQ form is different from the assessment that care managers completed in the past for basic care support. It includes questions on every aspect of a person's life, including social activities, education, employment possibilities, transport and so on - the questions are no longer simply about care. The new SAQ is designed to give people more choice and control over how

they live their lives. However, it needs a deal of thought in order to get it right. Fortunately, in Surrey, support help is available for service users from SILC as well as organisations such as Age Concern.

For more information, go to www.surreycc.gov.uk, call Laura Cresser, Participation lead at Surrey Council or Richard Davy at SILC 01483 458111.

In her own words

Lorna Marsh - SILC Independent Living Advisor



Staff team picture (Lorna - Front row 2nd from the left)

I have been managing my own Direct Payments for ten years now and am enthusiastic about the real independence this method of funding can provide. Hopefully I will be able to help others live a life as full as mine.

My working roles include: Teaching with ActOne ArtsBase Organisation; and quarterly meetings with The Qualifications Curriculum Authority (QCA)

where I am on the Disabled Peoples Advisory Panel for Education and Integration. I also give independent talks on education and integration, some of the highlights of this work have included lecturing at Eton College and Earl's Court.

I've been working at SILC since 12th June 2008. It's been a steep learning curve, but one that has been worthwhile.

I've been trained in Makaton up to level 4 foundation and Child Protection in the process, gaining very interesting practical knowledge that I will be able to pass on to new clients.

I believe that encouraging more clients that Direct Payments is the way forward, will give people opportunities to do things that they previously thought were not possible.

I'm often still nervous about going to see clients, but my colleagues at SILC have made me feel very comfortable. I've really enjoyed the conferences I've attended and I'm looking forward to seeing what comes next.

Of course, I still have a lot to learn but with the support of my colleagues I think I'm getting there!

Let Bluebird take the strain

If you want to choose your own Personal Assistant or Care Worker, but don't want to be the employer, Bluebird Care is now able to act as the employer on your behalf.

It means that you still decide who provides you with the support you need, but that you

don't have the hassle of worrying about contracts of employment, tax, or National Insurance contributions. It also means that when your regular worker is away, Bluebird can help you find a replacement worker.

Bluebird Care services are available in the Epsom,

Leatherhead, Ashted and Banstead areas.

For more information, contact Anne O'Neill tel 07970 771 672 or email epsom@bluebirdcare.co.uk Bluebird Care is registered with the Commission for Social Care and Inspection

Cool2Care - for families with disabled children

By Lindsay Blackburn (Cool2Care)

Since its formation in January, Cool2Care, the new venture in Surrey which aims to help families with disabled children, is growing from strength to strength.

What is Cool2Care?

Cool2Care is a non-profit making, social enterprise which recruits, trains, screens and places skilled care-workers in the homes of families with disabled children. We know that looking after a disabled child or young person is a long term commitment that can lead to both physical and mental stress. Regular help from a high-quality care-worker can relieve the pressure, give the family a break and stimulate the child too.

For Families

Although Cool2Care trains and screens care workers, they are

employed directly by the family. A modest one-off placement fee covers the cost of recruiting, training, screening and CRB checking and there is no ongoing commission. The service is compatible with Direct Payments recipients, and with those who receive funding from their local authorities.

The service is totally flexible. Cool2Care listens to families' requirements and provides a choice of care-workers that satisfy those criteria. We know that every child is unique and that children have very special needs. Our care-workers are trained to adapt to the needs of the child across a range of ages, disabilities and home circumstances. If you are the parent of a disabled child and would like to find out more about employing a care-worker, please call Lindsay Blackburn on 07872 604479.

"Just to let you know that things worked out very well with P this week. We have been able to go out and about to the park and do necessary stuff (like buying new shoes) which wouldn't have been able to happen without her help. The boys have enjoyed having her to play with. Thank you again for your help. Cool2care is a very valuable service to parents like ourselves."

Mother, Surrey

Contact: Philip Conway
Telephone: 020 7202 5886
Mobile: 0780 190 9476
Website: www.cool2care.co.uk
Email: philconway@uk.ibm.com
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"I can't praise the service we received from Cool2care highly enough. They found us a fantastic care worker in under a week and at very short notice. For me, having N has made the difference between dreading the long summer holidays and actually being able to enjoy having all my children home together. The problems don't go away, but thanks to N's help they are no longer overwhelming."

Mother, Surrey



SILC AGM 2008

SILC's 10th AGM at Leatherhead Leisure Centre was an extremely positive event with the Annual Report being well received. It was great to be reminded about all that SILC has achieved in the year and to share our new image as a Centre for Independent Living.

The morning began with the Chair's remarks and thanks to all the Trustees and staff team. Our treasurer Judith Ellis followed with her financial report for the year:

Lorna Marsh and Meurig Williams spoke very eloquently about the work of the ILAs (Independent Living Advisors).

Our Chief Officer, Richard Davy, gave a heart-warming report on the great work SILC has undertaken during the year, particularly since February when referrals for Direct Payments began flooding in. He was pleased about how well staff had risen to the challenge.

A buffet lunch gave attendees the opportunity to visit the stands displaying the work of various Surrey organisations. In the afternoon we heard a presentation about Self Directed Support before a final question and answer session - a positive end to an informative and interesting day. NB. Copies of the annual report are available from the SILC office.

Working with your Personal Assistant

The nature of the relationship you have with your Personal Assistant will depend on your own personality and preferences. But the most important thing in a successful working relationship is good communication.

Communicate

Make sure your PAs know what is expected of them and remember, everyone wants to feel appreciated and valued, so a little praise for a job well done is very important in keeping staff motivated. Explaining why you are asking for a task to be carried out in a particular way will help your PA to feel more involved in the support you need

Be consistent

If you keep changing your mind about how you want a task done, no one will be able to support you in the way that you'd like - be consistent in the instructions you give, and if you need to change, explain why.

Train well

Why not ask experienced PAs to help with the training of new staff? Using an experienced assistant to go through a particular procedure with you, will demonstrate clearly to a new member of staff how you like things done. It also reduces the time needed for training them and encourages a good 'team spirit'.

Talk to peers

If you're new to employing PAs, it's very helpful to speak to experienced Direct Payment employers, share problems and gain confidence. SILC will be arranging training for PAs to attend on their own or with their employers. Please ring SILC for more information or to tell us what training would be useful for you.

If you have difficulty getting to meetings, let us know and we will arrange transport. Call SILC on 01483 458111



Advising the UK Government on disability issues

Nick Danagher writes

Since December 2006 I have been a member of Equality 2025, a group of 19 disabled people appointed to advise the Westminster Government on disability issues.

It was set up in response to the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit report 'Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People'. Equality 2025's members each come from a different background and have a variety of experience and impairments.

In our first 2 years, we have issued advice on subjects ranging from the Single Equalities Bill, to disability employment services, the setting up of a housing and disability network, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Equality 2025 does not rely merely on the knowledge and views of its members. A large part of our work is to get out there and engage with disabled people so that our advice is based on the widest possible spectrum of views.



Equality 2025 meeting (Nick, second left)

We have just held our second annual national public meeting in Birmingham, and in between times we have held 6 regional meetings across the UK to discuss issues such as:

- Independent living and employment
- The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Young people and transitions into adulthood
- Transport and getting out and about
- Negative imagery of disabled people
- Hate crime

What disabled people tell us at these events, organised by disabled people for disabled people, helps to shape our work plan for the coming year.

We're delighted to have attracted attendees who have never been to such public meetings before. The events enable disabled people to give their opinions on the way Government policies and services should be designed.

We are hoping to hold a public meeting in the South East region in 2009. If you would like to know more about Equality 2025, please get in touch:

Equality 2025
The Secretariat
6th Floor
The Adelphi
1-11 John Adam Street
London WC2N 6HT
Tel. 020 7712 2822

Please also visit our website: www.officefordisability.gov.uk/equality2025/

We welcome your views on disability policy. You can contact me by emailing nick@equality2025.org or leave a voicemail on 0845 460 2025

Computer training at home

UCanDolt is a charity that provides computer training for disabled people in their own homes. In 10 weekly one-and-a-half hour lessons, the training covers topics such as word processing, email and the internet. The course is means tested, which means that there is a small fee payable.

For more information go to www.ucandoit.org.uk or contact Elizabeth Oldreive on 020 7730 7766.

SILC PA recruitment workshops

- 14th February (lovely!), afternoon, at Disability Initiative, Camberley
- 28th February, afternoon, at Guildford YMCA
- 14th March, afternoon, Park House in Leatherhead
- 28th March, afternoon, Inn Keepers Lodge, Redstone Hill, Redhill

To coincide with the launch of PA Finder, we'll be running a series of Personal Assistant Recruitment

Workshops across Surrey. The workshops aim to raise awareness of the benefits of working as a Personal Assistant for someone who receives Direct Payments.

We'll publicise these events in detail close to the time in the local press and radio.

If you would like more information, contact Kate at SILC or email kate@surreyilc.org.uk

Personal Assistant training March 2009

In November, SILC ran three very successful training days covering issues such as:

Independent Living and the core principles of providing care and support, Safeguarding, Health and Safety, Food Hygiene, and Moving and Handling.

The sessions were well attended by both Direct Payment employers and Personal Assistants.

We will be running a similar series of training sessions in March 2009, and if you would like more details, contact Kate at the SILC office or email kate@surreyilc.org.uk

PA Finder online

At the end of January, you'll be able to use SILC's new web service to help you recruit Personal Assistants.

PA Finder allows you to post details of the support you require and to browse the details of prospective PAs. It doesn't require that you reveal any personal details, and PA Finder will be supported by the SILC recruitment service so you can be sure that your confidentiality

and privacy will be respected at all times.

We hope that PA Finder will soon become the main way of recruiting PAs in Surrey, greatly reducing the cost of finding the support you need.

We'll let all Direct Payment recipients in Surrey know about the website before it's launched, giving full details of how to use it.