

THE ACORN



Staffordshire Children's Trust
Working together to improve the lives of children and young people

Edition 20
May 2011

**Welcome to the quarterly newsletter for Staffordshire Children's Trust.
Read on to find out more.....**

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Children's Trust Update...

Following the removal of the statutory requirement to have a Children's Trust or a children and young people's plan; and the development of the Health and Wellbeing Boards, the Children's Trust Board made the following recommendations at their meeting on 28th March 2011:

- they (the Children's Trust Board) will no longer meet; and
- due to the Health and Wellbeing Board having a 'cradle to the grave' remit, the current Executive Board membership should be reviewed and expanded with direct links into the Health and Wellbeing Board, to ensure the focus and priorities around children and young people remains imperative.

This process of 'updating' the Executive has begun and there will be a period of transition whilst we move towards these new arrangements. It is felt that the current communication channels of the Children's Trust have been running effectively and efficiently over the past several years; so they will be continued during this period of transition, still under the 'banner' of the Children's Trust. These channels include the Children's Trust Monthly Brief, the Acorn newsletter, and Children's Trust website to name a few.

We hope you will continue to contribute towards the various updates, and distribute them amongst your colleagues and networks.

If you do have any questions or suggestions, then please do not hesitate to contact myself or the Children's Trust office.

Kind regards

Paul Woodcock

County Commissioner, Children's Wellbeing

email: staffordshirechildrenstrust@staffordshire.gov.uk

or call 01785 277116

Students at Blythe Bridge High School and Sixth Form took part in the BBC School News Report, along with numerous schools all over the country. On 24th March, a selection of year 8 pupils became reporters, covering a school-based and local story.

A video report was created as part of the school-based story, to provide information on what Blythe Bridge High School has done to become an eco-school. Within this story, students got the opportunity to voice their opinions on the new uniform that is made out of recycled materials. The report looked at what life was like before the eco-school initiative and how this has since improved. Students conducted interviews with Mr Barker, Assistant Head of Dove House and Miss Cuncannon, Assistant Head of Manifold House who detailed how the ideas for the new uniform were put into practice.

Students also worked extremely hard on a web-page which detailed the local story of the renovation of the windmill at Meir Heath. Students worked on different areas of the page, varying from researching the key facts, to devising catchy headlines and sub-headings. Students were very impressed with their final creation, but also felt that they had learnt more about their local area.

Their report on the new school uniform and the fact that the blazers were made from recycled drinks bottles caught the attention of our local radio station, BBC Radio Stoke and Midlands Today. As well as acting as reporters all day, the students were interviewed and filmed by the media. A challenging and rewarding day was enjoyed by all who took part. All of the students are eagerly awaiting the next BBC Report Day.



To Celebrate the 400th Anniversary of the Publication of St James Bible, Ryecroft C.E. (C) Middle School held a Religious Education Day.

All the children at Ryecroft enjoyed a day of discovery and wonder as the question was asked, 'What's so special about the Bible?'

Through a variety of activities and drama, led by James Hamilton from Barnabas in schools, they examined the content, discovered interesting facts and analysed some of the stories.

In a final assembly for the whole school a group of children performed a re-enactment of the story of William Tyndale, who translated the Bible from Latin into English.

Mrs Shenton, Head of Humanities said:

"The day should remind the pupils that this year marks the 400th anniversary of the publication of the St James Bible making it accessible to all."

Kyra Hall Year 6 said:

"James from the Barnabas trust came into school to teach us more about the Holy Bible. He interacted with us and included us into his stories. James helped us to understand the Bible; he also told us facts about the Bible which were very interesting. He did some drama plays with us to act out stories (this made us all laugh a lot). It was definitely a better way of learning about the Bible than normal. I really enjoyed it. It was good because it was something different than our normal lessons, I think most of us found it very useful. So thank you James for teaching us about the Bible."

In the picture James Hamilton and from left to right: Josh Govan, Jack Scallan and Sam Hall



Small Talk at Pirehill First School

Some children and parents from the reception class at Pirehill First School in Stone have recently finished a 6 week programme of Languageland training. They have 'travelled on a magic carpet', had fun with puppets, stories, songs and games but in reality those activities were part of a programme to help boost their language skills and to demonstrate activities and techniques for the parents and class teacher, Mrs Tuckwell.

Pirehill First School are very aware of the importance of speech, language and communication. Ms Breeze, Head Teacher called in language and communication expert Libby Hill from Small Talk Speech and Language Therapy to deliver the sessions. "It's ideal because we can train reception and Key Stage 1 teachers without taking them out of the classroom", reports Libby, "The project doesn't usually involve parents but it has worked very well and the parents reported that they have learned a great deal. It has been very interesting for them to watch their children in the circle-time style groups." They looked at attention, listening, rhyme, syllable awareness, vocabulary, narrative, auditory memory, sequencing, expressive and receptive language skills.

Small Talk Speech & Language Therapy began to do lots of different training with nursery and primary schools as a result of major concerns about the general level of children's language when they start school. The Government's Communication Tsar Jean Gross reported in January 2010 that 1 in 6 three year olds have a recognised problem but many, many more have delayed skills which will affect progress when they start school. A previous Government report in 2008 showed that this can be as high as 50% of children in some areas (Bercow, J.). A questionnaire to Primary Head Teachers by Small Talk Speech & Language Therapy last year showed that 100% were concerned about declining speech, language and communication skills. These problems are not class or area specific and can affect all levels of society.

"We live in a very visual, fast-paced age and often the first time a child is required to do any formal listening is when they start school", reports Libby.

"Previously, in the 1970s for example, when attention, listening and language levels were much better, reception class teachers didn't have the complex demands they have today. Their job is therefore doubly difficult, they have more to get through, with children who are not as ready as they were. It's not fair on the child or the teacher", commented Libby. Mrs Tuckwell felt that the sessions were very helpful, it confirmed what she was already doing and added more suggestions and ideas which she has already begun to implement.

The project was funded by the Stafford and Stone Community and Learning Partnership.

For further information please contact Libby on 0844 704 5888 or the Head Teacher on 01785 354041



The Sound of Music - a roaring suc-

The theatre at Thomas Alleyne's was filled to capacity after the sell out school's production of 'The Sound of Music'.

The students received a standing ovation on the last night and the Headteacher, Suzanne O'Farrell, praised the students for their professional performance mentioning the superb quality of the singing, the orchestra and the sound and lighting from the production team. It was the first production by music teacher, Miss Todd and Mr Johnson and has given all those involved with it, a very valuable and memorable experience.

The Band



Miss Todd & Mr Johnson with PA Team



Max and Elsa



Maria with some of the pupils



Aiming High - Apply for Shorts Breaks Funding...

Aiming High for Disabled Children and their Families in Staffordshire - opportunity to apply for short breaks funding 2011.

Aiming High in Staffordshire is now seeking applications to deliver short break services.

Two separate funding streams are available. These are to deliver:

- **Services costing under £10,000 (reference PC352) – closing date 12 noon on 10 June 2011**
- **Services costing over £10,000 (reference PC353) – closing date 12 noon on 6 July 2011**

Funding is available to deliver two types of services:

1. Short Break Activities

Staffordshire County Council would like to receive tenders for short break services offering a range of different short break activities and recreational activities, across Staffordshire.

Many activities can be classed as short break activities, this includes:

Youth clubs, sport and leisure activities, outings, holiday playschemes, community activities like scouts and brownies, horse riding, clubs, arts and culture.

This list is not exclusive and we would welcome innovative activities and projects.

Activities should take place in school holidays, weekends, and after school/evenings.

2. A Support Service

The Support Service will involve two elements.

Sitting Service – a Sitting Service provided in the disabled child or young person's own home as a base for activities.

Community Support Service – a befriending and mentoring service supporting disabled children and young people to access activities in the community.

Further Information:

To receive a copy of the applications form, service specification-outlining full details of the service above, contract and guidance notes contact:

Staffordshire Procurement by email at sp@staffordshire.gov.uk; telephone to Joanne Whitehouse – 01785 854649 or in writing to the address below, stating:

Aiming High and the reference number

- **For applications Under £10,000 state reference PC352**
- **For applications Over £10,000 state reference PC353**
- 2. Your name/a point of contact
- 3. Name of Organisation/Group
- 4. Postal Address
- 5. Email
- 6. Telephone Number

Aiming High – *state reference number*
c/o Joanne Whitehouse
Staffordshire Procurement
Staffordshire County Council
Wedgewood Building
Tipping Street
Stafford
ST16 2DH

The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2010 came into force on 1st April 2011. These Regulations impose a duty on local authorities to provide, as part of the range of services they provide for families, breaks from caring to assist parents and others who provide care for disabled children.

The duty requires local authorities to make provision for short breaks for carers of disabled children in their area. In fulfilling the duty local authorities must have regard to (a) the needs of those carers who would be able to provide care more effectively if they had breaks from caring, and (b) the needs of those carers who would be unable to continue to provide care unless a break were offered to them.

The duty requires that local authorities provide a range of short breaks services and that local authorities, in consultation with carers in their area, prepare, publish, and keep under review, a 'short breaks services statement' setting out what services are available, any eligibility criteria for services and how the range of services are designed to meet the needs of carers in the area.

Paragraph 6(1)(c) of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 (inserted by section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008), requires local authorities to provide services to assist individuals who provide care for disabled children to continue to do so, or to do so more effectively, by giving them breaks from caring.

The duty follows a three year investment in short break services as part of the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme. Aiming High in Staffordshire is currently reviewing the service provision it has provided during the Aiming High programme.

Extension to activities

A number of Aiming High activities have been extended to continue to provide a range of different short break activities across Staffordshire. In addition G8way workers will also be providing a number of different activities in each of the Staffordshire districts over the next 12 months.

Disabled Children's Access to Childcare (DCATCH)

A research project funded by Disabled Children's Access to Childcare (DCATCH) has now been completed. The research looked at the childcare needs of parents and carers of disabled children. A final report has now been completed which identified almost half of the parents who were involved in the research had unmet needs for childcare. This was for a range of reasons including lack of appropriate types of provision and the ability of individual settings to cope with and understand the needs of disabled children. The research identified 14 barriers to accessing childcare for parents and carers of disabled children.

For more information and a copy of the report contact aiminghigh@staffordshire.gov.uk

Review of Aiming High Strategy 2009-2011

A review of the current Aiming High Strategy is taking place. The review will take account of the progress made with Aiming High to date, and identify actions to address gaps identified. Feedback from parents, carers, disabled children and staff will be central to the strategy development. The new strategy will be developed for publication in the autumn.

To feed any information you think may be relevant into the review and strategy development please contact: Tina Wigfall on 01785 278072 or tina.wigfall@staffordshire.gov.uk

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Aiming High Evaluation Project Worker

Amy Duddy, Aiming High Evaluation Project Worker ensures the views of disabled children and young people are included in the development and delivery of Aiming High services.

Amy continues to visit Aiming High funded activities to gain the comments and views of the children and young people about the services they have received.

“I have had the pleasure so far to attend a couple of G8way events as well as drop in on some cricket and football coaching which have been a great success. In the next few weeks I have other visits planned and hope to ensure the children and young people are able to voice their views.”

Amy is also looking into forums for disabled children “I am starting to look into the possibility of an Aiming High forum or group of children; this is in the early stages of development but hope to be able to report more in the next edition.”

Amy can be contacted at the Children's Voice Project at amy.duddy@staffordshire.gov.uk or on 01785 253878.

To keep up to date with the Short Break Programme and activities offered log onto www.staffordshire.gov.uk/aiminghigh

Staffordshire Parent Action Network

Since their first meeting in July last year, the Aiming High Parent and Carer Shadow Board have gone from strength to strength. There is now a strong core membership of parents who are all working hard to make positive changes for disabled children and their families across Staffordshire. Many of the members have extensive links to other parent support groups and organisations, creating a wide source of parent and carers' views and needs.

From the first of April, the Board wished to be known as SPAN (Staffordshire Parents Action Network). They want parents and carers to know that they are 'passionate about achieving a better deal for our children, regardless of ability by being involved in the decision making and shaping of services'.

Members of SPAN are currently connected with several boards and committees in Staffordshire, where they pass on parent and carers' views and ideas and filter back decisions made to their contacts around the county.

Links have been developed with other parent groups around the Midlands through regional meetings and conferences. At these 'get togethers', many topics that affect disabled families, both locally and nationally, are discussed and views from parents and carers are passed on to the decision makers through the regional and national network.

If you would like to contact a member of SPAN to find out more or to help with collecting views and opinions on disabled provision in Staffordshire, contact details are below.

Email: span@staffordshire.gov.uk

Alternatively, please telephone: 01785 356919



Aiming High Update from Mark Fosbrook...

Aiming High Disability Sport & Physical Activity Officer

Mark Fosbrook, Aiming High Disability Sport and Physical Activity Officer supports the development and awareness of disability sport and activities for disabled children across Staffordshire. He is based with Sport Across Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent (SASSOT).

Mark has been working on the following areas:

- **County Plan** - The development of a county plan for development of disability sport within the county.
- **Disability Sport Forums** - The development of Disability Sports Forums - groups of volunteers and professionals that have an interest in the development of disability sport in the area. Over the year the following groups have been established:
 - Stafford Disability Sport Forum
 - Burntwood & Lichfield Disability Sport Forum
 - Staffordshire Moorlands Disability Sport Forum
 - Newcastle Sport For AllThese add to current forums already in place in Cannock and East Staffordshire. Over this next year Mark will be developing groups in Tamworth and South Staffordshire. These groups will then be brought together in a countywide group to share good practise and networking.
- **Playground to Podium** - The Playground to Podium Initiative is designed to find children in both mainstream and special schools that show potential for future Paralympics.

SASSOT were responsible for running the County Athlete Assessment Days, which were very successful. On these days National Governing Body Coaches meet the children and assess their ability and potential.

Website

Mark has been re-vamping the SASSOT website to include a wealth of information and a live directory so people can search for clubs.

Disabilit-e News

One of the main issues that parents face is not knowing what opportunities are out there for their children to get involved with. Mark has developed the Disabilit-e Newsletter, which is distributed two times a month with information about anything to do with Disability Sport and Physical activity. This covers anything happening within Aiming High, the county, regionally, nationally and the elite world of sport. This goes out to 400 people directly and is also part of the main SASSOT newsletter, which goes out to over 1,600 people.

Inclusive Toolkit & Clubmark

The English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) developed a 'Health Check' for clubs to complete on how accessible they were for disabled people. Mark has developed a grading criteria and award for clubs achieving a certain standard.

This is now being piloted by the EFDS with the view of rolling this out nationally.

EFDS also offer Clubmark for disability clubs Mark has been working with several clubs to work towards achieving this.

Over the next year Mark will be to continue to develop opportunities and more importantly involve more disabled children in sporting opportunities.

For more information or to receive a copy of the Disabilit-e Newsletter contact Mark Fosbrook.
email: mfosbrook@staffordbc.gov.uk

'Teen Spirit' - A Big Lottery Funded Project for Teen Parents is well underway in Tamworth.

'Teen Spirit' is a 5 year project funded by the Big Lottery which gives support to young parents in Tamworth. The main aim of the project is to offer activities that engage parents to enjoy learning with their child as well as giving one to one support, in the home, about any issue that is concerning them.

The project which is led by Donja Martin covers all the Children's Centres in the Borough of Tamworth. By talking to these young parents, aged between 13 and 19, we found the types of activities they wanted to do and what help they needed.

Often, these parents, who may be managing with little or no support, are not confident about going to groups with older parents or they may just not have had the opportunities to learn about bringing up their baby.

By offering them a 'listening ear' or a 'helping hand' they gain confidence to attend our groups and enjoy fun learning experiences with their child. This ofcourse is great for both parent and child.

During the last year we have run two swimming courses at the SnowDome which also included 'Save a Baby's Life' First Aid Training. The parents and children have also enjoyed a fun 'music and singing' class, baby massage classes, a 'Play and Learn' course, making 'Crafts for Christmas' and a 'Stories and so much more' course which included a trip to the theatre in Birmingham. During the summer months, in addition to the courses we will be meeting up for picnics in the park and going on family trips.

Information about returning to college and training opportunities have been organised with a trip to Tamworth College.

"We are all very excited about the success of this project so far and would like to thank the Big Lottery Fund for supporting the work."

For more information about the project please contact:

Donja Martin

Teen Spirit Worker
Sure Start Children's Centres
Staffordshire County Council
The Exley Centre
Wilnecote Lane
Belgrave
Tamworth
B77 2LA
01827 475225
07875639284
donja.martin@staffordshire.gov.uk
www.staffordshire.gov.uk



Activity Weekend for Children with Diabetes...

A group of 25 children with diabetes, all patients at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust, have been on an action packed activity weekend.

The youngsters aged between 9 and 16 spent the weekend at Boreatton Park (PGL) in Shrewsbury.

They took part in activities including kayaking, zip wire, sensory trail, giant swing and Jacobs's ladder.

It's the second year in a row the Children's Diabetes Team has organised the trip and five members of staff gave up their own time to accompany the children.

Emma Biddulph, member of the Diabetes Team said: "This was a great way for them to meet other children with diabetes and share their experiences.

The kids had a fantastic weekend and all got on really well. Many of them are planning to stay in touch and we've had some lovely thank you letters from parents and children. We were so pleased with the feedback and comments we've had that we have already booked to go again next year!"

The weekend was part funded by the hospital's Children's Diabetic Trust Fund and by parents.

Emma continues: "We would like to say a special thank you to one of the parents, Nikki Price, and her friend Lynn Gelder who raised a substantial amount of money towards the cost of the trip."



10 year old Daniella Horton on the zip wire

Insulin Pump Evening a Success...

Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust has held an educational evening for children with diabetes and their families.

Over one hundred attended the insulin pump evening at Staffordshire University.

Staff from the Diabetes Team at the Trust explained how insulin pump therapy works, the advantages and disadvantages and the pumps were also demonstrated.

The informal event also gave children with diabetes the chance to meet other children with the condition.

Karen Whitehead, Paediatric Diabetes Specialist Nurse, said: "We are thrilled to have had such an impressive turnout and plan to organise further events."

Karen's team is also in the process of setting up a support group for parents who have children with diabetes.

The Trust has around 20 children on insulin pumps.



Changes to Connexions...

From the beginning of April, career services for young residents of Staffordshire moved from Connexions to Staffordshire Young People's Service (SYPS).

Young people aged between 13-19 and people aged up to 25 with learning difficulties will now receive their career support through Staffordshire Young People's Service. This will form part of a more joined up approach to services for young people, helping them get the best start in life and linking in with many other types of support and opportunities currently offered.

It will be mainly 'business as usual' for young people who use Connexions. Personal Advisers will continue to offer a valuable service to young people, to enable them to make well informed decisions about their future.

Staff will operate from libraries and youth centres rather than from high street Connexions shops. The service provided within schools and colleges will remain exactly the same.

To find out more, please contact:

Staffordshire Young People's Service

Tipping Street

Stafford

ST16 2DH

Telephone: 01785 278785 - Fax: 01785 278764

E-mail: youth@staffordshire.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/youth/home.aspx>

Do you need support getting back into work?...

If so, the **Family Employment Initiative** could help. We offer the following:

- Overcoming barriers
- Updating CVs
- Completing application forms
- Interview techniques
- Job search
- Training
- Work experience / volunteering opportunities

We now work in the following areas – all ST5 postcodes, Stoke, Trent Vale, Audley & Bignall End, Halmerend and Biddulph East.

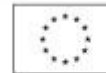
We are based at 23 High Street, Knutton but also work from a number of community venues.

To arrange an appointment or to find out more about the service, please call 01782 618906.



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regeneration trust

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West Midlands
www.advantagewm.co.uk

Circus Stars...

This Summer libraries across Staffordshire will be encouraging children to embark on a 3 stage reading challenge following six children who have signed up for a contemporary circus skills academy.

As children read books they gain new circus skills through three stages; practice, rehearsal and show time.

The Summer Reading Challenge **starts on 16th July and will run until 10th September.**

Children can read 6 or more books, or listen to 6 books on CD of their choice to receive a variety of rewards including stickers, a bookmark, a medal and a certificate.

This year children participating in the Children's University can use the Summer Reading Challenge to collect stamps.



Reading Education Assistance Dogs Project at Library...

On Monday February 28th Glascote Library near Tamworth played host to some very important visitors indeed.

Tony Nevett and Kelly Bakewell and their greyhounds Danny and Batman were special guests at the library. The reason for the visit was a pilot project for a scheme based around child literacy. Both Tony and Kelly, along with their very talented dogs, are registered literacy mentors, part of the Reading Education Assistance Dogs (READ) scheme.

READ is already a huge project in the United States, where it has been going for some time. The scheme was created to encourage young people who are struggling with their literacy skills to learn to become confident and enthusiastic about reading. The innovative part of the project is to use specially trained dogs as listening mentors, the idea being that by reading to a non-judgemental audience in a relaxed and neutral environment, this will boost the self-confidence of the children and teach them that reading is an enjoyable and fun hobby that can be enjoyed by anyone.

For this visit, Glascote Library had invited pupils from two local primary schools to attend, Oakhill School and Lakeside School. Oakhill pupils came along in the morning in small groups of 4 or 5, and were able to each choose a book and read to either Danny or Batman. In the afternoon it was the turn of pupils from Lakeside School.

The dogs and their trainers were a big success with the children, all of whom were quick to pick a book and come and read to one of the dogs. As specially trained 'mentors', the dogs remained friendly and calm at all times, and the enthusiasm in the children in reading to their special audience was easy to see.

Library staff were joined on the day by staff from both schools, in addition to a local Councillor and also a local author, Kate Pointon. The media were represented by both Central News and the Tamworth Herald Newspaper.

The day was judged as a big success by all involved and on the back on the success of this pilot, Glascote Library are hoping to host a 6 week project aimed at child literacy later in the year, again working with local schools and the wonderful literacy mentors from READ.

Many thanks to Danny and Batman (not forgetting Tony and Kelly!)



Local High School assist Local Library in Projects...

Codsall High School sixth formers as part of their enrichment activities are assisting local libraries in delivering services.

Students from the school have assisted in delivering Baby Bounce & Rhyme at Codsall and Perton Libraries over the last year. They assist local staff to set up the event and then participate in the singing and rhymes - these students are doing this as part of their Health & Social Care course.

Later on this year a local community group Wild About Perton will be undertaking a project to set out a walk around the lakeside and woods in Perton including the library garden which is looked after by volunteers from the group. Funding for this has come from the Lottery and high school students have been asked to assist with this project by producing a walk leaflet outlining the route which will be available to the local community. The students will use their graphic design skills and facilities at the school to produce a professionally designed product.

Staffordshire's Young Teen Fiction Award...

After months of nominating, Staffordshire's 11-14 year olds have nominated the following titles for this year's Young Teen Fiction Award short list:

- 'My name is Mina' by David Almond
- 'I'd tell you I love you, but then I'd have to kill you' by Ally Carter
- 'I was Jane Austin's best friend' by Cora Harrison
- 'Skulduggery pleasant: mortal coil' by Derek Landy
- 'Mortlock' by Jon Mayhew
- 'Withering tights' by Louise Renison

Book loving teenagers have until 8pm on Tuesday 5th July to vote online for the winning title at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/ytf

The winner will be announced at a fun-packed celebration day for participating schools at Uttoxeter Racecourse on Thursday July 7.



Sure Start Children's Centres Volunteering Programme...

Sure Start Children's Centres in Tamworth have re-launched their volunteering programme. It has now been running for nine months and has proved an invaluable experience for both volunteers and services alike.

A walk in the life of a volunteer

Firstly I contacted Lynsey at the Glascote Sure Start Centre and explained I had an interest in volunteering, she arranged a date that was suitable for me and I went to see her. At this meeting we had a chat and completed an application form and CRB check. After a few weeks I was sent a letter to attend a four week induction programme, which I did. This covered lots of topics including child development, child protection and equal opportunities. It was only an hour and a half a week and it was great to meet other volunteers. At the end of the programme we all were interviewed for what placements we were interested in. I could choose from reception work, parent and toddler sessions to promotional work. Once we were accepted for a placement we are visited and supported by Lynsey. The staff are very supportive and my confidence is growing weekly.

Volunteers are invaluable to our services, they bring with them their own life skills but also an enthusiasm to learn. It has been a privilege to work with the volunteers that have accessed the programme. At present I have 9 in placement and a new programme that started on the 6th May. The programme is on a roll on basis so new volunteers can join at any week.

We are always excited to meet new people who are interested in volunteering. If you are interested you can contact Lynsey on 01827 475222 or drop in to the volunteers' bureau in Tamworth.

YOMAC - Youth of the Moorlands Action Council...

In December 2010, saw the departure of Kate Martin as SYPS Participation Worker for the Moorlands as Kate took up the opportunity of working as a Youth Worker within the Blythe Bridge and Cheadle areas.

We would like to thank Kate for her commitment and dedication to Participation in the Moorlands and the formation of YOMAC approximately 10 years ago.

With Kate moving on from the Participation Workers role, we are pleased to announce that Mark Koszak (who has come from Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services - SCVYS) has taken over from Kate and will be the Participation Worker for the Moorlands.

At the end of March our Apprentice - Damien Clowes came to the end of his 2 year contract with the County Council.

We would like to thank Damien for his hard work and commitment to Participation in the Moorlands and in particular to YOMAC and the young people attending.

Damien now has the opportunity, through the qualifications and experience he has gained during his Apprenticeship, to apply for posts within Young People's Services. We wish him well in this respect.

Continued overleaf...

YOMAC - Youth of the Moorlands Action Council...

Continued...

Throughout these changes YOMAC continues to meet fortnightly in Leek with over 30 young people.

Since January 2011, YOMAC have held 9 meetings and have met with a variety of agencies and discussed many topics and issues.

These have included holding a Shadow Children's Trust Board Meeting with Sharon Moore (County Commissioner - Safer Communities) and Mark Jones (Staffordshire Young People's Service - Head of Service), which was to look at and discuss services for young people in Staffordshire.

YOMAC have also met with a representative from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. Members of YOMAC were asked to fill out and complete a questionnaire about what the young people would be interested in doing as Conservation Activities.

Young people have also taken part in a Cyber-Bullying Session run by Positive Activities Team Leader - Antony Capostagno. This session incorporated how to stay safe online and what information shouldn't be given out. It was an interactive session with questionnaires, discussions and DVD films.

YOMAC have also held a Political Speed Dating Event in March, where 14 young people met with 5 District Councillors from the Staffordshire Moorlands. This event started with a European Challenge which was a task to name as many of the 25 states in the European Union. Participants were then asked to name as many of these state capitals. The groups were then asked to discuss how they feel the

European Union affects them in the Moorlands. The 'Speed Dating' then took place with each member of YOMAC being able to ask questions of their local Councillor.

The future for YOMAC is a very bright one. Issues that affect young people in Staffordshire and in the Moorlands need to be raised with decision-makers and young people's voices need to be heard. We are working on promoting 'Your Staffordshire Card' within schools and local communities in the Moorlands.

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Your Staffordshire Travel Card...

How we got the card

For a long time the cost of buses has been a thorn in the side of all young people, with some having to pay over £5 each day just to get to school and back. Within Staffordshire, your United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP) representatives and the Youth Action Council (YAK) have gathered your views from surveys, interviews and the highly successful Speakout Conference in 2009. YAK evaluated the feedback, agreed the best solutions to the problems and presented all this back to County Councillors and key decision makers. YAK would like to thank everyone who supported this campaign, from attending Speakout to filling out surveys. YAK is proud that we now have a scheme that will allow young people to go to the places they want to go for a much fairer price.

County Council Leader Philip Atkins said: "Groups, including Staffordshire's Youth Action Council (YAK), have clearly told us that there is a need for greater mobility for young people. Research conducted by YAK last year showed over 60% of young people said a £1 ticket would get them on the move."

Chair of YAK Jack Bourne, aged 16 from Staffordshire Moorlands, said: "I am really pleased that the County Council is launching this scheme. It will make it much easier for younger people to access employment and education as well as reducing the cost of transport when teenagers want to meet up with their friends socially."

The initiative will also have a positive impact on the environment because people won't be as keen to buy a car if they can catch a bus for a bargain price. This will lead to fewer cars on the road pumping out carbon dioxide.

It is a great scheme and I am sure that it is one that people will be making the most of".

How it Works

Anyone under twenty who lives within the Staffordshire County Council boundaries can apply for a FREE 'Your Staffordshire Card' which will allow them to travel, from the first of June, for just £1 on any bus journey which starts or ends in the county.

That's a really cheap bus trip to see mates, get to school or college or just to get out and go places.

As the scheme grows there may be other potential benefits too. In the future the card may become a recognised proof of identity and age.



Your Staffordshire Travel Card...

How to Apply

There are three easy ways to apply for a FREE 'Your Staffordshire Card':

- Visit www.yourstaffordshirecard.info
- Pick up an application form from libraries or
- Call 0300 111 8000 to have an application form sent to you



Over the recent school holidays members of YAK and the eight district youth forums have been out and about promoting the Card. In Newcastle & Stafford the Staffordshire Young People's Service (SYPS) mobile units were set up in the town centres and youth workers, Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) staff and young people handed out promotional materials and sign-posted people to the website – leading to over 30,000 unique hits on the website and over 6,000 young people applying for the card.



Staff & young people promoting the 'Your Staffordshire Card' in Newcastle and in Stafford

Eccleshall Youth Survey 2011...

The Us2 Project led by Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS) started in June 2010. One of its aims was to work with rural communities to consult with young people on their needs and wants for places to go and things to do.

In January 2011 the largest youth survey undertaken in Eccleshall for a lifetime was created by SCVYS Youth Support Worker Jessica Wilkes-Mellor and sent around the local community for young people aged between 8 and 20 to complete.

The survey included questions about the local area and how young people felt about the community and the facilities that were available to them. As the survey was also being supported by the local sports clubs a targeted question about sports facilities was also included.

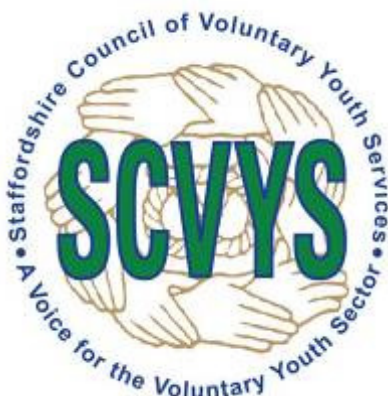
The survey was sent out through schools, sports clubs, the library, shops, scouts, guides and the church to get as many responses as possible. We expected 100 completed surveys but by the closing date we had received an amazing 200 responses which equates to 33% of the young people population of Eccleshall and clearly demonstrates the passion that young people have in their community and for being involved and having their say.

Jessica said: "The results of the survey are a good illustration of how young people feel in their community, what facilities they want to see and how they want to be more involved. The cross section of responses allowed us to see the priority areas for young people in the Eccleshall area as well as offering an insight in to the barriers and frustrations they face."

She added "This survey has enabled young people to have their say and identify the issues they face such as being starved of facilities and how the lack of places for them to go and 'hang out' affects them and how they feel at times certain places can seem 'unfriendly'. The young people also identified how they feel the local community do not understand their needs and how they have been 'labelled' as trouble makers which is not always the case."

The next step will be to create an action plan and a timetable with young people and members of the community. With the possibility of a new development by Eccleshall Eagles Junior Football Club and the building of a community hub, links between the young people and the project lead will be formed and supported by Jessica from the Us2 project.

For a copy of the detailed report contact Jessica at Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services on Jessica@staffscvys.org.uk or call 01785 240378.



Staffordshire County Council's Road Safety and Sustainable Travel Team are launching a new initiative promoting sustainable travel and increasing physical activity on children's journey to school.

The WoW scheme, which stands for Walk Once a Week, further compliments sustainable travel initiatives available to schools in Staffordshire such as Cycle Training and Walking Buses.

Walk Once a Week (WoW) is an all year round walking scheme that encourages parents to leave their car at home wherever possible and walk their children to school. As WoW runs all year round its biggest benefit is making walking the norm for families. Schools that currently take part have a higher average incidence of walking, at 10% above the average.

The WoW scheme rewards children that walk to school at least once a week throughout the school year. Children record how they travel to school on a class wall chart and if they walk at least 4 times a month they receive a themed badge, all highly collectable and designed by children themselves.

Ten schools in Tamworth have been chosen to trial the scheme which started on 16th May to coincide with national 'Walk to School Week'. The schools are provided with wall charts and badges and elect children to the role of WoW monitors to co-ordinate the recording of information, issue rewards and promote the scheme to the whole school community. The scheme has many benefits, including reducing congestion outside the school gates, increased physical activity levels and increased independence and road safety awareness amongst children.

Phase 2 of the scheme will be launched in September in approximately 80 schools across the County. The schools selected to take part in the scheme will have to meet specified criteria. This will include, being a nominated school on the school Speed Indicator Device (SID) programme and/or being identified as a school with a high childhood obesity rate. Schools with low walking rates or where it is believed a significant increase in walking is achievable will also be targeted.

Funding has been secured to run the scheme until July 2012. During this period schools will work towards increasing walking levels on the journey to school, through a menu of agreed initiatives and supported by the Road Safety and Sustainable Travel Team.



Welcome to the Walk to School Campaign



Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services...

A new era for Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services is upon us. In April 2011 a new team took the reins from Barry Halls, Sue Fox and Mark Koszak.

The focus of the new team over the next three years is to work with existing and new members to create a vibrant, diverse and sound voluntary youth sector, building on the experience of our hundred or so member groups and representing their views locally, regionally and nationally.

SCVYS has been involved in leading projects around the County for many years. From working with local communities to develop youth provision and clubs to leading on the highly successful national V Involved Project which engaged and supported thousands of young volunteers and matched them with suitable volunteering opportunities across Staffordshire.

Over this time a wealth of knowledge and resource has been developed and our aim is to enable new and existing members to grow and develop by distributing these resources, offering accredited training programmes and supporting new and existing members in delivering effective youth work programmes.

So if you are an existing member, know of a group that may need our help or are a new youth group looking for support please get in touch.

Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services, 01785 240378
Email: office@staffscvys.org.uk
or visit our website at: www.staffscvys.org.uk



Cannock Chase Children's Centre - Ofsted Report...

Cannock Chase Children's Centre is Outstanding, its official!

A big thank you to all the staff and Children's Trust partners who work together at Cannock Chase Children's Centre. Ofsted visited just before Christmas and did three separate inspections for childcare, early education and children's centre services. The centre was judged to be outstanding in each inspection report. The children's centre opened in June 2003, much of the catchment lies in areas of significant deprivation where there are problems related to health, lone and teenage parents, education, low incomes and poor housing. The level of unemployment and the proportion of families on benefits are above the national average. Most children's development on entry to early years provision is below expected levels for their age.

The report highlighted the excellent levels of communication between Trust partners including Midwives, Health Visitors and other professionals and commented on how work between the centre and its partners showed commitment to true equality of opportunity, with every family in the area benefiting from the centre's services, while those with particular needs are signposted to other professionals or to further options which are available at the centre. The range of services delivered by or on behalf of the centre was judged as excellent. Ofsted highlighted evidence that showed partnership working resulted in outstanding outcomes for children and their families.

For more information please contact Sarah Rivers
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Mob. 07976191025 Tel. 01543 469894

Newcastle African Cluster Celebration...

The event was held to celebrate the work of the Newcastle African Cluster, which is a partnership of three Newcastle Under Lyme schools funded through the British Council 'Connecting Classrooms' programme.

Ian Snead of the CEDARS Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) showed a wonderful presentation about the achievements of the link between the Newcastle African Cluster (Silverdale Community Primary School, CEDARS PRU and St John Fisher Catholic College) with schools in Nigeria and Mozambique (jointly called the Viewpoint Partnership) and the very positive effect of the partnership in terms of pupil engagement, intercultural understanding, challenging assumptions and community cohesion.

Planet Sound African drumming group entertained the guests who were able to look around an exhibition which told the story of the partnership from the very beginnings in 2007 to today.

Art work produced at African Learning Day in February at St John Fisher Catholic College was on display.

Two students from CEDARS PRU and St John Fisher who went to Mozambique in May 2010 were presented with awards. Anthony Hammond who was artist in residence to the project and helped us create the environmental art installation at Apedale Country Park also attended. Earlier that afternoon trees were planted at Apedale in the environmental area established by the schools.



The event was attended by the Mayor of Newcastle Under Lyme, Councillor Ann Heames and her consort Mr Heames.



The Mayor of Newcastle, Councillor Ann Heames, and her husband. They have supported the Newcastle African Cluster by attending our celebration events.

We should be very proud of the work our schools have done, and look forward to sustaining the link through our website:

<http://www.viewpointpartnership.org.uk>

If you would like any more any information about our partnership, please contact:

Mrs Alison Blaney, Associate Head Teacher,
Silverdale Community Primary School
Racecourse, Silverdale
Newcastle, Staffordshire
ST5 6PB
Tel 01782 297470



Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service has launched a new campaign to highlight the dangers of deliberately starting grass fires.

The Fire and Rescue Service tends to see a dangerous increase in grass fires over the school holidays which is put down to children and teenagers starting fires deliberately.

Last Easter, there were 215 grass fires across Staffordshire during the half term break.

This year, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service are hoping to educate young people about the dangers of starting fires deliberately and have designed a poster which will be distributed amongst school countywide. The poster (see overleaf) has a firefighter on it and is entitled 'Flames Aren't Games. Grass Fires Kill'. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service's Head of Risk Reduction, Ian Sloss said: "Young people who start grass fires seem oblivious to the fact that they are endangering their own lives as well as firefighters."

A grass fire can quickly spread and it does not take much for clothing to set on fire and before you know it, you have horrific burns which could claim your life.

For every call we receive about a grass fire there could be a person desperately trying to get out of a burning building or trapped in a car crash in urgent need of our assistance.

We work closely with partners to address the reasons for this type of crime and we hope by using role models, such as the footballers, we can educate young people about the dangers of playing with fire."

To book a free Home Fire Risk Check contact: 0800 0241 999.

You can also book online at

<http://www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk/bookyourhfrc.asp>

For all other non emergency enquiries contact: 08451 22 11 55

or log onto: www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk or www.direct.gov.uk/firekills.

In an emergency dial 999.



Staffordshire
Fire and Rescue Service
preventing • protecting • responding

Poster overleaf...



Staffordshire
Fire and Rescue Service
preventing • protecting • responding

**FLAMES
AREN'T
GAMES** 
GRASS FIRES KILL



Starting grass fires is no game.

If our Firefighters are putting out a grass fire caused by you or your mates, it means they can't be at the real emergencies – like house fires where people may be at risk of dying or being seriously injured.

Don't be an arsonist, be a team player.

www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk

MORE
01227 254444

Safeguarding Training Dates...

SSCB Safeguarding Children & E-Safety

Course Outline - A half day workshop (09.30-12.30), which highlights the risks associated with the use of technologies.

Training Dates
Wednesday 29 June 2011 @ Kingston Centre, Stafford
Tuesday 04 October 2011 @ Human Resource Centre, Stafford
Wednesday 12 October 2011 @ Kingston Centre, Stafford
Thursday 20 October 2011 @ Burton Resource Centre, Burton

For further information please go to the SSCB training catalogue
www.staffsscb.org.uk/professionals/Inter-Agencytraining/

If you are interested in attending, please complete a nomination form
www.staffsscb.org.uk/professionals/Inter-Agencytraining/nomination/
and send it to your link manager for signature.

You may be charged for this course, please go to
<http://www.staffsscb.org.uk/professionals/Inter-Agencytraining/costs/>



Family Link Update...

Support Groups

The Family Link Support Groups continue to go from strength to strength with insightful meetings planned for the rest of 2011. The recent South Support Group was attended by Andrea Harding an advocate from an POHWER, an Independent Advocacy Service, with discussion around assisting people with making complaints, and advocacy.

The forthcoming North Support Group sees a visit from Assistive Technology, to talk about equipment and aids which can be of use as carers for disabled children.

The date for this meeting is the 25th May 2011 from 7pm-9pm, held at Sandyford Community Fire Station.

Summer Farm Trip

After the hugely successful Family Link Trip to the farm last year it seems only right that we don our wellies once more and visit the animals at Ash End House Farm in Tamworth. With experienced staff on hand to guide the children and families around the stables, and ample opportunity for the children to touch, stroke and even hold a newborn chick this really is a lovely day out for all of the family.

The Family Link Trip to the Farm is happening on 25th June 2011, so look out for the photo's in the next edition!

Continued overleaf...

Link up with Family Link

As Ann and Bill's own children started to become more independent, they started to feel that they had more to give. So, when their son got married and their daughter flew the nest to University, they went to www.care4child.org and then picked up the phone to Staffordshire County Council.

"We joined the Family Link Team in November 2009 after we were told that more carers were desperately needed to give weekend breaks to children with learning or physical disabilities", said Ann. "We're just an ordinary family with a weekend a month spare. We love giving the children, and their parents, a break. It gives them a chance to recharge their batteries, meet new people, try new things and be that little bit more independent.

For us, it's so rewarding to give the children the opportunity to relax and enjoy themselves. We really feel we're making a difference. Each carer is trained and supported by the County Council's 'Outstanding' fostering service. We didn't have any particular experience of looking after children with learning or physical disabilities. The assessment was fine though and we felt fully supported all the way through the training process", said Bill. "Helen, our link worker, is always at the end of the phone to help us whenever we need support or advice. There's also a support group of other carers that we can go to if we want to, if we feel we need some more support."

Ann and Bill had a child placed with them soon after being assessed, and are now looking after *Steven, who

has learning difficulties. "We don't do anything out of the ordinary", said Bill. "We walk the dog, go bowling, go shopping, go out to eat or just stay at home and play games. We try to fit the weekend around what Steven wants to do, but also around what experiences will help him. Watching his confidence grow and seeing him relax in our company, is just priceless. He especially enjoys playing with our daughter on the games console when she's home from Uni. He has even chosen his own goldfish to go in the garden pond and has a really special love for our dog Arti. It's just like *Steven is a member of the family and it feels like he has always been with us."

Ann and Bill are calling on anyone with time to care to get in touch with Staffordshire County Council's fostering service to see if it's something they would like to do.

"We'd encourage anyone who has thought of fostering, but is perhaps worried about fitting it in with a full time job, to speak to the Family Link Team. You'll be giving a child and their family such desperately needed support and the opportunity to enjoy a weekend just for them. At the same time you will be fully supported by your very own link worker and given free training if you feel you need or want it. We also get a small allowance to help out."

We are looking for couples, families and single people to provide a regular break for a disabled child. Helping a child with a disability can be both rewarding and fun. By involving the child in your community or at home will give the child the opportunity to gain new experiences and will also give their family a break.

If you think you, or someone you know, would be interested in becoming a Family Link carer please call 0800 169 2061.

*Name changed for confidentiality purposes.



The recent launch of the Staffordshire Think 2 Project once again brings childcare and health provision together for local 2 year olds.

Cannock Chase Children's Centre effectively led the way in offering home play sessions accompanied by ten hours quality childcare to widen children's early experiences.

Relationships have developed and grown with local Health Visitors and staff from early years settings. Through our work alongside local Health Visitors we were able to make sure that all eligible families were identified to take part in the project. They were then able to choose from a range of high quality early years settings to access the ten hours childcare. In addition, families were offered exciting play sessions in the home, based upon the Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP) model. Play sessions are planned to meet the needs of individual children and to support parents in making the most of everyday routines.

As a result of the project many parents have benefitted from support and advice, being signposted to other services when needed.

In March 2011 we celebrated the successes of the project through a family day out to Twin Lakes Adventure Park. During the trip we were able to ask families lots of questions about their experiences of the project. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and therefore we look forward to continuing this success as the project is once again launched.

Cannock Chase Children's Centre believes that through this dedicated work with partners and parents we are truly able to offer children the best possible start in life.



Sophie and her mummy enjoy a PEEP at home session

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Tamworth Young Persons' Wellbeing Service...

Tamworth Young Persons' Wellbeing Service (TYPWS) was launched in October, 2010. The service is a joint initiative funded by Tamworth Borough Council and provided by Barnardo's SMART.

We are a friendly, non-judgemental and confidential service, dedicated to helping young people to overcome emotional hardship such as bereavement, separation, isolation, anxiety, stress, domestic violence. We offer to provide vital support at an early stage to limit the risk of ill mental health in later years and prevent intervention by specialist health teams i.e. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)/Adult Mental Health Services. TYPWS interventions include full assessment, one to one therapeutic sessions, liaison with parents/school and targeted intervention for specific issues as well as Common Assessment Framework (CAF) lead if required.

Outcomes for young people:

- Improved school attendance
- Positive choices/relationships
- Aspirations/looking to the future
- Improved emotional resilience
- Improved confidence/self esteem
- Improved family/school communication

Case Study (names have been changed to ensure the young person remains anonymous):

Billy 9 yrs old referred through school due to displaying emotional distress, crying in school, becoming withdrawn, strained relationships with Mom and bedwetting.

Agencies involved:

- CAFCASS (Child and Family Court Advisory and Support Service)
- CAMHS
- Pastoral Care in School
- Pathways (Domestic Violence Agency)
- Universal Services

Intervention:

- One to One therapeutic work
- Multi Agency Meetings
- Access support for mom
- Respite holiday for Billy

Outcome for Billy:

- Bedwetting stopped
- Improved concentration/attendance at school
- Improved confidence/increased self esteem
- Billy said "better relationship with mom" and mom confirms this.
- CAFCASS, CAMHS, Pathways no longer involved
- Making positive choices with friends

For further information please contact:

Lynne Smith

on 01827 286643

or lynne.smith@barnardo's.org.uk



BELIEVE IN CHILDREN

New online prospectus launched...

Young people will find it easier than ever to get online careers and education advice in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

The 'Way2Go' online prospectus showcases courses, careers advice, events and college open days for young people aged 14-19. Its aim is to help them find the most appropriate course of study from the thousands of opportunities on offer from schools, colleges and other training providers.

Councillor Liz Staples, Cabinet Member for Schools Education and Skills said: "The revamped and upgraded prospectus gives the most up to date information to young people, showing them exactly what is available in terms of courses and places to study. It's essential that young people are given all of the options available so they can take the path that is right for them, whether it is university, college or jobs and training. It is part of our commitment to support young people and to create a highly-skilled workforce of the future."

Sean Clarke, Local Area Prospectus Manager for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, explains: "This improves the services by allowing users to apply directly through the system for courses which they had researched and identified while using it. This website also has a fresh look and feel, and is very user-friendly."

Schools, colleges and training providers have been offered training and are being assisted in keeping their course listings on the system up-to-date. The searchable Prospectus is available for all now, whilst the online application process is currently being trialled in preparation for use in September.



For further information log onto: <http://www.way2go.me.uk>

The Acorn...

The articles contained within this publication are the responsibility of the original author; due to their nature the Staffordshire Children's Trust and its partner organisations accepts no responsibility for their accuracy or content. If you need further information about a particular article, then please contact staffordshirechildrenstrust@staffordshire.gov.uk

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If you need a copy of this information in large print, Braille, audio tape/disc, British Sign Language or another language, on cassette or disk, please contact www.staffordshirechildrenstrust.org.uk or call 01785 277116.

If you have any comments or feedback or would like to submit an article for the next edition of the Acorn please contact:
www.staffordshirechildrenstrust.org.uk or call 01785 277116.