



Social Services News

Information Bulletin from the Social Services Department

● Volume 24 – July 2005 ●

Children's Fund gets the 'Kidz Views'



The Children's Fund is a national programme funded by the government. It provides local services to improve the lives of children and young people aged between 5 and 13.

The Children's Fund in Wigan was developed in April 2003, and funds 30 projects around the borough. One of the main aims of the Fund is to involve children and young people in the design and delivery of its services, and in achieving the five outcomes set out in the recent government policy 'Every Child Matters':

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

Earlier this year, Wigan Children's Fund launched a Young Reporters Group, as a creative way of involving young

people and encouraging them to debate and research issues relating to the five outcomes. Through being part of the group, the young people have also been able to develop their ability to work as part of a team, gain confidence and self-esteem, learn new skills and make lots of new friends.

Eleven children were initially invited to be part of the group. They designed a logo for their newsletter – called '**Kidz Views**' – planned the content, and decided who would be responsible for the features. And because the newsletter is planned, designed and written by young people themselves, not only do they have a good idea of the kinds of things other young people might want to read about, they also relate to the issues which may affect other young people in the borough.

Since their first meeting in the Spring, the young reporters have been out and about interviewing Wigan Council staff and young people involved in various Children's Fund projects. The interviews so far have been about road safety (which links to the outcome 'stay safe') and the recent controversy surrounding school dinners needing to be healthier (which links to the outcome 'be healthy').

Issue 2 looks at bullying, and the young reporters have created a photo-story of a

young boy who was being bullied, and showing how he dealt with it. There's also 10 top tips for young people to follow if they ever become a victim of bullying.

'Kids Corner' gives younger children who are not reporters on the group the chance to have their say on issues which may affect them, and on children's rights.

All the young people who took part in the group had the chance to say what they thought about it in a video diary they produced. Comments included:

- *"I like being involved in the group because the interviews we do are important, and I get to learn new stuff and how to co-operate with different people."*
- *"I like it, I just really enjoy it."*
- *"I come then I'm not sat at home being bored, I guess it's just fun to do."*
- *"I'm good at English, but at school I don't get picked to do magazines or anything like that, so it's alright that I get to do that here."*

Now the group has developed, the aim is for the young people already involved to take more control over it and try to recruit other young people from Children's Fund projects.

L.& L. Superstars – Dancing their way to success!

L.& L. Superstars is a community voluntary dance group, funded by the Children's Fund, based in Tyldesley. The group provides dance opportunities within a fun environment for young people aged between 5 and 16.

The group started in 2003, and since then the young people involved have gone

from strength to strength. Their dedication, commitment and hard work is truly admirable and has begun to really pay off. During the last 12 months, they've been invited to perform at a number of venues within the North West, such as The Globe Theatre in Blackpool, Bolton Albert Hall, and the Gracie Fields Theatre in Rochdale.



More recently in June, L.& L. Superstars were the only group to represent Wigan at the Dance Showcase as part of Greater Manchester Youth Games. Their performance was fantastic and they received lots of positive feedback from spectators and other dance groups.

Their dance teachers and staff at Wigan Children's Fund are extremely proud of the young people involved.

Enquiries:

For information about Wigan Children's Fund and the projects running in the borough, contact:

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Wigan Children's Fund
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Managing complaints positively

Over 50 managers and senior social work staff attended two half-day training courses at Robin Park in mid June. The aim – to share experiences and develop strategies for dealing positively with complaints we receive from our customers.

The course was run by staff from the department's Customer Relations Unit, and explored a wide range of complaints against services and staff. What was clear from the training was that in general there is a very positive attitude within our department to dealing with complaints effectively at an early stage. Complaints inform our practice, and the message from Customer Relations – *'Raising Standards, Reducing Complaints'* – was loud and clear.

Feedback from participants was excellent, with 100% agreeing that the course objectives were met. There have also been a number of requests to repeat the course for other staff, so further sessions are planned later in the year.

Enquiries to:

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Co-ordinators
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News in brief

Staff from our **New Lodge Day Centre** would like to pass on their thanks to police officers at Atherton Police Station for all their help and support throughout a difficult couple of months.

The centre in Mealhouse Lane, Atherton is for older people and adults with physical disabilities. During March and April, a group of youths were determined to break every window in the building.

Police officers and support staff turned the spotlight on the problem, and eventually stopped most of the vandalism. And on St. George's Day, police officers they sent a huge bouquet of flowers to cheer everyone up at the centre. Thanks again from everyone at New Lodge.



Atherton Resource Centre offers a range of services to children in need and their families. Staff there have been building links with a health development worker, and during National Smile Week organised a presentation about healthy teeth to the 4-11s group.

They've also organised a parenting course called 'Coping with Kids', which started at the beginning of June and which will run for six weeks. It's a course for getting together with other parents and carers, to share ideas and find out how best to cope with kids. Places are free and there's a crèche provided. The course is on Wednesdays from 10am to 12 noon.

For further details, phone 883248.

SOC-ing it to them!

Over 20 members of staff represented Wigan Social Services at the SOCNOW recruitment event at Manchester Town Hall on 9 June. The event is a regional recruitment roadshow, endorsed by the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) North West, in association with *Community Care* magazine.

The aim of the event is to promote social care as a good career opportunity across the North West, which is essential if we are to tackle head-on the national shortage of social care staff.

Over 700 visitors attended the event.

Wigan's stand was very popular, with over 200 people registering their interest in working for us. Many of these were interested in specific social work vacancies, and some were looking to find out about other vacancies in the department. There was also some interest in our temporary work register, from people wishing to gain valuable work experience in social care.

Overall, the event was a great way for us to promote the range of benefits that come with working for Wigan Social Services, such as:

- a competitive salary and annual leave entitlement

- an excellent pension scheme
- flexible, family-friendly working
- excellent career prospects
- a range of training and development opportunities.

Feedback from other exhibitors at the event on the Wigan stand was very positive, including comments that the stand was "*well represented by different groups of social services' staff, resulting in a professional and informative image*".

From our point of view, the day itself was a huge success in terms of generating interest. The commitment and enthusiasm of our staff was superb, but it could also have been our very trendy burgundy t-shirts, which certainly got us noticed! We must also thank staff from the 5-Boroughs Partnership NHS Trust, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, and Youth Offending Team who also gave up their valuable time to work with us on the day.



Enquiries to:

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Website:

www.wiganmbc.gov.uk/pub/socs/careers.htm

A world of opportunities

Following on from the success of SOCNOW, we also held events at Robin Park on 16 and 17 June, for young people aged 17-24 who are interested in a career in social care, but unsure if they have the qualifications they need.

The **Apprenticeship Cadet Scheme** is run by our Staff Development and Training Section, in conjunction with City College Manchester. It's an alternative to college, for young people who want a career in social care, but want to get some practical experience first.

The course is full-time and runs for 18 months. It's designed to give people a taste of what it's like to work with adults in social care, and gives them a route to a range of possible careers. There's four days a week practical 'hands-on' experience working in any of our centres for older people, people with a learning disability or physical disability, or within mental health services. Then there's one day a week at college, to get the theoretical knowledge needed.

The course is hard work but very rewarding. Participants are working to achieve an NVQ Level 2 with Key Skills and a Technical Certificate. They will also get a grant of £90 per week. Interviews are being held in early September, so it's not too late to apply. The scheme starts late October.

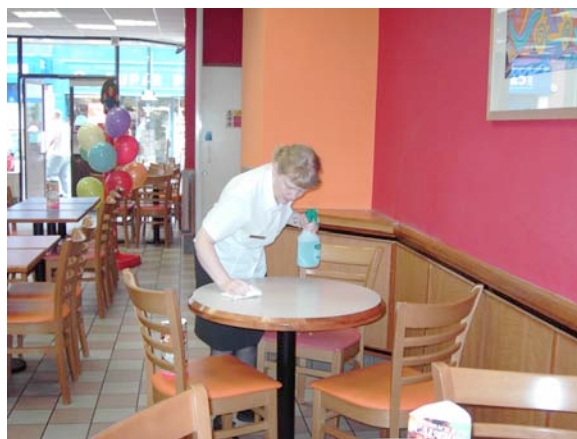
Enquiries to:

Sheila Gallagher – Service Manager
Phone: 833484
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Or, contact City College Manchester on 0161 614 8178.

Caroline's hard work pays off

Caroline Travis works at McDonalds in Leigh as a dining area hostess. She's been there since February 2005, thanks to help from staff at our Supported Employment Service.



It's another success story for the Supported Employment Service, who work with local employers to find paid work for people with mental health problems, acquired brain injuries, or disabilities – learning, physical or sensory.

Caroline is 36 years old and lives with her mum and brother in Lowton. She works 16 hours a week, including Saturdays and Sundays, and has just received the employee of the month award for May.

Paul Brittlend-Jones, manager of McDonalds in Leigh said:

"Caroline is a great worker and she's done really well since she started – so well, that she got employee of the month for May."

Caroline said:

"I really enjoy working at McDonalds and meeting different people every week. I also enjoy helping the customers when they need help and working with the children."

The Supported Employment Service helps people to enjoy their independence. Staff also support employers by:

- arranging monitoring visits with the manager and employee to discuss with them how things are working out
- offering general advice, and
- sorting out any problems.

Enquiries to:

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Employment Training Advisor
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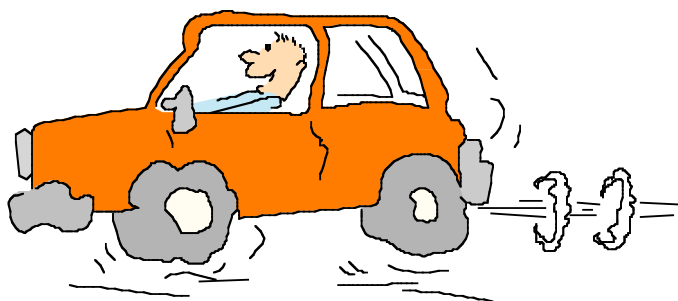
Bid success

One Vision is a group of people who have learning disabilities and who are supported by staff from Social Services and Wigan and Leigh College. They've just found out they have been successful in their bid for money from the Big Lottery Fund to the tune of £156,729.

The group write and star in their own short films. The money means they can now advertise for two workers for the next three years, so that the project can run full-time, five days a week.

Enquiries to:

Ann Harvey
Community Development Manager
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Volunteer drivers urgently needed

Interested in working with children and young people, but don't know where to start...?

Can you offer some spare time each week?

Becoming a volunteer driver could be your first step on the ladder.

Wigan Children's Fund are offering a full training package, covering:

- working with children and young people
- health and safety
- drugs and alcohol awareness
- child protection
- first aid
- advanced driving skills (optional)
- playwork

All our volunteers are reimbursed for their expenses. For more information, contact Jan Lee on 776513.

All applications are subject to checks by the Criminal Records Bureau.



Relaunch of service

The successful recruitment of new volunteers means that Wigan can now fulfil its duty to provide **'Independent Visitors'** as directed by the Children Act 1989. Under the Act, local authorities are required to appoint independent visitors for children and young people looked after (in care), who have little or no contact with their families.

For various reasons, some children and young people looked after can lose touch with parents and families. This can lead to them feeling isolated and lonely, despite the efforts of their carers and social workers. The launch of the independent visitors scheme now provides volunteers for these children, to enable them to have an interested adult in their lives. Supporting children, helping them to join in activities, befriending and just talking things over with them can all prove invaluable to a child's day-to-day life.

Our independent visitors are people who give up their time to help and support children. They are selected for their special skills and qualities, and their commitment to make a positive difference in a child's life. They receive induction and ongoing training and support.

Now the scheme has been relaunched, we are now actively promoting it throughout the department, and welcome referrals from children and young people themselves, their social workers and carers.

Enquiries to:

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Complaints and Quality Standards
Co-ordinator, Customer Relations Unit
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Think Ahead

Each year, we host a series of events during Alzheimer's Awareness Week – this year's events ran from 4-10 July. The theme was **'Think Ahead'** and was aimed at younger people with Dementia.

The events ranged from open days, coffee mornings and presentations at our day centres for people with mental health problems, to a Summer Fair at Shevington Methodist Church Hall on 9 July.

The Alzheimer's Society was formed back in 1979 and celebrated its 25th anniversary last September. It supports carers and anyone who is experiencing memory loss.

The Social Services Department has worked closely with the Society for many years, and has helped set up a local branch in the borough. It's continued to grow from strength to strength – a new website and newsletter are planned for the near future.

There are also now three support groups in the area:

- **Wigan Carers Support Group** –
Sunshine House Day Centre, Scholes.
Meet the first Thursday in each month, from 6.30pm to 8pm.
- **Leigh Carers Support Group** –
Pensioners Link, Church Street, Leigh.
Meet the first Friday in each month, from 2pm to 4pm.
- **Shevington Carers Support Group** –
Golden Days Garden Centre.
Meet for lunch at 1pm on the second Wednesday in each month.

Wigan branch of the Society has a dedicated committee of nine members from varied backgrounds, who have both professional and first hand experience of caring for people with Dementia. They welcome new ideas and new members.

Enquiries to:

Diane Ralph
Branch Secretary
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Another victory for Wigan at the JJB!

We often hear the term 'inclusion' and how important it is to help people have a sense of belonging in order to combat isolation and loneliness.

Well, there are few better ways to promote inclusion than football, which helps people to maintain a healthy body and mind. For the past 18 months, staff from the 5-Boroughs Partnership NHS Trust (who work jointly with Social Services), have developed a 6-a-side football event for mentally disordered offenders (MDO).

The event runs every Wednesday afternoon between 2 and 3pm at the JJB Stadium. It's been organised by Steve Marshall and Neil Lucas, support workers in the MDO team.

The team competes against other mental health teams in the North West, and hot on the heels of Latics' recent success they recently won their first ever major tournament – The Bertie Appeal Charity Football Tournament in aid of the Royal Albert Edward Infirmary in Wigan.

Steve Marshall said:

"The team is made up entirely of people who use mental health services in the borough. Their hard work, determination and commitment has certainly paid off. I'm absolutely chuffed to bits for them."

The team would love to hear from anyone who uses mental health services and would like to get involved.

Enquiries to:

Steve Marshall
Support Worker, MDO Team
Phone: 885860
E-mail: s.marshall2@wiganmbc.gov.uk

Help for people who receive Direct Payments

In May, our Direct Payments Team and Training Section organised a special workshop for people who receive Direct Payments from the department, their families and personal assistants (carers).

Direct Payments give people the choice of receiving cash payments to buy their care services, following an assessment by a social worker. They give them choice over who provides the care and at times to suit them.

The aim of the day was to:

- give people who receive the service an overview of the scheme, and the chance to meet with others in similar situations
- talk about employment issues, and
- feed back about a research project that has been taking place in Wigan.

There was also a short quiz, and two people spoke about their own personal experiences of using the scheme.

All in all, it was a really successful day. One person even described it as one of the most informative days they had ever been to!

Enquiries to:

Janette Cunliffe

Direct Payments Manager

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Look what's cooking!

Thanks to the NHS, over 55,000 hot meals are delivered to residents in the borough every year, with a further eight luncheon clubs receiving 13,000 as well.

The NHS have a contract with the Social Services Department to cook hot meals for

people who use our Community Meals Service. And to celebrate 10 years of providing meals, a series of special luncheons were 'cooked-up' at the end of June. Children from local primary schools dined with regulars at luncheon clubs in Scholes, Pemberton, Winstanley, Newtown and Mosley Common. They tucked into melon or soup, braised steak in mushroom sauce with a selection of vegetables, and trifle or apple crisp. Those people who have a hot meal delivered didn't miss out either – they had this special lunch at home instead.



The Mayor, Cllr. Brian Jarvis, joins in the celebrations at The Lindale Luncheon Club in Mosley Common

On weekdays, hot meals are delivered to people in the Tyldesley, Atherton and Ashton areas, while at weekends the services goes borough-wide. The Community Meals Service provides hot and frozen meals (which can be reheated in an oven or microwave) for people who are housebound or who find it difficult to cook for themselves. To arrange for an assessment to receive the service, phone our Central Duty Team on 828777.

Enquiries to:

Kathy Rudd

Catering Services Facilitator

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PCMHT explained...

The Primary Child Mental Health Team (PCMHT) is a group of staff made up of professionals from Education, Social Services and the Health Authority.

The service is based in Ince and offers advice, training and support to professionals who work with pre-school and primary school children in the borough, for example: doctors, social workers, family centre workers, school nurses, teachers, health visitors, education welfare officers, and the voluntary sector.

Some examples of difficulties children may experience include:

- anxiety
- low mood / self-esteem
- early onset behavioural difficulties
- temper tantrums
- separation/attachment problems
- sleeping problems
- feeding difficulties
- Enuresis (wetting)
- Encopresis (soiling)
- Bullying
- Loss and bereavement

One of the factors that can have a significant impact on the welfare of children is the affect of domestic violence. The team recently provided a training course at Pemberton Clinic to raise awareness amongst community nursery nurses across the borough.

Enquiries to:

Kieran Kennedy
Primary Child Mental Health Team
Phone: 775434
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Developing HIV/AIDS services

Lee Matthews is a newly appointed social worker with our Physical Disability Team in Leigh. Part of his role is to develop services for people in the borough living with HIV and AIDS.

He's currently working with a range of service providers from both the health and voluntary sectors to find out what support is currently available in the borough. His aim is to identify gaps in services and find ways of filling those gaps.

Lee is keen to hear from people who use services who would like to discuss issues with him, or from people who have good practice to share with him. He's also keen to hear from anyone who would like advice about services currently available.

Contact:

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Social worker, Physical Disabilities Team
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