



Page 3
Bath show us
how to party!



Page 5
Sara's dream
trip to meet
Mickey



Page 6
What to do if
you have an
accident at work

Light at the end of the tunnel!

This spring we are hosting four free seminars for parents with children who have learning difficulties aged 14-19.

At the beginning of February we had the first event in Derby. Thirty parents from Derby and the surrounding area met to hear about good practice and to share their experiences of this potentially difficult time.

Chaired by Kevin Walters, a parent and a member of our board, this day included presentations from Cally Ward, a parent whose own son has been through a number of transitions, and Kevin Stanner, a young person talking about his own real life experiences of transition. The afternoon



Cally Ward shares her experiences

Transition? How to find your way through

session was dedicated to group discussions, where the parents talked about what is and isn't working locally, and what they could do as a result of the day. Kate Jackson, our Transition Development Manager said:

"Having the right information, at the right time, is especially important for parents who are about to support their son or daughter through the transition process. We discovered that this is an area that still needs improving. Even though there is a vast amount of information to hand, knowing where to get the support or information from in the first place is still a major issue for most families. I think this day was a starting point for many families and hopefully many went away feeling empowered about the possibilities for their son or daughter after they leave school or college."

One of the parents commented:

"Meeting the Dimensions team gave me light at the end of the tunnel"

continued overleaf...

...cont from page 1.

We are planning a **2nd 'Lost in Transition?' Conference in November 2008** which will draw from the findings of these four seminars as well as sharing the findings from our new 'A Home of my Own' research.



The research is a long term (2-3 year) project which began in January 2008. We are recruiting young people aged between 19 and 30, both from within Dimensions and outside the organisation, who have moved into their own home and have had a positive experience doing so. Our aim is to find out how person centred planning, individualised budgets and direct payments have made a positive difference to these young people's lives in finding a home of their own. Throughout Spring 2008, we will be interviewing all 20 young people and their parents or support workers to find out their stories. These findings will then be written up in an easy read format and presented at the conference.

Clive's Story

'Clive's Story – Keeping it Personal' is a film about Clive, one of the people we support in Wokingham. The film takes us through Clive's experience of the health and social care system over the last 30 years.



Clive went into the local mental health hospital in 1970. After a number of moves – none of which he wanted – he finally left the healthcare system 20 years later. This is when we came into contact with Clive. He lived in a registered care home which he describes as 'alright', but he was still living with people he did not like.

It took 10 years for Clive to achieve his dream: his own rented house. From there Clive has become independent – and in his own words, 'happy'. This year he has started his own handyman business.

It's an inspiring story – a real example of someone who has been given the opportunity to direct their own support and has achieved real change for themselves. You can watch Clive's story on our website at www.dimensions-uk.org/clivesstory.

Adepta to join Dimensions

We are currently talking to an organisation called **Adepta**, who want to join the Dimensions group. **Adepta are a charity that also support people with learning difficulties. In fact, they support over 700 people with learning difficulties, and most of their services are in areas where we do not have services – e.g. in and around London and some of the Home Counties north of London.**



We hope that, by working together, we could share our expertise and skills to improve the services we provide to the people we support – for example, Adepta are known for their autism expertise, which we would hope to use to support and improve our autism services.

We would also hope that being a bigger organisation would give us more financial stability in the long term. Most of you know that budgets are being cut in many local authorities – if we became bigger, there would be more money coming into our organisation. This means we would have more money available to support regions who are having to overspend, making sure that the services we provide to the people we support in those regions are not affected.

We're still at the talking stage with all this at the moment, but if we do decide to go ahead, we think Adepta would join the group in Autumn this year. However, be assured that, at this early stage, we don't think Adepta joining the group will have any impact on the services we currently provide to the people we support – it'll be pretty much business as usual.

We will let you know how the talks progress. In the meantime, if you want to find out more about Adepta, their website address is: www.adepta.org.uk

Here are some snaps from the celebration events from the past year...



Ceri Meloy, Regional Director for **Cardiff**, with the competition winners at their celebration Ball in January. Five people won £100 to go towards a dream experience.



Mamma Mia...what a party! - The **East Midlands** region had a 70's party at their monthly nightclub for people with learning difficulties. The dancing queens shimmied all night to a brilliant Abba tribute band.

Wokingham and Bracknell had a 'Red Coats and Blue Suede Shoes' night. Everyone loved the entertainment - and you could see this by the amount of people on the dancefloor! The event was a huge



Over 600 people came to the **South West's** fantastic 'Festival of Fun' at Bath Racecourse. There was a live music tent, a snoozelum area, face painting, music and art therapy, a bouncy castle and lots more!



South Yorkshire had a great presentation evening about dreams and successes of the people we support in the region. Tony, or should we say Superman, won the fancy dress competition!



Here is the casino at **Norfolk's** celebration.



Peter's painting is an inspiration

Every year we exhibit at the National Social Services conference. At the most recent event we ran a raffle for the delegates and bought a painting from artist Peter Jones, one of the people we support in the North East, as the prize.



Peter went to present his painting to the winner, Cllr Susan Woodward, Cabinet Member for Older People and Healthier Communities, in person. Cllr Woodward said:

"I am so pleased that

Peter made the journey to present the prize to me. It presented a great opportunity to meet this talented man in person - his accomplishments are an example to others to show what can be achieved."

Accessible website

We're pleased to announce that our new accessible website is up and running! The site aims to help people with learning disabilities to find out more about us and what we do.

It's easy to navigate and is made up of video clips of people we support in the East Midlands region at work, at home, and out on the town. One of the highlights is the Derby disco video, although all the clips are great.

The picture above shows Wayne from Coventry.

He is one of the people we support who features in the website. He works as a paper seller for the Coventry Telegraph.



Go to our homepage www.dimensions-uk.org and follow the links.

Theale get their running shoes on



On Sunday 2nd March 2008, 36 staff and people we support from W.Berks, Wokingham and Bracknell took part in the Reading Half Marathon and the Green Park Challenge, a 2.8 km run which is open to everyone, from serious athletes to complete beginners wanting to have fun, get fit and raise money for charity all at the same time.

Many others volunteered to hand out medals and Lucozade drinks to the thirsty athletes. Tina Wilson from Learning and Development, who organised our participation in this event said:

"For me it is a clear indicator that there is nothing to stop anyone 'having a go', I would actively encourage everyone to take part in the sporting events locally to you. Contact the organisers if you have any specific needs - they are usually more than willing to oblige, I can guarantee you will have a brilliant time".



Strictly come dancing - Friday Night project style!

The brilliant Friday Night Project, a social club for people with learning difficulties in Wokingham and Bracknell, recently received some well-deserved recognition. It has been awarded the September Award from Wokingham Borough Council. The award was presented by the Mayor of Wokingham on 29th February.

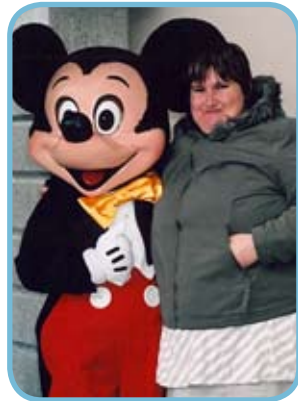
Nina flying high



Nina with her team and family before her dream flight

The dreams competition is nearly complete - forty five dreams have come true! You can read about all of the dreams, and see the pictures at www.dimensions-uk.org/dreams.

The project has inspired many regions to begin work on realising the dreams which weren't pulled out of the hat. In the North East they will be sharing the news about lots of people's dreams at their celebration day in March, and in the North Central region, one of the people we support will soon be going for a birthday limosene ride.



Jonathon Dj-ing and Michelle with Mickey at Disney

Praise for the sparkling cleaners!

With help from support worker Gemma Weatherill, people we support in the North Central region have started a new cleaning company called 'Sparkling Clean'.

The Sparkling Clean team have been busy working in offices and houses across Wakefield, and it seems like they have been scrubbing them up a treat! Customers have told us *'My bath is the cleanest it's ever been'* and *'having a cleaner has really made a difference'*. Louise from Ossett works for two hours a week with Sparkling Clean,

both in the Wakefield Office and for a customer in Sandal. She is really enjoying her job. David from Wakefield (pictured below) works for the team on a Friday, and has now started to make his own way there, using the bus. David was having some problems remembering what the different products were for, so now he has pictures on the different bottles so he knows exactly which one to use. David is really proud of his new job and after work he always heads into town to spend his hard earned wages!



Green fingers in Worcester

The Worcester region have just been allocated their own allotment, which will be developed and used by the people we support.

Last weekend a group of staff and people we support started preparations for the growing season...



Worcester have also received a fantastic gift. Aiden, one of the people we support in the region, has a brother who is part of a bikers gang who have kindly donated them £3,750! Below are photos of the cheque being presented to Lesley Goodwin who manages Aiden's service, and Aiden with his Mom on the night of the presentation.



Health and Safety

We're pleased to announce the following new staff benefit – a rehabilitation scheme that helps with medical treatment if you have an accident at work.

Q. What should I do if I have an accident at work?

A. Contact the Health and Safety team and they will help you join the new scheme.

What is it?

- If you have an accident at work that has to be reported (for example: a back injury which means you are off work for more than 3 days) then you may be entitled to free medical treatment.

How do I use the scheme?

- Once the Health and Safety team are made aware of the accident (and they agree that this is a reportable accident), they will contact the scheme on your behalf.
- The Occupational Health Adviser for the scheme will then contact you directly and make the necessary arrangements for medical treatment.
- S/he will contact you on a regular basis and liaise with the relevant departments (i.e. physiotherapists, GP etc.) on your behalf.

What are the benefits of the scheme?

- Constant liaison with an Occupational Health Adviser
- Quick treatment - often within 7 days of notification to the Occupational Health Adviser
- Quicker recovery as you don't have to wait for NHS treatment
- A quicker return to work



HR – Perkz

HR have been doing a great job of getting us lots of staff benefits over the past year. One person who has

really made the most of them is Andy George - he managed

to save £1000 using our Staff Discounts Book! Another staff member who has done well is Daniel Frater from the West Midlands, winning tickets for Alton Towers.

As well as the 'Staff Discounts for you!' book, we are also a member of PERKZ .



What is Perkz? This is a website which gives you access to discounts at lots of different shops and holiday companies.

How do I register? Go to www.perkz.com and register using the company code DIMENSIONS.

Remember

We recently lost our corporate discount with Tussauds because not enough people were using it. Luckily Tussauds is included in Perkz offers, but we need to remember that if we don't use these discounts, we'll lose them!



Daniel receives his prize Alton Towers tickets

C3 Management Development Programme hits the road running....

The C3 Management Development programme is underway. Over 180 of Dimensions First Line Managers are signed up to attend the 10 month programme which is designed to help them to gain Competence, Confidence and build the Capacity to manage their individual services effectively.

Trainers Louise Trethowan and Gaynor Hayward are leading the monthly workshops in venues across the country. They will be joined by members of Human Resources and the Finance team where further specific expertise is required.

Continued from previous page...

The initial C3 workshops have been very well received and the managers are bringing a wealth of experience and information that will be shared over the coming months. The trainers have given a commitment to each group to feed back organisational information to senior managers so that we can have Dimensions in the best place to meet future challenges.

Feedback has been very positive, one person said *"I have learnt more in 2 days than I have in the last six months"*

If you'd like to know more about the C3 programme visit the Learning & Development intranet site and click into the C3 tab.



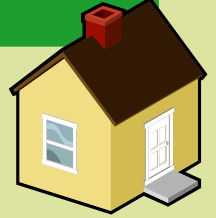
Unlocking
your
potential

Sheffield gives a true Yorkshire welcome to the Finance team

In January, Dave Fidler and Mark Beaven from the Theale Finance team visited all the services in Sheffield. The aim was to look at how we can reduce the amount of cash that is used both for business purposes (petty cash) and by the people we support. A questionnaire was used to collect information and this will make it easier to present the findings to Lisa Watchorn, the Regional Director.

The visits were welcomed by the managers, as it provided them with an opportunity to show Dave and Mark what running a service is really like and what problems are faced every day. Dave commented, *"The review has shown that our teams put a lot of time and energy into ensuring that money is well spent and well managed, but it has also shown that there are ways to reduce the amount of cash in circulation. We were made to feel most welcome by the support teams and we are still on a diet following all of the buns and cakes we were offered!"*

Housing and maintenance Housing disposal



As you may know, the Housing department has been busy disposing of all our homes. Here is an update about the progress so far...

- Over the past few years, we have been transferring homes to other Housing Associations in Scotland, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Berkshire, Essex, Surrey, Sussex, Norfolk and Suffolk.
- We aim to transfer all our homes in Lancashire and South Cumbria, before the end of year.
- All our remaining housing is currently open to offers from Housing Associations. Hopefully we will have offers for all our homes in the very near future and our aim is to transfer all of these by July 2009.

Refurbishment

We have successfully completed the external decoration on around 80 of our homes and a number of internal decorations are in process and or completed. We have also refurbished many kitchens and bathrooms and a number of homes have benefited from new boilers. All these works are managed by the maintenance team, to keep overheads low and make sure we get value for money.

Our Housing Management staff continue to support our agents nationwide and some operational teams have benefited from their expertise on management, budget and tenancy issues. During the year we have also advised on several development projects that some operational teams are involved in and a host of documents concerning leases, management agreements, tenancies, licences and service level agreements.

For further information on any of the above contact one of the housing staff.

Important changes to our maintenance company

Atkins recently decided to withdraw their services for Housing Associations so we are now using a new company called Astraline.

in terview



Leanne Geritz must be one of the best known people in our services in the North East! As the regional Person Centred Planning Facilitator she was initially seconded for 6 months, but has now spent the last 15 months supporting people to create their own Person Centred Plans.

Why are Person Centred Plans (PCP's) so important?

PCP's enable people we support to achieve their dreams, goals and aspirations - however big or small those might be. It gives people we support an opportunity to talk about issues that are important to them, in a way that gives them empowerment over their lives. It also gives the important and key people in a person's life the opportunity to work together to help achieve the goals and dreams that are set.

Whose PCP have you enjoyed making the most?

No one PCP sticks out as being the most enjoyable, as I have found that each PCP I have carried out has been so varied and different. If you spend time getting to know individuals you can then make the PCP very

meaningful - rather than it just being another document in a file (unless that is what they want!). By doing this no one PCP is the same.

What kind of changes do you see in peoples lives once they have a PCP in place?

Dreams and goals are achieved and worked towards at a pace that is good for them. People who are important to the person sign up to helping the individual. Some examples of this are gaining jobs, holidays, learning a new skill or maintaining things already in place in their lives.

Do you have any advice for other people doing the same job?

I think it is hard to advise others doing the same job, as being a PCP facilitator can be very diverse. I personally find the job very rewarding, I get to build strong relationships and work closely with people we support. I like the fact that I have to 'think outside the box' and change the way I work with each individual. No one day is the same! You need to be able to keep the PCP very person orientated, and have the ability to redirect the circle of support if needed.



New people, and places

- Jackie Fletcher has recently become Director of Continuous Improvement. Congratulations Jackie!

- We have a new office in Telford. This is acting as the regional base until the office in Sandwell becomes the Regional Office for the whole of West Midlands.

- Our new service in Darlington is open! Aidan and Claire moved from residential care into their new home two months ago. Aidan has just started to look into getting a blue car so that he can get out and about more and to explore the countryside. Claire is now exploring the wider community and has just recently visited the local sensory room. Kevin has just moved in to join them and seems to be settling in well.

Finally...

Have you got a question you'd like to see David Wolverson answer?

Why not post it on his new blog on our Intranet?