

THE NATIONAL PORTAGE ASSOCIATION

Peterborough Portage Service Groups



George enjoying the swimming group



Ruby enjoying the Therapy Group



Monty using PECs



Lola exploring

As well as home visiting, Peterborough has always felt groups play an important part in our service, offering a range of support, learning and enjoyment for our children and their families.

When the Portage service was set up over 30 years ago, the first groups to evolve were singing groups, enthusiastically and vibrantly run by Jenny Bambridge (Pre-school teacher/Portage Home Visitor), Allyson Darling (Nursery Nurse/Portage Home Visitor), Shirley Conway (Pre-school teacher/Portage Home Visitor) and often a health colleague.

The singing groups are still running today with the addition of many other similar groups across the city. The sessions are free and open to families/carers from the community but they also provide an opportunity for parents and children to attend who are on the Portage waiting list. At the end of the sessions there is always time to offer support and advice from Allyson, Emma or Sam, who now run the groups.

A close link we have maintained over the years is with our Child Development Unit at Peterborough District Hospital. Here, Portage Home Visitors alongside Therapists from the CDU have run a singing group and physiotherapy play session. These two groups now run from Caverstede Early Years Centre and are still supported by Physiotherapists and Portage Home Visitors. The groups have always been very well attended and the 'parent to parent' support is invaluable.

The Portage Service, Physiotherapy Service and the Visually Impaired Service, jointly run a 'Splash' hydrotherapy pool session at The Phoenix Special School, Peterborough. This is a wonderfully relaxed session for our children and their families to attend and Zelda Eldred (Portage Home Visitor) even manages to get a bit of singing in there too!

More recent groups set up or supported by Portage are run from one of our local Children's Centres. Lisa Clissett (Orton Children's Centre Portage Home Visitor) runs a PEEP (Peers Early Education Partnership) group along with a Speech Therapist from the centre. She also co-runs with Jayne (a Physiotherapist), a group called the 'Extra-ordinaries'. Families and carers are invited with their children who may have a diagnosis of a disability or additional needs or health issues. This is a fun sensory session using treasure baskets, song and outdoor play.

Our service has three trained NAS (National Autistic Society) Early Bird trainers and, alongside an Area Senco, Clinical Psychologist and Occupational Therapist we offer two, ten week parents' courses a year for parents with children that have a diagnosis of ASD.

Finally, Portage co-run a Drop-In session in collaboration with the Adult Learning Disability service and the Voluntary Carers service. This offers parents with learning disabilities and their children a weekly meeting place to discuss any issues or anxieties related to child development, benefits, housing or any other daily living related issues.

As we know, by talking to parents, groups are not for everybody. However, they can be extremely beneficial to some children and families/carers, particularly those groups originally set up by parents/carers or from consultation with them.

We dedicate this article highlighting and celebrating the continuing support our service offers, to a very dear friend and colleague who was our inspiration in setting up many of our projects, to Shirley Conway who sadly passed away on 26th March 2009.

Sarah Bernard, Portage Co-ordinator, Peterborough Tel: 01733 333735

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FRIENDS OF PLYMOUTH PORTAGE HOST GROUND BREAKING CONFERENCE

Friends of Plymouth Portage, a registered charity, (number 1047874) agreed to spend £3,500 of their funds raised by one Plymouth family to provide a local conference for parents of children receiving Portage or who had received Portage in the past. The chair of the charity, Gillian Parker said that she wanted many more parents to benefit from the opportunities a Plymouth conference could provide than just one family a year that the charity can fund to attend the National Portage Conference, a residential weekend held in Northampton.

The conference title **“Looking to the Future Together”** was chosen to reflect the Inclusion theme for the day. All local early years settings were invited as well as all other agencies who offer services to children with additional needs and/or disabilities. This is the first time that Plymouth has been able to offer a joint event that was primarily initiated and funded by parents. Plymouth City Council supported the conference with some top-up funding to enable the organisers to get the best speakers and venue possible. The conference was opened by the Deputy Lord Mayor for Plymouth, Mary Aspinall, who said:

“I am looking forward to hearing what is said by the speakers and also to listening to the families and workers involved with the service that benefits the children of Plymouth. Partnership working is essential to meet the individual needs of the children. We know that early intervention and support is a key part of the work that is needed to be able to maximise the opportunities for children to be included in their communities”.



18 parents/carers of children with additional support needs and 80 professionals representing many different agencies attended the day. We heard Laura “Mole” Chapman, Director of Equality Training, speak on “Happiness and Well-being in Learning” and John Oates, Senior Lecturer in the Child and Youth Studies Group at the Open University, speak about “The Importance of Attachments in the Early Years.” There were 6 seminars to choose from offering a range of interesting and diverse topics related to inclusion. Information stands were also available for delegates to browse during the breaks as well as the opportunity to network with colleagues, parents and friends.

The conference received very positive evaluations with a large percentage of the participants enjoying all aspects of the day and many expressing the wish that another similar conference be organised in the future.

Diann Davis
Portage Co-ordinator, Conference planning team.

TRIPLE P PARENTING PROGRAMMES

Triple P (Positive Parenting Programme) is a series of structured parenting courses offered to the parents of children who have, or who are at risk of developing, behavioural problems. It is a multi-level programme, offered at differing levels of intensity, with a variety of courses aimed at different ages and delivered to both groups and individuals. Triple P interventions range from level 1, which consists of widely available parenting advice (in Australia, where Triple P is based, this includes television programmes on parenting), though to level 5, for parents of children with the most complex difficulties.

For the parents of children with disabilities who display (or are at risk of displaying) behavioural difficulties, Stepping Stones Triple P is offered. This falls at the fourth level of family intervention and is designed to be delivered to parents individually, either in the clinic or in the family home.

Stepping Stones, like the other targeted Triple P interventions, is time limited and designed to be delivered over 10 discrete sessions, each with a specified focus. These include supporting parents to understand and reflect on their parenting strategies, identifying the possible causes of the child's (potential) behavioural difficulties, promoting the child's development and introducing different techniques for managing difficult behaviour. Considerable emphasis is placed on systematic observation of parent-child interaction in order to develop a clear understanding of the possible reasons for the behavioural difficulties (including factors relating to the child's medical diagnosis) and the means by which such behaviour may be maintained, before the tailored programme is undertaken. Emphasis is also placed on the importance of conducting comprehensive baseline assessment (both of parenting capacity and the child's needs) and in evaluating the effectiveness of the Triple P intervention.

Triple P is one of three parenting programmes recently evaluated for the Department for Children Schools and Families. Along with two other parenting programmes, Triple P was found to lead to measurable improvements in parents' mental well-being, in their perception of their parenting skills and in their sense of being a parent. It also led to perceived improvements in the behaviour of the child about whom they were concerned (Lindsay et al 2008).

Within Hounslow, the Stepping Stones programme is offered to families who have been referred to the multi disciplinary Challenging Behaviour Team, which supports families of children with significant learning difficulties and challenging behaviour. Whilst some of these are young children also receiving Portage, the vast majority are in (special) school placements.

As an intervention to support parents of children with disabilities, Stepping Stones Triple P would clearly be of benefit to some of those families receiving Portage. However, the two programmes are quite distinct and offer very different kinds of intervention. Stepping Stones Triple P is a time limited programme, focussed primarily on the management of behaviour and frequently supporting families with children over five. It may therefore compliment but cannot replace Portage which is targeted at pre-school children and aims to foster child development in the round, through prolonged engagement with the family.

Dawn Collard, Educational Psychologist

Acting Portage Supervisor

Children's Services and Lifelong Learning, London Borough of Hounslow

Triple P'ing in Portsmouth

All Portage staff in Portsmouth are accredited Triple P trainers. The training was delivered by Triple P trainers flown in from New Zealand and indeed one of the challenges was tuning in to the accent. The course content is naturally delivered in its 'purest' sense, and the starting point is from the perspective that the practitioner does not know the referred family and child and is meeting them for the first time in session one.

A great deal of information can be gathered about the family and child looking at not just the behaviour causing concern and its frequency but includes for example, the child's development, an analysis of the parents relationship with one another, a measure of how depressed the mother may be and gauging stress levels. One might say a holistic assessment of the situation!

In subsequent 'sessions' a practitioner discusses the results and the following weeks some strategies are put into place. Parents have particular sections of a DVD to watch and home work to complete in between sessions.

If this all sounds rather familiar – then it is! ABC charts, Tally Sheets, discussing the possible causes of behaviour, introducing techniques such as Clear Instructions, Quiet Time (mini Time Out's e.g. sitting away for a few minutes when you have not done as I have asked) as well as Time Out.

So if you are a Portage Home Visitor working with a family who are being 'Triple P'd', they will be hearing similar ideas to what you would suggest and between me and you – if you are doing Triple P we have been told that it doesn't have to take to Session 4 before you can start teaching parents strategies. Thank goodness!

We had our reservations I will admit but it's so very Portage anyway. The challenge is setting aside time on a visit to cover Triple P, as the local authority has recently introduced it and are looking for outcome measures.

More info on: www.triplep.net

Sharon Ensor

Portsmouth Portage Service Manager

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National **Portage** Association
Partners with Parents and Children

PORTAGE BASIC WORKSHOPS

Dewsbury

Dates: 9th, 10th and 11th December 2009

Presenters: Tony Dunning and Kath Harrison-Jennings (ATs)

Cost: Please contact course organiser

Contact: Janice Hirst or Su Panther

Psychology and Specialist Outreach

Child and Family Guidance Centre

Temple Road, Dewsbury, WF13 3QE

Tel: 01924 324853

Email: Janice.hirst@kirklees.gov.uk

Ref N3

Region Northern

London Borough of Hounslow Portage Service

Dates: Thursday 15th, Friday 16th, Monday 19th and Tuesday 20th October 2009

Presenters: Denise Davidson, Katherine Pugh

Cost: £175

Venue: Hounslow Education Centre

Martindale Road, Hounslow, TW4 7HE

Time: 08.45am – 4.00pm

To book contact: Administrator 0208 583 6270 or email portage@hounslow.gov.uk

Jan Bennett

Staffordshire Portage Service were very sad to hear of the sudden loss of Jan Bennett, who was the Senior Portage Worker for Newcastle and Staffordshire Moorlands Portage Service from June 2003 to December 2007. Jan retired and moved back to Lincoln with her husband Paul in May 2008.

Jan was passionate about Portage and inspired everyone who worked with her. She became involved with the NPA, helping to organise Conferences and taking up the role of the Midland Regional Representative.

Jan set up the Newcastle and Staffordshire Moorlands Portage Service in June 2003, when Staffordshire obtained funding to expand their services from two to four.

Jan will be fondly remembered by all staff and professionals who worked with her and also families who had the pleasure of Jan's visits to their homes.

FLUBBER RECIPE

Flubber - it stretches, if you put it on the table it spreads out and it even bounces!

Dissolve about 1 level teaspoon of Borax (from Boots, Chemists or Ironmongers) in 200-300ml of warm water. If you are using standard PVA glue pour about half a cup full into a container, and then dilute it with another half cupfull of water (if you want to end up with more goo, then use more glue!) Add 1-2 teaspoons of borax solution and stir vigorously.

You may want to repeat the experiment with different amounts of borax.

After it starts to solidify, take it out of the container and knead it in your hands for a few minutes.

Have fun...

(Supervise play. No eating or fingers in eyes and wash hands after use.)

Recycle Your Phones and Inkjet Cartridges for the NPA

The NPA is recycling inkjet cartridges and mobile phones and a proportion of the funding raised will go to the organisation. So now you can do something for the environment and something for the NPA at the same time!

We have envelopes available at the office for sending phones and cartridges for recycling so if you have any that you don't know what to do with-now you know! We will also have envelopes available at NPA events, including Conference.

Epson cartridges are not suitable for recycling so please do not save these but if you have any Samsung, HP, Lexmark, Canon or Dell inkjet cartridges then these can be recycled.

PORTAGE HOME VISITING WITH SIMRAN

I'd like to tell you about a very rewarding but sometimes challenging experience I've had with a new family on my Portage Home Visiting caseload.

Simran is the third and youngest child in the family. She has an older brother who also has special needs and a sister in the middle. Simran's mum, Tasha, is a single parent who leads a busy life.

When I started home visiting with Simran and her family it was difficult at the beginning to establish a visiting routine. Mum sometimes forgot our appointments and did not like to open the door if she was unsure who was outside. At times this felt frustrating for me but during supervision my manager advised me to be persistent and patient bearing in mind that this was a totally new experience for this family.

On my first visit Mum sat with Simran and asked many questions about the Portage Service and my role within it. We talked as adults and did a lot of 'Family Focus' that first session. I did my best to ensure mum understood all about Portage and felt that perhaps next time I would work with Simran.

On my second visit mum seemed more comfortable with me and as I took off my shoes at the doorway, she started talking to me about her week and how busy she was. She also disclosed a lot of detail about her personal intimate life, so after about 20 minutes of listening to Mum, whilst she held Simran on her lap, I decided to end my visit there and at supervision discussed the matter with my supervisor, Pauline. She suggested setting up a routine of having the first 20 minutes of my visit based on Family Focus and then Structured Teaching for the next 20 minutes as Tasha did not want to engage with Simran in any Child-Led activity.

For the following few weeks the same thing happened but as time went by Tasha began by putting Simran on the sofa between us and then would let me interact with her for a bit. Eventually my visits got into a pattern, for the first 20 minutes I would listen to Mum then I would work with Simran for 20- 30 minutes. I had to get used to this way of working as well and at times I felt uneasy listening to conversations about outside issues but I got used to the process. Seeing Simran do so well made me smile and feel it was all worthwhile.

There have been some attachment issues between Tasha and Simran but I know this gap is narrowing. Simran is doing well now and it's such a pleasure seeing Tasha enjoying time with her child. Now, Tasha comes to groups and trips with Simran and it's great to see them playing together!

Aarti Gadher

A Manager's viewpoint

Aarti, the Home Visitor, wanted to discuss this family with me at supervision as she couldn't even get through the front door. There hadn't appeared to be a problem when the initial visit was carried out and Mum had agreed to the service.

I couldn't help but wonder what had changed in the few weeks the child had been on our waiting list?

I advised Aarti to go back the same day, at the same time each week as arranged. I told her to knock on the door, wait a few minutes and if there was no answer then leave a note saying, "Sorry I missed you. See you next week, please ring if this is not a good time." We rang Mum as well to back up the written notes and she always replied, "Yes, please come!" After a couple of attempts Aarti was allowed in and the visits proceeded as she has written in her article.

In following supervision sessions we talked about the fact that as Aarti felt uncomfortable with some of the conversations during visits, she had the right not to visit this family and that we could change workers if she preferred.

We talked about the three circle model in Portage and set up a routine of working towards this with Family Focus for the first 20 minutes then Structured Teaching for 20 minutes. At first, Aarti would leave at this point as Mum didn't want Simran out of her walker to engage in a Child Led activity. As the relationship between Mum and Aarti became stronger and more trusted, we have been able to have varying lengths of Child Led play to finish the session with.

This has been a fantastic success story, positively changing Mum's attitude to see what her child with Down Syndrome can do and giving Simran many more opportunities. Also, Aarti has gained further experience as a Portage Home Visitor working within different family situations. We have overcome the barriers to working successfully in their home and have helped Tasha to engage with other services as needed. This has raised Mum's self esteem and she has reduced some of her social activities to spend quality time with her daughter.

Pauline Harris

Editor's note:

Aarti and Pauline work in an inner city service and wanted to share an experience that may have occurred in other services. This is a good time to highlight the Inclusion, Equality and Diversity toolkit that will be coming to services before too long. This toolkit will give scenarios of challenges faced by all working in a Portage Service, that can be discussed, perhaps at Supervision meetings to highlight our reactions to the given scenario and then what could be our subsequent actions in supporting families.

FABULOUS FARM TRIP



On Monday 13th July we took several families to Smithills Farm in Bolton for our Early Support Day Trip.

Smithills Farm is an open interactive farm which offers an inclusive environment with full disabled access.

The children enjoyed a ride on a donkey and a tractor ride. They were able to hold chicks, rabbits, guinea pigs and other baby animals on the farm. Bottle feeding the lambs and feeding the goats was a lovely experience for the children. Finally, they watched the cows being milked and a wonderful day was had by all!

Lynda King - Portage Home Visitor
lynda.king@salford.gov.uk

Kirklees Portage Service says 'Goodbye' to valued team member

Margaret Bailey, Senior Portage Worker, has recently retired from the Kirklees Portage Service having worked there for over 27 years and having been a founder member of the Portage Team.

Margaret's name is synonymous with caring, compassion and creativity. Nothing was too much trouble for her as far as children and families were concerned. Margaret's practice typified partnership with parents and the usual comment from parents was: "we could never have done it without Margaret." Over the years many parents have kept in touch with her and have reported back on their children's progress.

In addition to providing a high quality Portage Service her achievements include; helping and advising colleagues; supporting the induction and training of members of the Portage team and the wider Psychological Service. She has also contributed to the National Portage Association Training and encouraged many parents to attend the workshops.

Margaret has been the cornerstone of the Kirklees Portage Service and will be sorely missed. We hope that she will have a long and happy retirement and will keep in touch.

Tony Dunning & Kath Harrison-Jennings, Kirklees Portage Service

Editor: Apologies to Kirklees Portage Service for the late inclusion of this article. The NPA wishes Margaret a long and happy retirement.



Training for Trainers 2009

There was a very successful Training for Trainers weekend course held in May organised by Queenie McNally T for T Coordinator. The event was fully booked with 24 delegates and had representatives from



Portage Services countrywide. It was a working weekend starting mid morning on the Friday and ending on the Sunday afternoon but included lots of fun and an opportunity to widen the circle of Portage colleagues and friends.

The tutor team were Diann Davis, Kath Harrison-Jennings, Queenie Mc Nally, John Parry, Bonny Robinson, Chris Walker, Irene Westerman and Penny Whittell. Audrey Cooper was the observer before taking on a tutor role in the future. If you are interested in becoming a T for T tutor please get further details from Jane Willis; e-mail: tc4npa@tiscali.co.uk



From the Chair



Time flies by and it is now the beginning of July! We've had some lovely sunny weather but now things look as though they are going to change. Life in Portage is like that too – everything goes along swimmingly and then changes come along that make working lives more complicated!

It is always pleasing to hear how adaptable and flexible many Services are – and this has become apparent as I have met Home Visitors and practitioners in their own situations. There are many innovative and exciting things going on to benefit the children and families we work with and hopefully you will have a chance to hear about some of this at Conference within the Seminar Programme.

It is also good to know that the Core Competencies are starting to be used in Services and this will give a great way forward to support Portage Home Visitors in their personal and professional development.

Work is continuing on achieving a way of getting a qualification through successfully attending a Portage Basic Workshop – it has been a long time coming but looks as though we are on the right road! Bonny Robinson is leading on this project and was able to recruit some support from Portage services at the Trainers' Forum held in Derby recently.

Ruth and Jane continue to work through the different strands of the strategic aims of the NPA/DCSF grant and I know that there will be focus days planned throughout the regions over the next year so I will look forward to meeting many of you at those days.

But before then, the Conference will be held in Northampton again – so hope to see some of you there!

Chris Walker

From the Editor

I was one of those 24 delegates who attended the Training for Trainers workshop at The Midland Hotel in Derby. At the end of the weekend we recorded significant events in a special booklet called 'Memories are made of this'. Looking back at mine I wrote some funny things. 'Adrenaline makes you sparkle!' - the strap line advised to help you get over your presenting nerves, 'Free pens!' - every room we went into on every day had pens provided by the hotel, mind you they came in handy with all the notes we made, 'Baby Jasmine being born!' - yes Anne Tweddle from Carlisle South became a Grandmother that weekend. I also wrote 'One step further!' - never mind 'small steps' this was a big step for me, getting closer to my goal of becoming an Accredited Trainer.

Ingrid Mather

Visit the NPA Website: <http://www.portage.org.uk>

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Articles, notices and advertisements for inclusion in Portage Post 75 should be sent by post and/or email to the Editor by the 15th October 2009.

The rates for advertising are:

Voluntary Organisations £30, £60, £120, £240 (one eighth, quarter, half or whole page).

Others £60, £120, £240, £480 plus VAT where applicable. Inserts £75 and £150.

From the NPA Executive

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The National Portage Association is limited by guarantee No 4165317, registered England & Wales. Registered Charity No. 1087865. Registered Offices: King's Court, 17 School Road, Hall Green, Birmingham, B28 8JG

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