

THE NATIONAL PORTAGE ASSOCIATION

Conference Weekend at the Hilton



Ruby and I attended our first weekend away at the Portage conference in Northamptonshire. I had looked forward to this event for over six months. I was asked to go as a parent representative of Birmingham Early Support team along with two other parent representatives.

Having carefully read through the conference pack the day before, I was really excited at attending this big event. I was also looking forward to spending some quality time with Ruby on a one to one level. Since the birth of her younger sister Connie, this had not happened as much as I would have liked.

I was amazed at the meticulous planning that had gone into the Portage weekend. I was comforted by the friendly Portage workers who greeted us on our late arrival and who saw to our every need over the two days. Ruby is a very active four and half year old and keeping up with her, on a positive note, keeps me fit. During the course of the weekend Ruby loved exploring her new environment and whenever she was out of my sight, she was retrieved by an understanding Portage worker with a smile.

Attending the structured workshops on offer really inspired me on a personal level as well as empowering me to be a better parent for Ruby in the future. It was great meeting other parents of disabled children and reminded me how special we all are. The conference simulated the kind of inclusive world I hope



Ruby will grow up in. This was endorsed by the wonderful attitude of the Hilton staff, where it was obvious they were there to meet our every need.

The Crèche facilities were superb and Ruby had a lot of fun as well as hugs. Initially, I did not think I could utilise the babysitting services, however, I soon changed my mind on arrival once I saw the staff and gained confidence in the conference set up. (In fact I went out two nights leaving Ruby fast asleep knowing the sitters were close by).

There were many highlights for me during this weekend, such as:

- Attending Rob Long's workshop
- Meeting other parents of disabled children
- Ruby and I felt really special and well cared for
- Professionalism of the Portage staff
- The location of the Conference
- The Portage Weekend DVD (I must remember to buy one)
- Meeting the Portage workers from Peterborough who encouraged me to attend the evening meal and join their table, otherwise I would have remained in my room with Ruby.
- Seeing Parents of disabled children relax and having fun at the Evening/disco meal is something I will not forget
- Observing the daddies getting to know each other and smiling
- I have never experienced such camaraderie in an organisation and it made me want to get more involved.
- I returned home to my family feeling invigorated and happy.

Leaving the conference made me feel sad as I truly felt I had met some wonderful professionals and children/families. I have to be honest and admit that having qualified as a social worker in 1996, I used to refer families on to the Portage schemes (I never envisaged I would use the service one day) however, I feel on reflection I had little understanding of how invaluable the Portage workers are to children and their families.

This weekend has a new recruit who will be singing Portage praises whenever I get the opportunity and I would love to get more involved with Portage in the future.

*Marcia Squire-Wood
Ruby Squire-Wood*

The members of Sunderland Portage's 'Sunshine Group' had great fun making green hand prints which were then transformed into a Christmas card for the NPA.

The sibling card creator was Amy Cruddas, age 7, who is the sister of Katie. Amy literally 'jumped for joy' when she heard that the card was to be printed and sold by the NPA and took her letter of congratulations from Louise Bell to share with her classmates.

Christmas cards were made available from the NPA office. There was one design in a pack and the two designs available were a snowman, designed by Amy Cruddas, and a Christmas tree, designed by the Sunshine Group.



The new Birth to Three Portage Service in Warwickshire host their first Teddy Bears Picnic

2009 saw the amalgamation of the two Portage services in Warwickshire under the new name of the Integrated Disability Service (IDS) Birth to Three Portage Service.

Historically, there had been two Portage Services in Warwickshire – The South Warwickshire Portage Service commissioned by the Local Health Authority and the Birth to Three Family Service, part of the IDS Teaching and Learning Team within Warwickshire County Council.

On June 24th the Service hosted a Teddy Bears Picnic in the grounds of Coombe Abbey. Fifty families from across the county attended the event which provided an excellent opportunity to meet in a relaxed informal environment. Before and after the picnic there was a range of sensory activities provided for the children to take part in and the day ended with a fiddle player, playing a selection of the children's favourite rhymes and songs – a truly memorable occasion!

Sarah Buckwell and Jeanette Smith – Co-ordinating Managers



CHRISTMAS CARDS 2010!

Following the success of our NPA Christmas cards for 2009 we would very much like to produce Christmas cards again in 2010. If you come across any pictures which may be suitable please hang onto them and await further instructions in the Spring!

City of York Portage Service

We have had a Portage Service in York now for 13 years, initially through a 3 year joint funding grant by Health, Education and Social Services and managed by The Children's Society. We then became part of the Education Psychology Department of Learning Culture and Children's Services in the City of York (a unitary authority).

In addition to being a registered Portage Service we currently have additional funding to carry out two projects. Firstly, '**Sure Start Portage**' for children born low weight pre-term (LWPT) and for children who are 'looked after' (LAC). This funding provides for up to 10 children and secondly, **Early Support**, for children across the 'core' Portage caseload.

The '**Sure Start Portage**' project offers a short-term (6 months) home visiting service to 'looked after children' and to children born low weight pre-term. Both groups are statistically at risk of having poorer outcomes in their later years and in adulthood. This project is not 'problem based' but instead offers support to parents and carers. It gives them information about child development and monitoring the child's progress in a fun, relaxed and positive way using Portage Service delivery principles. This has given us stronger links with the local Children's Centres and resulted in us being commissioned to offer the Portage Basic Workshop to 14 Children's Centre staff.

The **Early Support** funding assists our service in providing Early Support Key Working to children with significant special needs and their families. The funding pays towards the costs of this additional workload for Portage Home Visitors and also for an Early Support Key Worker Coordinator to support Portage Home Visitors and other professionals working with this same child population. It also promotes the training 'Working in Partnership' and the use of the Early Support Developmental Journals. Additionally it provides funding for some administrative support.

The City of York Portage Service has also delivered the '**Early Support Parent Workshops**' following the training undertaken by two Portage Home Visitors (one of whom is a parent of a child with additional needs). This 4-day course has now been offered twice and involved a second parent delivering the training with us on the second occasion. The availability of a trained counsellor, and a crèche for the children, was provided for all 8 of the days. The feedback from the parents who attended the course was extremely positive and comments included;

"confidence, empowerment, knowledge and a welcome opportunity to share thoughts and feelings with others"

After both courses the families involved chose to meet up again for a picnic in order to maintain contacts and friendships developed through the course.

Prepared by Heather Swaine, Portage Home Visitor, on behalf of the City of York Portage Service

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FEBURARY 2010

3 DAY BASIC PORTAGE WORKSHOP

Dates: 3rd, 4th and 5th of February 2010

Venue: The Home Brewery Building, Sir John Robinson Way, Arnold, Nottinghamshire NG5 6DA

Time: 9:00 - 4:00

Cost: £175 (including refreshments and lunch)

Course Tutors: Holly Peacock (NPA Accredited Trainer)

Wendy Ince (NPA Accredited Trainer), Angie Clay (working towards Accreditation)

For more information please contact: Beverley Knight on 0115 8546332

FEBURARY / MARCH 2010

PORTAGE WORKSHOP

Dates: 25th February, 4th and 11th March 2010

Venue: Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

Cost: £180 (tbc) per person (incl all lunch and refreshments)

Course Tutor: Jeanette Smith (Accredited Trainer)

For more information please contact: Denise Webb on 01242 525412

Gloucestershire Portage Service, Battledown Centre for Children & Families, Harp Hill, Battledown,
Cheltenham GL52 6PZ

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SEPTEMBER 2010

3 DAY BASIC PORTAGE WORKSHOP

Dates: 29th, 30th September and 1st October

Venue: Meadow House, Littleworth, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG18 2TA

Time: 9:00 - 4:00

Cost: £175 (including refreshments and lunch)

Course Tutors: Holly Peacock (NPA Accredited Trainer)

Wendy Ince (NPA Accredited Trainer), Angie Clay (working towards Accreditation)

For more information please contact: Beverley Knight on 0115 8546332

A PATRON FOR THE NPA?

The NPA is currently investigating the possibility of inviting someone to be its patron. If you have any suggestions for people who you think may be suitable/willing or if you have any thoughts on this, please contact Nick Hollis, via the NPA office. (email administrator@portage.org.uk Tel 0121 2441807)

Goodbye Deborah, Hello Debra!

Some of you may already know that Deborah, the admin assistant in the NPA office, has left us to move to pastures new. We would like to say a big thank you to her for all of her hard work and wish her well in her new home in Somerset.

We will shortly be joined in the office by a new admin assistant, Debra, and are looking forward very much to welcoming her into the team.

Increasing Accessibility of NPA materials

If you or your service ever need translations of NPA materials or versions in alternative media then we want to hear from you.

As part of the current DCSF project the NPA is looking at increasing the accessibility of resources including publications such as the Values Statement and Information Leaflet. If you can help us out by providing feedback about your needs or those of your service then please get in touch.

We want to know:

- the languages/media needed
- the number of families who would find this helpful
- your contact details

Also if you, or anyone you know, may be able to help with translation then we would be pleased to hear from you.

Please telephone the office on 0121 2441807 or email administrator@portage.org.uk

From the Editor

I'm sure you're aware that Portage Post welcomes articles and photos from all parents and children, professionals and anyone interested in Portage, Early Years or Special Needs. During one of my recent pleas of 'Has anyone got any articles?' I was surprised to discover that perhaps you think we have loads of contributors and therefore we don't really need your article. During 2010 the NPA is planning to refresh the look of Portage Post. So, make it your New Year's Resolution to contribute to Portage Post by submitting something or else sending out a plea 'Has anyone got any articles?'

Ingrid Mather

info@portage.org.uk

MORE PHONE AND INKJET CARTRIDGE RECYCLING ENVELOPES AVAILABLE

The NPA office has recently taken delivery of a new batch of mobile phone and inkjet cartridge recycling envelopes-so now we need to fill them! A proportion of the funding raised will go to the organisation and it won't cost you anything, except a bit of time to rummage about and find your old phones and cartridges!

If you would like any of the postage paid envelopes please contact us at the office on 0121 2441807 or email info@portage.org.uk.

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.

Wandsworth Celebrates 20 Years of Portage & Says a Farewell

On Friday 17th July we celebrated 20 years of Portage in Wandsworth. The rain held off for the afternoon as Portage families past and present, and numerous professionals arrived for an afternoon of fun and entertainment.

Falconbrook Primary School set the atmosphere with their fantastic steel band. Children enjoyed exploring the fire engine and Spotty the Clown entertained them making balloon models. We all tucked into sandwiches, ice-cream and cakes. The celebratory cake was cut by Sarah who was one of the first children to receive Portage in Wandsworth 20 years ago, she then gave a lovely speech.

Amongst all the fun it was also a sad day as Wandsworth Portage Service said goodbye to Pauline Wilson who has retired after 12 years of running the service. Before she left we asked her a few questions about her time in Portage:

How did you become involved in Portage?

When I was working in Hampshire in 1976, I was seconded to further training. During the course of my training Shearer and Shearer were invited over from Wisconsin to join Albert Kushlick, Seán Cameron, Molly White and the Educational Psychologists in Winchester. They shared their evidence to prove that early intervention for young children who had developmental delay could be an effective way of improving their progress.

I was particularly excited to hear about this project because I had been teaching when children started school age 5. Through their talk I realised the potential for supporting the parents to develop their children's learning prior to coming into a setting.

I then went off and had my own family, remaining very enthusiastic about Portage. I moved to London where I had the opportunity to set up a Portage Service in the local hospital and from then it was always close to my heart.

I went on to train in higher education, but my heart had always wanted to come back to Portage. I was lucky enough to come to Wandsworth and to have worked here for 12 years running the service.

What have you enjoyed most about running Portage?

There are many aspects of working in Portage that I have enjoyed, in particular working with a team of colleagues who are equally enthusiastic about working with young children with special needs, and supporting families when sometimes things can be very hard for them.

What stands out in your memory about the 20 Years Celebration?

I think whilst sometimes the work we do can be very sad, the most overwhelming thing that was demonstrated at our 20 years celebration was that there is much love and joy in our work. We are all very fortunate to work with young children and their families.

What key aspects of the Portage approach do you think has benefited families and professionals?

There are so many aspects to the Portage approach that I think can benefit families, some of the key ones are working in partnership



with parents and modelling play activities. This can give them confidence and validate their efforts to support the development of their child's play and learning.

I think the emotional support dimension for which Seán Cameron presented the training was really helpful to enable me to support families.

Another aspect of our work that can benefit families is the support we offer through the whole of the SEN Statutory Assessment and transition process. This can help children to settle confidently into their mainstream or special needs setting and ensures the parents are feeling confident about the next stage in their child's life.

The multi-agency aspect of our work is a key factor, as we all know. Also, continuing to heighten public awareness of children with special needs can help parents feel more comfortable in the community.

Lastly, being able to develop training opportunities for other early years professionals and the medical profession, is a part of our work that I have enjoyed.

How would you hope to see Portage develop in the future?

I'd like to see the Portage model being adopted in many more authorities in the country because the service available at the moment isn't really equitable. For example, families living just over the border from our authority have no opportunity to receive Portage.

I hope the NPA will continue to be funded to ensure high levels of service delivery in all areas.

What are you looking forward to about your retirement?

I'm looking forward to not getting up every morning and driving through traffic. I'm going to enjoy every day with what it brings. I'm also doing some training with settings to raise people's knowledge and understanding of children with special needs. I'm also looking forward to doing some travelling, seeing my friends and family and being in my garden.

Penny Taylor, Jackie Clements & Heather Walter (August 2009)

Multisensory Magic ! The X Factor in Sensing and Learning



The Surrey Portage Early Education Support Service PMLD Workshop held in the summer of 2009 was led by Flo Longhorn. She is an International Consultant in Special Needs Education and author of numerous books on multi-sensory approaches to learning.

The Workshop was highly stimulating and motivating. Flo shared her wealth of experience from working with children and adults with severe and profound learning difficulties around the world.

Her presentation and materials made clear the purpose of creating wonderful resources that meet the individual needs of the child.

All areas of the Workshop were very useful, especially the latest developments on how the brain works and links with memory.

Thank you Flo- a brilliant training day that went too quickly! Finally, a big thank you to Cookson Electronics and Fernox for donating the use of their Fernox Academy in Woking to host the event for Surrey Portage Early Education Support Service.

From the Chair



I'm writing this in November as the winds and rain are lashing at my window! Conference was a fantastic weekend in October and my thanks go to Bonny Robinson, her planning team for all their organisation and the NPA board for their help and support in making everything go with a swing.

We welcome Sue Goodhead onto the Board and thank her for taking over the role of Treasurer and at this point I would like to take this opportunity to thank Glen Cossins for the many years of 'service' she has given to the NPA. Glen was first the South West regional rep and then took on the treasurer's role and here she has done a brilliant job of making the finances clear and comprehensible! Thank you Glen!

We also welcome Nick Hollis who has been co-opted onto the board as a parent rep and Shahenaz Sheikh has been co-opted as Northern Regional Rep as since the AGM - Jo Murray has stood down as Northern Regional Rep and has been co-opted as chair of Publicity and Information!

Work continues on the strategic aims of the DCSF/NPA grant and an update will be given in the next edition of Portage Post. We were hoping to launch the new website in November but the new database is in the process of being incorporated into it - so unfortunately this has been delayed. So watch this space!!

My apologies for this brief 'From the Chair' - I'm using one finger on my left hand to type this - having fractured my right humerus after tripping over!! Many thanks for the good wishes sent to me!

Chris Walker

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

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Articles, notices and advertisements for inclusion in Portage Post 76 should be sent by post and/or email to the Editor by the 15th February 2010.

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

Every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the content, but no responsibility can be taken for any error or omission.

The opinions of the contributors do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the charity, nor does the inclusion of an item, insert or advertisement constitute a recommendation.

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Please Note: Executive details are on page 4