

February 2005

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Welcome to the February edition of the Networker.

We hope that you will find this edition full of interesting information. There are a number of new projects that you may wish to get involved in, helping to test the council's new website (See below) taking part in our Sensory Loss consultation (see page three) or contacting your local disability forum to have your say on things that matter in your area (see page 2).

We would really welcome the involvement of new members and of course those members who have so readily supported us in the past.

Those of you from the Taunton Deane area will also find a questionnaire enclosed from the "Responsibility Gap". Taunton Deane are carrying out research to check for gaps in services and we would highly appreciate it if you could spend a short amount

of time to complete the questionnaire and return it to us in the freepost envelope provided.

We hope that you enjoy this edition of the Networker, we would welcome any comments or articles for the next edition, which can be addressed to Michelle at the office and we always welcome introductions to new individuals or organisations who may like to get involved in SAIN

Help review Somerset County Council's more Accessible Website

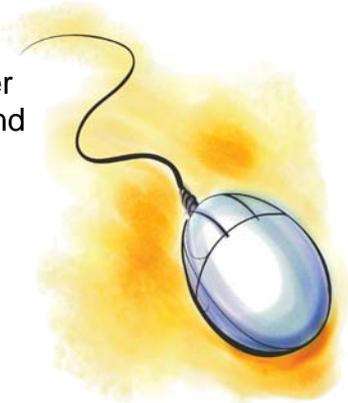
Somerset County Council has recently updated its website. Part of these changes were made to make our web pages more accessible to all. This update is part of a programme of improvement, that will see further improvements in

accessibility. We would like to get a better understanding of what extent the changes we have made have improved the website for service users and at the same time improve our understanding of the real life issues facing people with disabilities as they use our website.

We are looking for a small number of volunteers, to attend an informal focus group on the morning of the 24th February 2005. If you are an experienced Internet user with a disability who can spare a couple of hours to help improve the County Council website then it would be great to hear from you. Mileage allowance and expenses will be paid.

Please contact Ann Paulin, at Somerset County Council on 01823 355196 or write to: Ann Paulin, Consultation Co-ordinator, Communications and Marketing Team, Somerset County Council, Taunton, TA1 4DY
Email: APaulin@somerset.gov.uk

"Somerset County Council values diversity, and celebrates cultural and social differences. Our Equal Opportunities Promise is to provide all services of equal quality which meet your needs and fulfil your rights. You can expect us to treat you fairly, with respect and dignity, and to be understanding of whoever you are and what ever your background".



Please remember to let us know if you change address, telephone number or email so that we can stay in touch.

Free Training with



Voluntary Sector Training Alliance

In early 2004 the Somerset Voluntary Sector Network (SVSN), of whom SAIN are members was awarded European Social Fund Co-finance monies by The Learning and Skills Council (Somerset) to deliver a County-wide training and capacity building project. In August 2004 ViSTA (previously known as Fu-

ture Foundations) was established to deliver this project. A 2005 training programme has been devised, a copy of which has been included with your newsletter. Training topics cover areas such as finance, health & safety, negotiating skills, first aid and fundraising. Training is free for SVSN members so if you are interested in any of the courses, please contact Michelle at the office.

One course particularly close to our hearts concerns Disability Equality and the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). This train-

ing day is designed for all organisations, staff and volunteers who need to know more about the DDA and who wish to understand more about disability equality. This will be a lively and participatory day where you will be involved in activities to help really understand the issues. This course will run on Saturday 12th March 2005 at the Shepton Mallet District Council Offices from 9.30am to 4.30pm.

Interested? Contact Michelle at the SAIN office or visit www.vistaproject.org.uk

Local Disability Forums

At our recent AGM, many of you said that you would like to get involved with your local disability forum but that you didn't know how to contact them. Hopefully the details below will soon have you in touch.

Taunton Deane Disability Forum.

For meeting dates and venues please contact David Atkinson on 01823 282712 or email pardre@btconnect.com

Mendip Disability Forum

Meets 4 times per year contact Paul Marsh on 01458 448378 for dates and venue or email pam.luxton@dial.pipex.com

South Somerset Disability Forum

Hold bi monthly meetings, contact Frances Peacey on 01935 706766 or email ssdf1@hotmail.com for more details

The West Somerset Disability Association

Meet on the last Monday of the month in Minehead. Call Molly Newstead on 01984 634739 or email westsomersetdisability@tiscali.co.uk to find out more



Somerset Gateway A Community Information Partnership.

SAIN recently attended the launch of the "Somerset Gateway" This new database holds information on a wide range of local clubs, societies, voluntary services, advice and support services, Hobbies, learning and other services throughout Somerset.

Do you want to know how to make contact with your local disability forum. Maybe you need some support and want to contact an advocate or you just want to know what's going on in your area related to a particular activity. If so the Somerset Gateway has up to date information and contact details on a wide range of subjects

An easy reference card has been included with all newslet-

ters with details of how you can contact the Somerset Gateway or log on to www.somerset.gov.uk/somersetgateway

Maybe you are a member of a club or society who are not yet on the database, if so then log on to the Somerset Gateway website or contact **them on 01823 336370**

Sensory Loss Consultation

SAIN, the Somerset Access and Inclusion Network are pleased to announce that they have secured funding from Somerset County Council, Social Services department to complete a consultation exercise with people with sensory loss.

We are looking for people from the following groups; deaf people, hard of hearing people and blind/visually impaired people who would like to be involved in the consultation exercise. Each group will be consulted separately, twice yearly on topics

such as the Counties Sensory Loss policy, the National Sensory Loss policy, Equipment Provision, Access and information and any other topics of concern.

Our aim is to bring a panel from each group together to discuss the above topics and feedback their views to the council so that services can be delivered in line with the needs of the group. We are considering holding panel meetings in March and September of this year and we are keen to hear from anyone who may like to be involved.

In order for us to fully represent the views of people with sensory loss in Somerset it is es-

sential that we include as many people from each of the groups as possible, this consultation will therefore be open to any adult with sensory loss residing in Somerset and not just SAIN members. We would therefore be grateful if you could circulate this to as many relevant parties as possible.

If you would like more information on the exercise and would like to be involved please contact the office with your details as soon as possible, we will then contact you again in mid February to arrange dates for the panels to meet. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Michelle at the office

Leisuremobility comes to Minehead

Do you have temporary or permanent mobility problems? Are you only able to walk short distance? Would you like to shop and visit the facilities in Minehead if so Leisuremobility may be the answer.

Leisuremobility hire out manual, and powered wheelchairs and

scooters to aid those wishing to enjoy the region. For a small charge wheelchairs and scooters will be available for short term hire from the Leisuremobility vehicle based at the Summerland Avenue Car Park in Minehead on Thursday 17th February between 10am and 3.30pm and then fortnightly for a trial period. The service also operates in Ilfracombe on a Wednesday. You can prebook

seven days in advance. For service availability and bookings please call 01271 328866



Are you losing your sight

Talk to some one in a similar situation. Steven is registered blind and has a number of useful addresses and phone numbers and is happy to talk to you about his own experiences. Give him a ring on 01643 702321

Make sure it's safe

Many of you will have adaptations in your home to assist with daily living. It is vital that these adaptations are checked on a regular basis to ensure that they are safe. The likes of handrails, should be checked to ensure that they are securely fitted and are not missing any fixings. Ask a friend or relative to

check them over and make sure they are OK. If you find any problems with your equipment then you should report the problem to Medequip on 01823 259993 or talk to your social worker as soon as possible





Crisis House Public Meeting

at the Albemarle Centre (The Loft Meeting Room)
Friday 11th March 2.30-4.30

The main philosophy is that people in a crisis should have an alternative to hospital admission, should be helped to identify their needs and find their own solutions, there should be a non-medical approach that takes people's whole lives into account, and that respects the wide variety of beliefs, lifestyles and needs of the local community

This meeting should be of interest to service users, survivors, carers, statutory and voluntary sector workers, service providers and commissioners

Aim of the event is to

- demonstrate how much support there is across Somerset for this kind of initiative
- hear first hand from the project manager how a crisis house has been successfully funded and is now running in Cornwall (Speaker Trevor Moses)

- Seek volunteers who have the time to commit to form a steering group
- Seek other practical offers of support from individuals and agency representatives
- Plan a way forward

For more information about the event and/or help with transport please contact User Participation Workers, Julia D'Allen 01935 840137 or Alexandra Simson 01643 702853 or Liz Simmons Mind in Taunton & West Somerset 01823 334906



Patient and Public Involvement in Health Forums (PPI)

What can a PPI forum do?

- Encourage local people to get involved in health matters
- Find out what people really think about health care locally and take action
- Independently watch over the quality of local health care
- Monitor, visit and report on NHS services from a patients viewpoint
- Shape decisions which impact upon our health
- Work with local groups and developing partnerships to influence local and national health decisions.
- Make reports and recommendations about trust services, based on the views of patients and the community.
- Be a force for fairness and change

- Monitor the effectiveness of local patient advice and liaison services (PALS) and complaint support services such as ICAS

What can a PPI forum not do?

- Become involved in management or operation of trust activities
- Reveal commercially sensitive information about a trust.
- Breach the confidentiality of individual patient details
- Take up individual complaints
- Promote their own pecuniary interests

If you would like to know more then following is a list of public meetings where any member of the public can go along and raise any health related issue or concern with a member of the forum. Meeting are subject to change, if you have special needs for accessing a meeting please contact James or Luisa at the health Advisory Partnership on 0845 6015849

Somerset Coast PPI Forum Thursday 10th March 2005

The Foxes Hotel, Minehead Starting at : 7.00pm

Somerset Partnership PPI Wednesday 16th March 2005

Bridgwater & Albion Rugby & Football Club Ltd, Lounge Suite , Bridgwater, TA6 4TZ Starting at : 2.00pm

Taunton Deane PPI Forum Tuesday 1st March 2005

United Reform Church, Wellington. Starting at : 12 noon

