

RPCAG Newsletter

Official Newsletter of the Richmond Parent Carers Action Group

Issue 1 October 2010

Prompt Action!

All change!! New Government legislation mean cuts that will affect us all. As parents of children with special needs we have to be extra vigilant to ensure that our children's rights are not slowly eroded away in the government cost-cutting spree. We therefore desperately need your support.

Each of you has a special talent that you can bring to the table to help us to put our case forward. Collectively our voices are more likely to be heard and acted upon by the Richmond Borough Council. To date RPCAG has enjoyed a productive and supportive relationship with the Council. Now we are working at building strong links with the new Councillors and individuals who represent our children. With a growing voice and better communications, our children's and our own needs are more likely to be met. **For many of us, we have to be the voice our children do not have.**

Three years of progress

During the last three years we have achieved many of our objectives but there is still plenty of work to do. Some of the highlights to date include the organisation of six Family Fun days and special Information Days supported by guest speakers for our members. RPCAG has also covered topics relating to school choices, therapy options and health-care. In addition, we have linked up with professional charities, such as the National Autistic Society (NAS), Scope and Mencap. This year, together

with NAS, we held an Autism Day that was attended by over forty families. RPCAG has shared skills, information and guidance within our group as well as with our sister charity, Me Too & Co. Many of our members feel that belonging to RPCAG helps them avoid the feeling of isolation.

By being informed and being pro-active we can help shape the future for our children and improve the quality of life for all concerned.

Improvements in SEN transport

A recent Transport Focus Meeting with Richmond Borough's Head of Transport, Mr Robert Flower, has meant swift action being taken to replace the Special Educational Needs (SEN), transport provision to Linden Lodge by a more suitable vehicle. Furthermore, improved communication channels have been forged by both sides as a result of the meeting. RPCAG and individual parents are now able to consult with Mr Flower on transport issues and more pressingly, on the forthcoming SEN transport changes.

Children and parents enjoy a session with the Music Group.

Focus on Social Services

At a recent Social Services focus meeting with Richmond Borough's Head of Social Services, Michelle Williams, it was agreed that Ms Williams would personally oversee the training and development of new staff. She also confirmed that new staff would be accompanied by an experienced staff member when visiting parents for the first time.

Ms Williams also agreed to send new staff to a play session at Me Too & Co, our group as part of their training package.

Aiming High!

In July we held a very well received "FUN DAY" for our parents which was sponsored by 'Aiming High'. We also held an Aiming High focus meeting with Becky Powell, Richmond Borough's co-ordinator for Aiming High.

Ms Powell came to tell us about Aiming High and how we can, by completing a couple of forms, gain access to a government 'one-off payment' of up to £500 for short breaks for our children. The money needs to be spent by December 31st 2010.

If you need the forms to be sent to you, please telephone: Becky Powell on 0208 8316123.



Action needed! to save our Respite Care!

The Croft Centre Re-Development Campaign

John Doherty, RPCAG's previous Chair and now a Trustee of Me Too & Co, started the ball rolling by campaigning for planning permission for The Croft Children's Centre in Kew. There was great jubilation when planning permission was finally granted despite a certain amount of public unpopularity and resistance to the scheme.

However, we subsequently learned that £1.2m of government funding for the re-development had been withdrawn. Part of the project was to include a three bedroom respite centre for children at the site.

Currently Richmond Borough has no provision for overnight respite for children. Respite care is essential for our families for a number of reasons. Firstly it gives parents a much needed break from the stress imposed by constant caring. This is especially so for our single parents. Secondly it gives our children a safe environment in which to socialise and thirdly it helps in the transition from dependency to independence.

Without respite, families are often on the edge emotionally and relationships are therefore more likely to break down. The carers are also at a greatly increased risk of mental health problems, illness and accidents.

Depression is acknowledged as the biggest danger with often devastating consequences.

We need more action!

From a financial point of view, Richmond Borough spends up to £600 per night to send a child out of the Borough for respite care. This does not happen often as budgets are tight. The burden on the NHS and the local Primary Care Trust (PCT), from neglect in this area is a huge nationwide problem. Should the unspeakable happen, then it will be social services that would have to take care of the children involved.

It is unthinkable not to have suitable respite care in Richmond Borough. In the long term, the cost both financial and human would be immeasurable.

We are lobbying our MP's

RPCAG have lobbied our MPs Vince Cable and Zac Goldsmith. Along with Cllr. Christine Perceival, and as a result of our representations, they have written to Michael Gore, Secretary of State, to reverse the decision to withdraw the funding. RPCAG has written to the Richmond & Twickenham Times and has had three letters published. We are now in talks with Nick Whitfield, Head of Children's Services in Richmond Borough Council. We would like to assure you that RPCAG will not rest until suitable respite is provided in this borough.

PLEASE HELP – fill in our form!

Please do all you can to help this essential service. RPCAG will keep you posted on how you can voice your concerns.

**JUST FILL IN A RPCAG
MEMBERSHIP FORM
AND WE WILL DO
THE REST!**

RPCAG 2010 Diary Looking ahead

- **29th October**
Information and Fun Day.
- **5th November**
Transition focus meeting organised by Karl Burgess with guest speakers from Mencap, the Job Centre and Connexions *to be confirmed.*
- **December**
(Date to be confirmed) Focus meeting: Secondary School provision within the Borough. What would you like to see in place for your child?
- **17th December**
RPCAG Christmas Party at The Turk's Head with a live band and 'team building' games for all parents of RPCAG and Me Too & Co as well as their friends. This is a **Free Event**.
Book your babysitter through:
The Three Wings Trust's Sitting Service
They have experienced special needs sitters.
Telephone: 0208 8831 6175

RPCAG Contact Details

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