

## **NEWS ABOUT DISH**

The well attended Disability Huntingdonshire (DISH) AGM was on 17<sup>th</sup> November. We also made unsung hero awards to Hilary Bayles, a volunteer for over 6 years with DISH, and Daniel her brother who ran the London Marathon for us. Both were very brave since their father died suddenly, just before the Marathon event. We gratefully received a cheque for £5000.00 from Huntingdon Freeman's Trust. This money is vital in helping us to continue with our work. We are also funded by Huntingdonshire District Council; St Neots, St Ives and Huntingdon Town Councils, and Cambridgeshire County Council.

**Over the next year we shall be striving to survive the future cuts in local authority expenditure.**

As manager, I have been with Disability Huntingdonshire for just over a year now. It has been a sometimes challenging but always very fulfilling time. Although the organisation is very small, it is very effective, and this reflects the dedication of the staff, volunteers and trustees. We have also been pleased this year to host a work placement from the Papworth Rehabilitation Centre, and to have had a month's volunteer support from two Polish students who were visiting the UK.

We have a website and a facebook page, but our reputation ensures that clients return to us, and many new clients are enlisted through word of mouth recommendations.

**IMPORTANT NEWS !!!!!!!!  
DISH now has NEW PHONE NUMBERS:  
01480 748 168 and 03303 553 256 (good for mobiles)**

People with disabilities are often housebound. Many cannot use or do not have access to Internet. Last year, DISH made the equivalent of 332 (30 minute unit) Home Visits. Telephone Information and face to face interviews resulted in over 2000 client contacts over the year. We offer a valued and well used service.

During the year we also set up a successful partnership with St Neots Children's Centre. The majority of families were helped to claim Disability Living Allowance. This was used for a variety of beneficial expenses, not normally afforded, such as:

- outings;
- specialist tutors not available through statutory services;
- special toys and equipment;
- replacement clothing;
- dietary needs;
- personal assistants and childminders.

At the request of parents and local Children's Centre managers, our family adviser co-ordinated meetings of parent groups. Parents exchanged experiences, overcame

isolation, and gained mutual support. The adviser was later able to follow up individual cases.

The landscape of Welfare Benefits has changed dramatically due to the current and previous Government's Welfare Reforms. People with disabilities belong to a group that is the most affected. Vulnerable people, particularly those with disabilities, and those in pockets of deprivation (eg Huntingdon North, St Neots), will need to be guided through these in order to maximise their income and to dispel the likelihood of becoming reliant on charities and local authorities for crisis help and discretionary funding.

An application for Disability Living Allowance (child) or Personal Independence Payment (adult) can take anything up to 4 hours to complete. DISH is one of the few services that will undertake to do this on a face to face basis. DISH, by taking our clients through the bewildering benefits minefield helps clients to maximise income and to regain dignity through financial independence. People with disabilities can make healthier choices. Reduction in anxiety improves mental health, and reduces calls on health and social services.

We have established for next financial year a formal Partnership and SLA with Huntingdon and District MS Society. We work in partnership and take referrals from: Hunts Blind and the Huntingdon Physical Disabilities Team. We collaborate with, and signpost to: Cambridgeshire Alliance for Independent Living; Royal British Legion; Axiom and Hunts Money Advice; St Neots Time bank and Foodbank and many other local and national services for people with disabilities. We liaise where possible with the Department of Work and Pensions.

We are making applications to charities for grants to fund an Outreach project. This would enable us to reach more vulnerable people in local Community Centres, Children's Centres or Doctor's Surgery.

We have had expressions of interest from various centres.

We want to be there.

Professionals and potential clients want us there too.

We just need the money to do it.