



# News from Red2Green

## Coalition confronts County Cabinet over cuts

A coalition of clients, carers and voluntary organisations from across Cambridgeshire put pen to paper at the end of December to write to members of the County Cabinet. They were expressing shared concern about possible cuts by Cambridgeshire County Council in its services for people with disabilities and mental health issues.

Concern was expressed that the County's need to meet budget shortfalls could result in:

- "respite services for some of the county's neediest people and families cut to the bone.
- the sudden closure of day support services without proper pre-planning
- withdrawal of funding for support services which enable disabled people to find a job and become part of their community
- cuts in support to disabled groups and voluntary sector organisations which provide important services and representation to people in need".

The signatories recognise that the Council's overspending needs to be redressed, but thought that the rebalance was being attempted in too short a time frame. Concern was expressed that any dramatic cuts taken in April 07 could actually

turn out to cost more. For example, carers whose respite support is cut may feel forced to take up residential places instead for their loved ones, at a much greater cost to the county.

The letter's authors instead asked that the Council work in partnership to look at how to make the most of limited resources. The organisations point out that they bring in funds from external sources which help make the Council's money go further, making impressive results possible.

Overall, the authors asked:

- "for you [the Council] to structure re-balancing of the budget over a longer period in order to protect our most vulnerable users and carers from serious hardship
- for you to work with us - users, carers and the voluntary sector - to ensure that the complex range of supports we have developed in partnership with you over many years are not destroyed
- for you to seek efficiency savings first and to root out poor quality / low value projects, roles and services before cutting front-line services



*County's activities under threat?*

- for you to respond to your own survey of tax-payers in Cambridgeshire, all of whom accorded a high priority to the needs of disabled people".

We await to see whether the Council takes up the coalition's offer of a meeting.

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## Reboot truly boots up

Readers of the last *News from Red2Green* will recall that we proudly announced a grant from the Big Lottery Fund's Community Recycling and Economic Development (CRED) Programme towards our Reboot computer recycling project. On 5 December it was formally launched.

Reboot is training young adults with Asperger Syndrome in computer recycling, meeting local waste recycling targets while gaining on-the-job skills and training.

Pete Wickham, Reboot's Manager, said: "New directives mean that the public can't just put their old computers in the bin any more; they have to be disposed of in an environmentally friendly way. We know lots of parents are looking for computers for their children or for themselves for that matter, and through Reboot you can order a refurbished one, built to whatever specification you need. And remember to bring us your old computer and we'll carefully recycle it for you. Importantly, while we're doing our bit to minimise waste in the environment, we're also helping to improve the job prospects of young adults with social communication difficulties".

Aspergers Syndrome is a form of autism and affects the way people communicate and relate to others. Many people with Aspergers Syndrome are very intelligent, but often can't succeed in employment because they find it difficult to read the unwritten rules of the workplace.

People with Aspergers Syn-



*Reboot trainee, Ben, being filmed for BBC Newsroom South East*

drome often excel at computing because they can get to grips with the logic and processes involved in how computers work, so this Reboot recycling initiative helps train them in an area which they clearly already enjoy. Reboot's trainees are all graduates of Red2Green's Aspirations programme, which teaches them the social skills and strategies for coping in every day situations.

The Reboot launch on 5 December was widely covered in the media; BBC Newsroom South East covered it in five bulletins, Cambridge Evening News covered it twice in three days, and Pete Wickham did radio interviews with BBC Radio Cambridgeshire, Q103 and Star107.

Reboot is based at Citylife house in Sturton Street, Cambridge. For more information visit [www.red2green.org](http://www.red2green.org), email [reboot@red2green.org](mailto:reboot@red2green.org) or call 01223 365917.

Supported by  
**The National Lottery**<sup>®</sup>  
through the Big Lottery Fund



PROGRAMME  
**CRED**

## Red2Green round up

### Spooky celebrations

To celebrate Halloween, the Options team threw a fabulous party, inviting our own clients and those from other projects and homes in the county. Everyone excelled themselves in their fancy dress, and £400 was raised towards a new minibus.

### Health for Life spans South Cambridgeshire

Courtesy of the Big Lottery Fund Health for Life is now able to extend its service provision into the whole of rural South Cambridgeshire. The new Development Officer, Claire Perry, has settled into her new role and has 11 new clients to date, two of whom are already attending activities.

We are now working closely with a variety of health professionals to encourage a managed flow of new client referrals and with community education and local organisations to identify further activities.

### Bottisham Village College

Thank you to the students of Bottisham Village College for raising £600 for Red2Green by each donating £1 not to wear their uniforms. Your support is much appreciated.

### Expanded website

There are lots of new pages on Red2Green's website, including an information centre where you can download our press releases, as well as more detail about some of our projects. Do revisit us at [www.red2green.org](http://www.red2green.org).

# Aspirations in the city

Red2Green is expanding its programme for young people aged 16 – 25 with Asperger's Syndrome or social communication difficulties.

This project is for young people on the autistic spectrum, and the Aspirations team is particularly keen to outreach to students from ethnic minority backgrounds who live in or around Cambridge. Sessions will take place at Citylife House in Sturton Street, provisionally timetabled for Thursdays. Sessions in other locations such as Ely may also be possible.

There will be taster sessions involving various activities such as food, craft, money skills, computing and games and the aim would be to meet individuals' needs on their doorstep. In the longer term it is hoped that these



*Fun activities like t-shirt design also enhance social skills and interaction at Aspirations*

young people would join the main project, for all ages, based in Harvey's Barn.

For further information contact Susan Owen at Aspirations on 01223 811662

This outreach service has been made possible thanks to grants from the Equitable Charitable Trust and Awards for All.



## Researching the rural past

Somewhere in Harvey's Barn Mr R. Harvey has etched his name and dated the time as 1774. We haven't found the etching yet, but Aspirations students have discovered more about the barn and life in Swaffham Bulbeck during the C18th, thanks to a grant from The Heritage Lottery Fund.

At a presentation evening on 31 October, students displayed the rewards of their labour, including three dimensional displays of an 18th century local map and papier mache examples of earthenware dishes and jugs. Using an old plan of the structure of the barn, some students created a balsa wood model of the frame.

The learners worked as a team, using digital cameras, creating a Power Point presentation, and using new "Mind Mapping" software to create colourful, informative displays of their work.

Thirty young people were involved in the project, concentrating on areas of specific interest to them; ten received accreditation in local history.

Most importantly for this group of young learners it gave them a great sense of achievement, their confidence has increased, they have worked together and met new people, and the work has sparked an interest to do more research into their local area.

## Red2Green round up

### Achievements recognised

On 31 October, Aspirations students held a presentation evening and received certificates to mark their Open College Network (OCN) qualifications achieved over the year. The 40 students, with social communication disorders such as Aspergers Syndrome, gained credits in building a portfolio, self and others and computer skills. Ten gained credits in local history, and three in health and hygiene.

At the open evening, the students also displayed the results of their research into Harvey's Barn, Burgh Hall and the surrounding village (see below, left).

Looking forward, learning routes for Aspirations' students for this year include:

- budgeting for independent living
- healthy living
- further IT skills
- work preparation and understanding the workplace
- living in the community

These activities are accredited and we look forward to supporting our learners in this exciting and varied timetable.

### Cambridge Rag

We were very pleased to receive a cheque for £200 from Cambridge Rag. This will go towards PAT testing equipment for Reboot, helping us to make sure that all our recycled computers are electrically safe. Big thanks to all the students who took part in a range of events from bungee jumping to 'blind date'.

## Red2Green launches new Amber project

Young adults looking for training or further education are being offered a new Red2Green service.

Formally launched on 21 November, our Amber initiative is offering tailored learning and work preparation support for 16 to 24 year olds keen to get into apprenticeships or college.



*The Amber team being photographed by the Cambridge Evening News*

Red2Green's Deputy Chief Executive, Samantha Sherratt, said "There are around 1,000 young people not in employment, education or training across the county, and that's just the 16 to 19 year olds. So we are offering a really individually tailored programme so young people can look at the skills they've already got, receive help if they need to brush up on something, like numeracy for example, look at readying themselves for employment and helping them find suitable apprenticeships. For others we can help find them further education courses which will then enhance their chances of employment".

To be eligible for the project the young adults have to be aged between 16 and 24, and not in employment, education or training.

The need for the Amber project is clearly evident <sup>(1)</sup>:

- Unemployment rates of 18-24 year olds in Cambridgeshire is almost double that of 45-59 year olds
- The average rate of young adults in Cambridgeshire identified as not in employment, education or training stands at 5.5%. Rates in Fenland are above the average at over 8%, and in South Cambridgeshire rates are the lowest at 2.5%

- In LSC's Cambridgeshire area, 46% of 16-18s with learning difficulties/disabilities are in employment, education or training – this is low compared to the English average of 59%.

Through a series of business breakfasts and one to one consultations, Amber staff are also engaging employers in the area to assess their workforce needs and to raise their awareness of these potential apprentices.

We were delighted that the Amber launch was covered in the Ely Standard, Newmarket Journal, Cambridge Evening News, Star 107 and BBC Radio Cambridgeshire.

The project funded by the European Social Fund, through the Learning and Skills Council.

<sup>(1)</sup> All statistics from *Developing the evidence base for the Cambridgeshire Investing in Communities programme*, September 2006, Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion and Roger Tym and Partners.

Funded by:



Leading learning and skills



## Red2Green round up

### Work4You

Work4You, a supported employment programme creating opportunities for people with learning disabilities in Cambridgeshire, was launched on 6 November. Work4You is a joint venture between Phoenix Employ and Papworth Trust and is funded by Cambridgeshire Social Services. Red2Green is part of that joint venture.

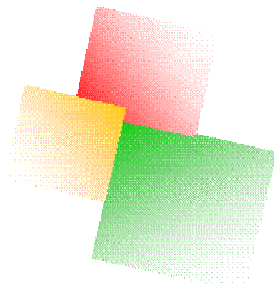
Through the services of specialist employment advisers, Work4You helps people with learning disabilities find and retain work. We carefully match the applicant and their skills to a suitable job and provide support to employers, work colleagues and the individual in the work place.

Work4You is tailored to individuals and provides help them in their assessing and profiling, CVs and application forms, job searching, job matching, job coaching, benefits advice, general advice and guidance and in work support.

You can find out more about the Work4You programme by calling freephone 0800 952 5000 or visiting [www.work4you.org.uk](http://www.work4you.org.uk), where you can sign up to receive a free news sheet.

### Employers breakfast

To encourage more employers to take on people with disabilities or mental health problems, Red2Green's Advance and Amber projects are jointly holding an employers breakfast in Ely in February. This follows a similar, successful introduction in Cambridge on 31 October. For more information email [advance@red2green.org](mailto:advance@red2green.org).



## Real advances in Advance's first year

Advance is one year old and here Heather Taplin gives an overview of the project's, and its clients', successes.

In Advance's first year, we have welcomed 56 clients on to the project and I am delighted to report that so far 28 people have moved forward into a voluntary role and another six have achieved paid work. We will be expecting a substantial number of people already in volunteering to move into paid work this year.

Many clients have said that they appreciate how Advance helps them work their way through guidance, training and work preparation at their own pace, addressing personal issues as we go. Some clients, due to the stage and nature of their disability, are not ready for placement or paid work yet, but are making great progress and will extend their working experiences next year.

All clients have regular, individual reviews, as well as activities such as skills assessments, career interest assessments, updating CVs, interview practice and conducting job searching. Regular employment support reviews are available to clients and employers whether this is paid or voluntary work.

Moving forward into work and volunteering can prove quite complicated and very daunting.



*Heather Taplin, Advance manager*

People need time and good information to make good decisions and action plans. To help, we are hoping to start a monthly benefit surgery, building up working relationships with all the benefits advisory services. Through these connections, our clients will receive the most appropriate benefits advice, allowing them to take well-informed, action planned choices. We aim to ensure all clients are offered a 'best off' calculation to help them.

Thanks to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, having a contract that is longer than twelve months gives scope for those clients who need more time to progress. We feel that we can work with people's cycles of engagement; Advance can meet their needs when they are ready to move forward. Referrers and clients have commented on the value of this project's flexibility to respond to clients' needs and not "lose the moment" or the opportunity.

## About this pull-out

This pull-out has been made possible thanks to Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's funding of Red2Green's Advance project. In this regular pull-out readers can learn more about the Advance project, Red2Green's other employment and volunteering initiatives, clients' own success stories, learning opportunities and initiatives in the world of work.

## What people say about Advance

Clients have said:

"I wanted to drop you a line and say thank you for the help and advice that you gave me, and just to let you know that I followed your advice regarding the presentation and layout of my CV and have successfully gained employment." **Tim T.**

"Thank you again for all you are doing for me." **Alan H.**

"Thanks for all the help and support, it did help me." **Mandy L.**

Referrers have said:

"There is so much we appreciate about this project"

"Clients appreciate the way this project can react quickly and flexibly to their needs."

"We like the way you are flexible about meeting clients where they feel at ease."

"We feel that your initial informal chat to explain the project to clients helps to move their motivation and encourage them prior to a formal beginning."

"We think you are approachable and willing to go the extra mile."

## Advance fact sheet: Readying yourself for work

Make a good plan, and make it SMART (Specific, Measured, Achievable, Realistic and Timed).

### Think about your health

- Are you used to doing things every day, if not once you start working or volunteering you may find yourself easily exhausted and this can bring back health problems. So build up your stamina by exercising both your body and your mind.
- Should you work part time or can you maintain full time employment? Would a voluntary position be a good way to prove to yourself and to prospective employers that you can do the work? Speak to your support worker, specialist, or GP and let them know what you are thinking of.

### Prepare

Have you had a benefit check to make sure that you know what you are permitted to do and what effect your plans might have on your benefits, and who to inform at Jobcentre Plus? Make sure you know the rules for your circumstances.

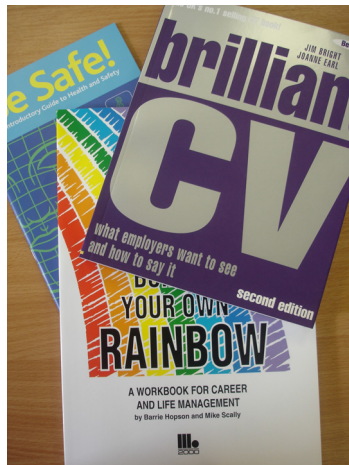
### Choose carefully

Think about what kind of work interests you, do you like to work:

- indoors or out, or either
- with your brain or your hands, or both
- by yourself, with other people, or both

Make sure you have done some careers guidance and are making good informed choices.

Is your CV up to date and reflecting all your best and new skills? is it targeted towards your new choice of employment? does it show the person you are now? If



not, ask for some help.

Are you confident in your abilities, are your existing skills a bit rusty? Could you do with some training to bring you up to date with the workforce? If so, get help, search for suitable training and include it into your plans.

### Arrange necessary changes

Talk about any reasonable adaptations that you might need for the workplace; remember you could also need this for a voluntary position. Reasonable adjustments could mean:

- Flexible working times. If your medication doesn't begin working until part way through the morning, it is better to arrange later start and finish times in the day. People already do this to avoid rush hour traffic and it can be useful for employers to have someone around to extend their service hours.
- If someone has mobility problems sometimes changing the placing of resources can help. For instance, anyone with a replacement hip might re-arrange filing systems, to save bending to lower filing drawers.

Personal working equipment can be available for you through the Access to Work programme, although only for paid positions.

## Advance round up

### Volunteers' meals expenses

Since 9 October a change in policy allows money paid to refund the cost of meals taken during volunteering to be disregarded for benefit purposes. Hopefully this positive change will enable more people on benefits to take up volunteering and become more involved in their local community.

Further info from Olwen Mitton at Jobcentre Plus on 0114 259 5600 or [olwen.mitton@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:olwen.mitton@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk)

### Better off calculations

Anyone unsure about how a return to work could affect their benefits can get a better off calculation. Jobcentre Plus use a web-based application, the Better Off Calculator, to provide estimates of current and potential entitlements to a range of benefits and tax credits.

### Is work good for your health and well-being?

This independent report commissioned for the Health, Work and Well-being strategy, (a partnership of Government, employers and healthcare professionals) has found that:

*"Being in work is not only good for a person's physical and mental health, but it also boosts self esteem and quality of life."*

Visit [www.health-and-work.gov.uk](http://www.health-and-work.gov.uk) for a summary of the report.

### Maximising income project

Citizen's Advice Bureaux provide local, free, impartial, independent and confidential Income Maximisation Projects. Call for benefits and debt advice. 0845 241 2555.

## My story

On the advice of Clive Diver, from Jobcentre Plus, David Bottwright came along to Red2Green's Advance launch last year. Here David tells his story:

"I just went along to find out if this would work for me. I had been going on doing tests for umpteen years. It's about finding the right kind of help. For me it's about whether people can understand me, and for me to get my confidence in somebody to be able to talk about things that have been holding me back.

People think I'm OK, and that's on the outside, but it's what's inside that makes me lose concen-



*David joining the Aspirations students in their local history research*

tration and focus and so to lose confidence. I feel I've always had problems in communication. I have reports showing some aspects of Asperger Syndrome; I've done lots of therapy, communication groups and assertiveness courses.

When I started at Advance we talked about my personal situation, what I wanted to do, my skills, talents, work experience and interests. We talked about the things which were stopping me getting to where I wanted to be. Our plan was to do some volunteering and some training and at the same time to keep a look out for suitable paid work.

First of all, in February, I joined Red2Green's Aspirations group who work with people with communication difficulties. I attend one day a week, am extending my IT skills, am really enjoying the practical work, especially the model making which is part of the National Heritage Lottery's funding of the History of Harvey's barn at Swaffham Bulbeck. Quite soon afterwards I got a paid Chauffeur's job with Executive travel. I'm self employed and work five or six days a week. I got the details from their website and I'm really enjoying the work.

After my CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) check cleared, I started volunteering as a minibus escort



*David Bottwright found new opportunities through Advance*

for Red2Green's Options service, and am now MIDAS trained certificated to drive a minibus with a tail lift.

I feel I have managed to fit in really well and feel the difference in myself. Everything is moving forward, not in leaps and bounds, but slowly getting there. I have learnt to look at things from other people's points of view and learnt how to get around things.

I am now helping other group members with their Skills for Life learning. I am getting social and communication skills and thinking about joining the evening social club."

## About Red2Green

Red2Green increases opportunities in education, training, work and leisure for people with a wide range of disabilities across Cambridgeshire. We also raise awareness of the potential of people with disabilities to make positive contributions to society.

*News from Red2Green* is a quarterly email newsletter to keep our supporters, partners and decision makers up to date with what is happening within the organisation, as well as the context in which we work.

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