

## Carers Day, 11<sup>th</sup> June 2009 at Haverfordwest Rugby and Football Club

Nicole van Schie welcomed everybody and announced the availability of free swimming for carers for the coming month on completion of a form. Hopefully this free swimming for carers could work for the year in the future if the take-up is good.

After this introduction Georgina Knowles gave a very moving account of her caring role, caring for her daughter Sapphire. Georgina had brought photographs which were shown on the screen, showing a smiley happy girl. Georgina's story started when Sapphire failed her hearing test aged 6 months. When she was 18 months old, Georgina was informed that Sapphire was severely disabled. After that Sapphire entered the system and since then has been in touch with a variety of professionals – some very good, and some not so good. Georgina has cared for Sapphire for 13 years, fed her, changed her nappies, spoken for her, heard for her, seen for her, taken her out... For a long time Georgina didn't see herself as a carer, just as a mother. She said that through Sapphire she has had an amazing life meeting many amazing people! She has been able to take Sapphire to Florida to swim with dolphins, had been able to take her to Disneyland... Georgina's account left many in the audience in tears, and focused people's minds on what life can be like for carers.

Tracey Martin-Smith from Telecare gave a presentation on the many useful gadgets that her team can supply to make life safer and enable people to stay in their homes. The range of devices was very impressive, from sensors that indicate flooding caused by taps being left on, to wet bed sensors, smoke detectors, door sensors and personal alarms of many different kinds. Tracey made clear that these devices can be used and adapted to suit many different situations. Alarms can be linked to several telephone numbers, starting with one family member going on to others if contact can't be made. If you are interested in any of these devices ring the PCC contact centre and ask for Telecare, or speak to Social Services.

Following this Nicole introduced the different organisations that had brought information to the event and were available for carers to talk to in the afternoon – Mind, Carers in Wales, Telecare, the Step Project (Pembroke College), Carers Outreach, Clynfyw Countryside Centre...

Janet Davies of Pembrokeshire College gave an outline of what the Step Project can do for carers. The project aims to enrich people's lives through learning and provides a range of courses in the community. The aim is to meet the needs of communities, so courses are provided at request and tailor-made. The project is working with a range of carers' support groups, Hafal, Mind, the Chronic Pain Support group amongst others. Courses are free and costs of dependent care and travel can sometimes be met. The Step Project also offers use of rooms free of charge to community groups, and personal advice and guidance.

After this Nicole interviewed Angela Watwood, the Head of Community Care Services. Angela started in her post about a year ago, having moved from Hampshire. After introducing her role Nicole asked Angela about her work with carers. Angela said that she saw carers very much as co-workers, and that if it wasn't for all the unpaid carers we as a society could by far not care for so many people. She said that the support agencies don't know of half of the cases out there and that it is a challenge to reach and support carers who don't even identify themselves as carers. Angela was very keen to find out from carers what services they needed, and encouraged carers to make suggestions. She also had advice for carers: "Make sure you have plans in place for emergencies, don't wait until there is a crisis. Go and visit homes to see if you like them for the time it might be needed".

*Carer 1: Thank you for a brilliant day*

*Carer 2: I came to the Carer's day last year and received so much information; it was overwhelming I never knew there was so much out there. This year I have come again so that I can now ask the right questions.*

*Janet Davies, STEP project: Nice atmosphere, have enjoyed it so far.*

*Other professional: Very well organised and warm atmosphere.*