

Carers Day, 17th June 2010 at Haverfordwest Rugby and Football Club

“A LIFE OF MY OWN”

Forty-seven carers and 23 other professionals booked a place in advance of the day. It was a busy event with lots of people meeting and catching up with one another.

Nicole van Schie welcomed everybody, announced the programme for the day. After the introduction Noel Evans talked about his caring role, caring for his Mum. Some people were much moved and it helped carers to know they are not alone in this, even though it sometimes feels like that. A carer said: “It was a wonderful day, knowing that as one is struggling there are people out there in the same position.”

Sheila Morris was unable to attend the day, but she had written her story down for Nicole to read out the account of her life as a carer. Sheila emphasised to realise that although it is hard to admit, there comes a time when the person you care for might be better off being cared for in a home. She also said it is important to go out to support groups and meet with other carers, to look after yourself. A carer: “I thought the carer’s presentations ‘A life of my own’ were very well presented and moving.”

Sophie Thomas from Paul Sartori talked about the importance of “Advance Care Planning”, in the past also called ‘living will’. Advance Care Planning helps to plan for the future and think about what kind of medical care you wish to receive in later life, to keep control over the care and support you need. The last presentation of the morning was given by Nicole about the Welsh Assembly’s Carers Measure of which an update is published on [page 4](#). A carer said: “Informative, enjoyable and worthwhile day, will recommend to other carers to attend if they can.”

This year carers had their therapy taster sessions before lunch and they had the opportunity to meet and talk with people from Snowdrop Care and Mobility and at the information stands of 16 organisations who provide support and services for carers. The ‘Secret Service Film’ of Ceredigion Carers was shown during this time. A carer: “It was the first time I had attended such an event and thought it wonderful to have so much information all together in one place.”

In the afternoon

Counsellor Sian James, Cabinet Member and Carers Champion

Jon Skone, Director of Social Services and Hywel Dda Health Board County Director,

Angela Watwood, Head of Community and Primary Care

And Lyn Hambidge, Head of Housing Commissioning and Carers Strategy Lead

joined for the Carers Forum Carousel. The five forum groups were visited in turn by those four people to discuss their questions. The rooms were buzzing and the overall feedback showed that “there wasn’t enough time”. A carer: “I was disappointed that the total amount of time for the discussion forums was so short!!”

Report Carers Forum

Sian James told the forum that as the Carers Champion she works on the Carers Strategy by being a member of the Carers Strategy Implementation Group. This group is informed by the Carers Forum. She works with Maggie Titterton from Carers Wales, meets with Gwenda Thomas, deputy

minister of the Welsh Assembly and is part of the Carers Champions Network set up by Carers Wales.

Sian is also involved in the review of Carers Funding and assures carers that this review would address issues such as the closing of Pembrokeshire Carers Outreach and the Young Carers Project. She also visits carers groups and organisations.

If there are problems with the request for a carer's assessment Sian advised to ask for her. She recommends to make use of carer's assessments. Carer's assessment staff members are now placed in community care and childcare teams, a further person is to be appointed to consider the strategic aspects of carers provision. She hopes these staff will be proactive in identifying carers who are having problems.

As the cabinet member Sian James has a strategic role with the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy and is the chair of this board.

On the practical side Sian finds out what difficulties people have and looks at making things run smoothly. Through her involvement with the carer's grant she has been instrumental in distributing money to voluntary groups such as Crossroads, Age Concern, Pembrokeshire Mind, Hafal, the Alzheimer's Society etc. with a commitment to fund up to March 2011.