

# Wise words...but who said what?

We can all learn a lot from the knowledge and experiences of others. The following quotes came from the mouths of the famous faces shown below but who said what?

Have a read of the quotes below and have a go at matching them to the individuals shown using the table below

to help you. If you think you know the answers, please email your entry to karen.porter@woking.gov.uk The first lucky name to be pulled out of the virtual hat will **win £20 of vouchers** to spend on a special treat – it could be a book, film, CD or even a massage – the choice is endless! So get reading and send your answers along today.



Barack Obama



Nelson Mandela



Margaret Thatcher



Stephen Hawking



Susan Hampshire



Lance Armstrong

1. "No woman in my time will be prime minister or chancellor or foreign secretary - not the top jobs. Anyway, I wouldn't want to be prime minister; you have to give yourself 100 percent."

2. "Pain is temporary. It may last a minute, or an hour, or a day, or a year, but eventually it will subside and something else will take its place. If I quit, however, it lasts forever."

3. "This (return to basic truths) is the meaning of our liberty and our creed - why men and women and children of every race and every faith can join in celebration across this magnificent Mall, and why a man whose father less than 60 years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath."

4. "We are just an advanced breed of monkeys on a minor planet of a very average star. But we can understand the Universe. That makes us something very special."

5. "It is a lonely existence to be a child with a disability which no-one can see or understand, you exasperate your teachers, you disappoint your parents, and worst of all you know that you are not just stupid."

6. "For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

Name	No.
Barack Obama	_____
Nelson Mandela	_____
Margaret Thatcher	_____
Stephen Hawking	_____
Susan Hampshire	_____
Lance Armstrong	_____

# WOKING

STAFF NEWSLETTER FOR ALL EMPLOYEES OF WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL

SPECIAL EDITION

## It's Equalities Week 2009!

Welcome to this special edition of **OK!** which has been prepared by colleagues across the Council to mark Equalities Week (Monday 11 to Friday 15 May 2009).

This will be the fourth time that the Council has organised such a week and the aim is to highlight and share differences between us all and understand that these differences are important to the rich fabric of our organisation, our community and society in general.

A week of events, activities and entertainment has been organised focusing on equality and diversity (see programme on this page and overleaf) and we hope that at least one or two of them will be of interest and encourage

you to think about the different people that you encounter in your day-to-day life.

Inside this special issue of **OK!** you will find a range of interesting articles and heartfelt accounts from familiar faces who are keen to offer you an insight into their lives that are interesting and unique for a number of reasons.

There are also a number of articles from people outside of our organisation, who have shared their unique lives with **OK!** readers.

This year, Equalities Week has a special focus on mental health and well-being, recognising that such problems can affect people at any time of life and in different ways. Despite the

fact that anxiety and phobias affect about one in every ten people at some point in their lives, there still seems to be a general reticence to talk about such issues which can compound and even exacerbate the problem. This issue seeks to explode some of the myths about mental health problems and encourage people to look after their minds as well as their bodies.

And if you feel like winning yourself a little treat, there is also a chance to **win £20 of vouchers** for a Woking retail outlet of your choice by entering our special equalities competition on the back page.

**So why don't you turn away from the computer screen, make yourself a cup of tea and take five minutes to enjoy this special edition of OK!**

## Programme

### Monday 11 May Chill out! Staff Rest Area Civic Offices

For the duration of Equalities Week, part of the staff rest area at the Civic Offices will be transformed into a chill out zone where you can go to escape from your desk. There will be information stands about how to identify and deal with stress, various professionals will be available for a chat and **Azmet Khan**, a local therapist, will be available to offer head and shoulder massages to those people who have booked in advance. Annual health checks will be taking place in the First Aid Room on the second floor for those people who have booked in advance.

In addition, you will be able to vent some of your frustrations on the stress

wall (but keep it clean please as it's a family show) before relaxing for five minutes with a cup of herbal tea and a bar of endorphin-stimulating chocolate.

And if you prefer to exercise your stresses away, you will be able to have a go on the Wii fit console – anyone for tennis, or boxing or ten pin bowling?

Of course, you will still need to go back to your desk and some point, but you know what they say about all work and no play!



### Stress Management Training

During the first two days of Equalities Week, qualified external trainer, **Joy Gleeson**, will conduct three training sessions with managers on how to recognise and manage stress among their teams.

Her objective will be to raise awareness of the signs, symptoms, background and causes of stress in the workplace and equip managers with a range of techniques for tackling stress within their teams and themselves.

Managers have already been contacted about this, but if you feel that you would benefit and don't already have a slot booked, please contact **Refeia Zaman** on ext. 3479.

# Equalities Week programme ...continued

**Tuesday 12 May**

## **Sexual Orientation Awareness** 2 - 4pm, Committee Room 1

In this session, **Gino Mariano**, Chairperson of Gay Surrey and gay rights campaigner will talk candidly about some of the key issues affecting gay people in Surrey today. He will share his views on gay rights and civil partnerships and will be happy to answer any questions that people may have. If you would like to attend but haven't put your name down, simply turn up on the day.

## **Listening Service drop-in**

2 - 4pm, Rest Area

**Judy Ouellette** from the confidential Listening Service will be available in the rest area between 2-4pm if you would like to pop down for a chat or to find out more about the service she offers. Alternatively, if you would like a confidential one-to-one session (for up to 30 mins) please email Angie Taylor in confidence.

**Wednesday 13 May**

## **Gypsy and Traveller Awareness** 10am - 12 noon, Committee Room 1

In this session, **John Hockley** from Surrey Police and **Amanda Boynton** from Surrey County Council will share their knowledge and experience of working with gypsy and traveller communities. The awareness session will cover the history, culture, stigmas, myths and conflict issues associated with these communities. John and Amanda will also explore strategies for the future, including suggestions on best practice. This promises to be a fascinating insight into communities that are largely misunderstood by society in general. If you would like to attend but haven't put your name down, simply turn up on the day.

## **Health advice**

10am - 2pm, Staff Rest Area

**Katie Sharrock**, Personal Wellness Coach, will be offering nutrition advice and body fat testing in the rest area between 10am - 2pm. Do pop down if

you would like some advice and a free check.



**Thursday 14 May**

## **Introduction to signing** 11am - 12noon, Meeting Room 2

Have you ever encountered a deaf person and felt that it would be useful to communicate with them, albeit at a basic level? Why not pop along to this one hour, power session in how to use sign language to find out what you could do to help people who rely on sign language to get their message across. Qualified signer, **Hannah Howard** (Benefits), will show you what's it's all about and hand out some quick reference cards at the end to help for the future. If you want to participate, simply pop along to Meeting Room 2 on the day.

## **Consult the Counsellor**

11am - 2pm, Staff Rest Area

Qualified counsellor, **Claire Wootton-Woolley**, will be available in the rest area for advice and a chat between 11am - 2pm. Please drop by if you would like to find out more about the services she offers and/or Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. Alternatively, if you would like a confidential one-to-one Session (for up to half an hour) please book a time, in confidence, with Angie Taylor in HR.

## **Comedy Night**

6.30pm - 9pm, Phoenix Bar

If you missed out on this cracking evening last time Equalities Week came to WBC, then now's your chance to find out what everyone else was talking about.

The **Abnormally Funny People** describe themselves as 'a group of gifted stand-up comedians strutting

their funny stuff. They are all very, very, very funny people.' And if last time's event is anything to go by, we should all be in for a real treat.

The comedy night will feature a compere and three fabulously funny acts. The event will start at 6.30pm in the Phoenix Bar and will run until around 9pm. The event is free of charge, although there will be a £3 charge for those people who would like to have some food on the night. Everybody will need a ticket though to ensure that numbers comply with health and safety.

Tickets are now available, so if you haven't got yours yet, please speak to a member of the Sports and Social Committee (details on ewok).

This truly is one of the absolute highlights of the week so make sure you don't miss out.



**Friday 15 May**

## **Dress Down Day**

It's almost the weekend so why not demonstrate your individual style by putting on your favourite casual clothes for Dress Down Day. In exchange, you just need to dig down into your denims (or whatever else you decide to wear) and pay a pound for charity. Members of the Equality Team will pay you a visit at your desk to collect the cash.

All of the money raised will be donated to **The Alzheimer's Society, Woking Branch**.

**For further information about Equalities Week, please contact Refeia Zaman on ext. 3479.**



## **Shamreen Hussain, a colleague with a visual impairment**

**Working life can be challenging at the best of times but, for colleagues with disabilities, there can be additional obstacles and complications to negotiate during the course of the week. In this article, Shamreen Hussain (IT Application Services) talks about her visual impairment and how she chooses to focus more on her abilities than her disability.**

I was born with cone dystrophy, an eye condition which affects my ability to see colour and makes me extremely sensitive to bright light. I can't actually see any colours at all - I generally only see objects as shades of grey and black. In addition, I am short-sighted and have very weak sharp vision. Unfortunately, my condition cannot be corrected with either surgery or lenses so I have just learnt to live with what I have and make the most of it.

As a child, my parents didn't give me any special treatment at all but they helped me to stand on my own two feet. Their attitude helped me to develop a 'can do' approach and I have been very keen to ensure that my disability does not dominate my life. I attended Woking High, a school with a special visual impairment unit, and this really helped me to reach my academic potential. I went on to enjoy university and then a year-long placement with a large investment bank. Sadly, my employer wasn't that supportive or understanding and if I was struggling with a task they would just take it off me rather than help me to complete it.

I joined Woking Borough Council two years ago and everyone has been very supportive of me. Within the first few weeks, one of my colleagues sat me down, asked me some questions about my condition and then talked to me about how we could work around it. In my opinion, this is definitely the right approach - I don't want to be fussed over but people sometimes need to ask questions to understand the challenges that I am facing.



On the whole, I enjoy my job as a Workflow Support Officer, offering help and advice to colleagues in Customer Services who work with Contact Manager. Here's a typical day for me.

**7.30am** Get out of bed and think about what I am going to wear. Because I can't see colours, I pick out what I think will look good and then ask my younger sister's advice. She generally advises me if I have made a bad decision!

**8.30am** Walk to work along a familiar route. Sometimes I find it tricky crossing Victoria Way, especially if it's bright and sunny as I can't see the lights and not all pedestrian crossings have audible indicators. But I take my time and make it across the road.

**9am** Arrive at work and log on. I have made some adjustments to my computer to make the text size bigger and make it easier to read what is on screen. As most of my work is computer-based, I can gain access to a wealth of information this way - it's just paperwork that is more tricky. However, I have a magnifier which I can use to enlarge text on hard copies.

**10am** As we have a new version of the Contact Manager system, I spend

some time testing different areas of the system. I also check my emails and send out responses to enquiries about the Hometrak system.

**1pm** Lunchtime! I always try and spend an hour out of the office - I find it's helpful to rest my eyes away from the computer screen and anyway it's good to get a breath of fresh air. I am very familiar with Woking so walking around town isn't a problem for me. I occasionally go clothes shopping and sometimes have to ask the shop assistants to help me read the labels or identify colours - generally people are very helpful once they understand why I am asking for help.

**2pm** I get on with developing some processes for Contact Manager. This might involve producing scripts for the Customer Services staff to use when dealing with callers or developing templates for gathering important information about customer enquiries.

**3pm** Off to a Chief Executive's briefing. Powerpoint is a problem for me no matter how close I sit to the screen so I rely on the speaker to explain the relevant points.

**4pm** Go back to my desk to find that a couple of queries have cropped up from colleagues in Customer Services. I drop everything to investigate what the problem is and spend the rest of the day trying to resolve things.

**5.30pm** Decide to take myself off to the gym where the staff have spent a bit of time with me developing a training programme and helping me to use the equipment. I can't read the displays on the equipment so I have to find other ways of gauging how well I am doing.

**6.30pm** Hometime. Walk home and put my feet up in front of the telly with the family. I also get my sewing box out as I have recently started to have a go at making my own clothes. So far, with the help of my colleague, Jane Prudden, I have managed to make a skirt and a top which is a real achievement.

# Who's who in Surrey?



Former student of George Abbot School and Guildford College, local resident **Gino Meriano** now lives in Weybridge, from where he runs his company Pink Weddings and the Gay Wedding Show. Gino is also Chair of Gay Surrey and the Gay Business Association. A busy campaigner for gay rights, **OK!** managed to catch up with Gino online, to find out a bit more about his latest venture – publishing a book on civil partnerships.

## Who or what brought about the idea for Pink Weddings, and was it an immediate success?

The idea came about when I was looking to arrange a ceremony for Mike (my husband) and me. We couldn't find anything and we decided to create a small website with some information to help couples like us. We started with some ideas and, before we knew it, Pink Weddings suddenly grew into a full guide to help couples plan their day, both before and after the introduction of Civil Partnerships.

## What prompted you to begin campaigning for gay rights?

To be honest, I fell into this position, when I started to research possibilities for same sex couples and found nothing. So, I started Pink Weddings and from there I noticed many areas of discrimination for members of the LBGT community

and in the workplace. I launched [www.ginomeriano.com](http://www.ginomeriano.com) to keep people informed of my work and the kind of changes that myself and many others have had on the community as a whole in Surrey and around the world.

## What sort of things does campaigning involve and do you focus on the UK or take your campaigning abroad?

Over the years, I have delivered training programmes surrounding the Civil Partnership and Equality Act. I have travelled around the UK, working alongside the Registration Service preparing for the Civil Partnership Act and companies and public authorities on equality and diversity. I've been consulted by many regional and local councils, police, national health service and businesses to name but a few. I have taken the next step in bringing innovative consultancy to a different level when approaching such a sensitive subject as the LGBT community in business and society.

We have seen major changes in the law and it's time to embrace these new acts, understand the impact they will have and how best you as a person, manager or organisation can adopt them without the fear factor. I have always been headstrong, full of passion with a firm belief that same-sex relationships should be recognised and fully accepted in society. The gay community should be considered as equal and I believe that through the power of training, consulting and campaigning the community will be heard and true social acceptance will be achieved.

## You Chair Gay Surrey – what are the organisation's aims?

Our mission is to offer the gay community of Surrey a comprehensive website portal for members of the gay community who are seeking information. We currently have over 10,000 unique visitors to our site a

month and Gay Surrey has over 3,000 subscribers who regularly receive e mail updates on news, local events and aims for the future. Young Gay Surrey launched in 2008.

## Now that Civil Partnerships are legal in the UK, does this mean your campaigning days are over?

No, we still have a long way to go. While we have moved so far with the new legislation, we have lots more work to do when it comes to social inclusion. We constantly go through the Act, the Equality Act and the Single Equality Bill to ensure that full legal rights are given to the community, and, at the same time, continue to seek acceptance rather than tolerance.

## Please tell us about your new book and what you hope it will achieve.

We were asked by New Holland Publishing to produce a book that helps couples and suppliers alike with arranging civil partnerships. The book was created based on our own experience over the last six years, since the creation of Pink Weddings and the Gay Wedding Show.

In 2005, the Civil Partnership Act was ratified and same-sex couples were allowed to arrange Civil Partnership ceremonies for the first time. Although thousands of couples have taken this step since then, arranging simple or elaborate ceremonies, many people are still confused about what a Civil Partnership actually is and what it really means under the law.

[www.pinkweddings.biz/thebook](http://www.pinkweddings.biz/thebook)  
[www.gaysurrey.org](http://www.gaysurrey.org)  
[www.ygsspeakout.org](http://www.ygsspeakout.org)

If you want to hear more from Gino and take the opportunity to ask him questions, you can go along to his talk on Tuesday 12 May, 2-4pm CR1.

years until the concept of care in the community was accepted as the best way forward.

She founded the charity with the hope of giving both children and adults with learning disabilities the chance to enjoy social activities in the community, instead of allowing them to remain isolated on the fringes of society. Today, the charity has almost 500 members, accessing a range of fun

activities and trips away and enjoying the chance to build up their self-confidence and abilities.

The charity is always on the lookout for enthusiastic, patient and tolerant volunteers to assist its members in enjoying social activities so if you have some time to spare and you think you may be suited to this type of role, please contact Link Leisure on 01483 770037.

Did you know?

**Did you know** that this year is the 20th anniversary of Woking charity, Link Leisure? It was founded in 1989 by local lady, Maureen Young, who saw the need to provide learning disabled people with supported access to social activities.

A former social worker, Maureen witnessed how people with learning disabilities were treated within the community and watched how the situation changed over a number of

# Rob keeps it real

## In this article, Rob Leach talks to OK! about what it's like to be a gay Councillor.



When I was asked to write this article, I felt a mixture of anxiety and positivity. On the one hand, I was nervous about a reaction from anyone who may disapprove but, on the other hand, I recognised that I had both an opportunity and a duty, in a sense, to support any gay, lesbian or bisexual member of staff who may feel uncomfortable about their sexuality. As it is estimated that between one in ten and one in twenty people are gay, there must be a fair number of us living and working in Woking.

So what's it like being a 'gay Councillor'? To be honest, I have never shouted it from the rooftops, but neither have I lied. Of course, sexuality is not just about who you go to bed with, it is an integral part of who you are.

At the Council, I can honestly say that I have always found Corporate Management Group to be both

supportive of, and positive about, diversity issues. That said, it hurts me to know that in Woking there are some groups who will not accept my way of life. I get most annoyed with the view that it is somehow my 'choice'. Is heterosexuality a choice? Perhaps unsurprisingly, the real decision for me was: should I be open or keep it quiet? Unlike ethnicity, gender and some disabilities, gay people can choose to hide their diversity. On candidate election literature, it is not uncommon

to see comments like 'X is married with two children'. If I were to write 'Rob is a single, gay man' would that make me more or less electable? I wonder!

The only time I have been asked to take up the issue politically was about a year ago, when Gay Surrey asked me why they had been refused permission to publicise World Aids Day in a privately-owned part of town. I wrote to the Chief Executive of the company and was told that the area was 'family friendly'. In my experience, this is often 'newspeak' for 'gays not welcome'. Happily, the new management of that company is very helpful, and I am grateful to lobby groups like Gay Surrey for helping to ensure that our town centre welcomes all in our community.

I will close with something to ponder. A study of a selection of towns was completed about two years ago, which found that there was a correlation between those towns with a visible gay community and the town's prosperity. Is that about the 'pink pound' or is it a sign of a community at peace with itself?

## Postcard from...

### ...Louise Kidd and Jane Robinson

At the end of March, **Jane Robinson** and **Louise Kidd** (Planning Policy) decided to treat themselves to a relaxing day away from the office and became 'ladies that lunch' up in London.

Their day out began with a spin on the London Eye, admiring all of the famous sights of the city (a Planning Policy Officer's dream!). They then stopped for tea and cake at the former County Hall building before hitting the tourist trail around Buckingham Palace and Trafalgar Square (where they encountered some motorcyclists protesting about parking charges).

The pair had a great day out and felt relaxed and refreshed afterwards, ready to face a host of new challenges when they returned to the office the following day!

We love hearing about all of your adventures so the next time that you are on holiday or enjoying a few days away, please remember to take the **OK!** with you, get someone to snap you have a sneaky read and send a pic and a brief write-up to [karen.porter@woking.gov.uk](mailto:karen.porter@woking.gov.uk) As summer is coming up, we are looking forward to receiving some fun and exotic postcards!



## Dealing with depression

**Growing up is never easy, especially when one of your parents has a long-term illness. Here, an anonymous Council employee talks candidly to OK! about their experience of growing up with a parent who suffers from depression and anxiety.**



Writing this has been so much harder than I ever imagined because, although I do not suffer from depression or anxiety myself, my mum does, and has done for many years. When I sat down to think about my mum's depression, I realised that I have never really spoken about it in much detail to anyone, not even to her, even though her depression has had an effect on me and the person I have become.

I first noticed my mum was 'a bit more emotional' when I was about 12. I had never thought she was different to anyone else until, after a series of family problems, everything became too much for her and she suffered a breakdown. However, I did not really understand that she was suffering and needed help, and felt helpless. Besides, I was a 12-year old girl who was struggling to sort out her own issues and really did not want to face her problem. The support from our wider family was fantastic, but nothing was ever properly explained to me. I did

not understand what was happening, or why, and was upset that I did not see it coming.

From that point, my mum was put on medication and given help. Over the years, I have struggled to understand exactly what my mum is thinking. Sometimes I want to say 'pull yourself together' or 'get over it' but now realise she does not always have the inner-strength to do so. At the time, I did not realise she had suffered on and off with these conditions since she was 18. I have also found out that these conditions run in our family, with several close relatives suffering from anxiety, depression and panic attacks. This knowledge is quite scary and, for many years, I have worried that I may end up suffering from them myself. However, something positive that has come out of this, is that I have become a much stronger person, because I have watched my mum suffer for so long and I do not want to be like that.

Living with someone who suffers from depression and anxiety is not as difficult as you may think. You just have to be understanding and receptive to their emotions. It is not hard work and does not make my mum an unstable person. She is a normal human being, with normal emotions, but sometimes things can become too much for her.

I have written this anonymously because I feel that there is still a stigma attached to the word 'depression' and am worried about what people may think of me, but more importantly of my mum. This is not a reflection of those working around me, but more of society in general. What is important to me is that my mum is much better and does not suffer from depression any more. There are still days when certain things can make her more anxious and stressed, but she finds that alternative medicines can really help her regulate her mood.

## A problem shared...

Do you feel so weighed down by a problem that you just don't seem to be able to get out from underneath it? If so, it might be time to talk to someone in confidence.

### Listening service

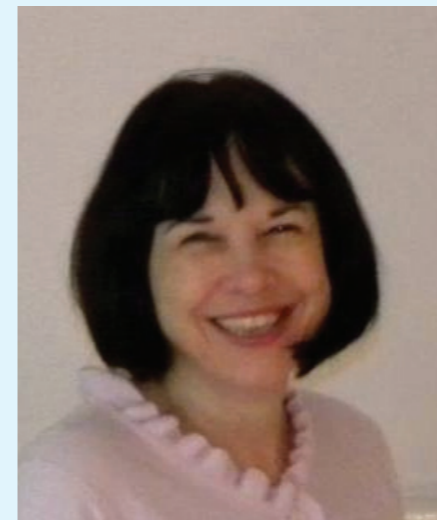
**Judy Ouellette**, our Listening Officer, is on hand every Tuesday afternoon to meet with staff and talk about personal or work-related issues that people are facing. If you would like to talk to Judy about any issue, just email her at [judy.ouellette@woking.gov.uk](mailto:judy.ouellette@woking.gov.uk) to arrange an appointment. On the first Tuesday of the month, Judy can be found in the Treatment Room at the Leisure Centre between 2pm and 4.30pm and on the remaining Tuesdays she is based in Room 2.2 of the Civic Offices.



Judy will also be available on **Tuesday 12 May** from 2pm to 4pm, either in the Rest Area – just drop in and have a chat – or for pre-booked sessions. If you would like to book a session with Judy, please email Angie Taylor on [angie.taylor@woking.gov.uk](mailto:angie.taylor@woking.gov.uk) All emails will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

### Counselling service

Sometimes a listening ear is not enough. People who have reached a point where it does not seem possible to move forward. This may well be where a trained counsellor can make all the difference. HR is able to offer access to Claire Wooton-Woolley, a trained and very experienced counsellor.



Claire will also be available to anyone on **Thursday 14 May** from 11am - 2pm in the Rest Area – just drop by and have a chat. If you would like to book a session with Claire, please email Angie Taylor on [angie.taylor@woking.gov.uk](mailto:angie.taylor@woking.gov.uk) All emails will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

**Please note:** it may sometimes be possible to fit you in on the day. If you wish to speak to her, go to the room (as explained above) knock on the door and, if she is free, she will be happy to talk to you there and then.

equalities week

## Can you separate myth from fact?



**Q 4. There's not much you can do to help a friend experiencing a mental health problem.**

**A – Myth**

If someone you know is experiencing a mental health issue, just staying in touch can really help. For many people, it is the small things that friends do that can make a difference, like visiting or phoning.

**Q 5. People can't work if they have a mental health problem.**

**A – Myth**

With one in four people affected, you probably work with someone with a mental health issue. However, people who are open about their experiences often experience discrimination at work or in trying to get a job because of mental health issues.

**Q 6. If you use a mental health service, there's a one in three chance you'll lose contact with friends.**

**A – Fact**

Sometimes friends feel like they don't know enough to be able to help, or feel uncomfortable. But you don't need to be an expert on mental health to be a friend. It's often the everyday things that make a difference.

**Q 1. Mental health problems are rare.**

**A – Myth**

Mental health issues affect one in four people in any one year. So, even if you don't have a mental health issue, it's likely your best friend, a family member or work colleague could be affected. Mental health issues affect people of all ages, from all different backgrounds.

**Q 2. People with mental health problems are violent.**

**A – Myth**

People with mental health issues are much more likely to be the victim of violence. The violence myth makes it harder for people to talk openly about mental health issues. It can also make friends reluctant to stay in touch.

**Q 3. People can recover completely from a mental illness.**

**A – Fact**

Many people can and do recover completely from mental health issues.

Alongside professional help, the support of friends, family and getting back to work are all important in helping people recover.

**For further information about mental health, please see the following websites:**

[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

[www.cornerhousewoking.org.uk](http://www.cornerhousewoking.org.uk)

## Inclusive Fitness Initiative

by Jackie Waite

The Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) is a national programme that helps the fitness industry to become more inclusive, catering for the needs of disabled and non-disabled people alike, through a range of projects and products.

IFI is driven by four key areas of fitness provision, to achieve a holistic approach and ensure that all people can expect a truly inclusive experience when visiting an accredited facility. These four areas are:

- **accessible facilities** – creating buildings, and addressing policies and procedures, to meet the needs of disabled people
- **inclusive fitness equipment** – providing equipment that meets the needs of both disabled and non-disabled people (underpinned by extensive consultation with disabled and non-disabled people)
- **staff training** – ensuring that staff have the necessary skills to provide a safe, effective and fun workout, which also provides value for money
- **inclusive marketing** – developing inclusive marketing strategies and activities to encourage disabled people to participate.

For the last six years, the IFI has been working to provide better access to fitness facilities for disabled people, initially supported by £6 million of Sport England Lottery Funding. The IFI has accredited a total of 186 facilities to date and has made a significant impact on increasing participation in physical activity by disabled people.

The programme has secured a further £1.95 million from the National Sports Foundation to work with a further 200 facilities, with the

aim of accrediting nearly 400 facilities by the end of 2009.

### The statistics

- On average, IFI venues attract 128 visits by disabled people, and provide an induction for nine new users per month.
- Over 50% of disabled users attracted to IFI venues have never used a fitness suite before.
- Nearly 50% of all disabled users visit the gym twice or more a week.

The fundamental benefit of IFI accredited facilities is that the developments and enhancements that are made are not only of benefit to users that may have previously been overlooked by the leisure industry, such as disabled people, older adults and people with medical or other health conditions, but to the entire community.

In November 2008, Woking Leisure Centre underwent its first audit by the IFI. By 11 May, it aims to have completed the initial requirements of the audit, in order to launch its IFI mark during Inclusive Fitness Week (11-15 May 2009). If the remaining work is completed within the year, the Leisure Centre will achieve full registered status, which will last for two years.



## Investors in People

The Council has maintained the Investor in People (IIP) Standard since April 1995. The award is valid for three years and we were last assessed in February 2007. We are committed to ensuring we continue to maintain the accreditation.



### INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

In order to achieve this, our plan is to undertake a 'dry run' assessment on 22 and 23 September 2009, and the formal assessment during week commencing 22 February 2010.

The dry run will help us focus attention on any areas for improvement prior to the 'real thing' next year, and will include a series of brief interviews between a small selection of staff and members with the IIP Assessor. This will test how well IIP is working at Woking and, as maintaining the Standard is a key objective of the organisation, we are grateful for your help with this process.

More information on Investors in People, including a copy of the last IIP Review Report, can be found on ewok's People Pages, under Learning and Development. If you require any further details, please contact Sarah Dolbear on ext. 3907.

## Equality Framework update

By Refeia Zaman

The Equality Framework for Local Government was launched in January 2009 and will help authorities in improving performance on equality and diversity. The aim of the framework is to move away from a very prescriptive 'top down' process (of the old Equality Standard) towards a more proportional approach where local authorities can use the framework to determine their local needs, priorities and actions.

The Equality Framework for Local Government has three levels of performance, **emerging**, **achieving** and **excellent**, covering the

following areas of work:

- knowing your community – equality mapping
- place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- community engagement and satisfaction
- responsive services and customer care
- a modern and diverse workforce.

Authorities will be encouraged to critically self-assess their

performance. Self assessment at the achieving and excellent levels will need to be validated by external peer challenges (or external assessments) provided by the I&DeA and will be awarded by a recognition standard, once reached.

As an authority, we are currently assessing where we are as an organisation and will be looking to carry out a full self-assessment later on this year, with a view to being externally peer assessed by the end of 2009 for the achieving level. For further information, please contact Refeia Zaman on ext. 3479.

## Make sure you're SAVI about visual impairment

To comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, we are obliged to provide visually impaired people with information in formats that they can access and actively promote their availability, where possible.

To ensure that we are doing this correctly, the Council's Marketing Communications Team adheres to the '**See it Right**' guidelines that are produced by the Royal National Institute for the Blind. These guidelines help us to make sure that our documents are accessible to all.

At a local level, we work with Surrey Association for Visual Impairment (SAVI) to offer the following alternative formats to people living in Woking Borough:

- Braille
- large print
- audio tape or CD.

If you receive a customer request to produce a document in an alternative format, you should:

- identify the document required
- clarify with the individual which format they require and capture their contact details
- explain to the individual that the document will be provided in the preferred format within a reasonable timescale, depending on the length of the document
- contact the Marketing Communications Team (ext. 3824) with the title of the document and format required, along with the budget code you wish to use. Marketing Communications will manage the job on your behalf.

Please note that SAVI does not offer a free service, and their fees will depend on the format and length of translation required.

## What do you think?

WBC's Equalities Team is really interested to find out what you think about Equalities Week and it will be posting a feedback survey on ewok next week.

Do you think it has been a worthwhile week? What would you like to see done differently? How can Equalities Week be improved?

Your views are really important so check out ewok to make your voice and views heard.



# SPORTS AND SOCIAL UPDATE

## Sports and Social Club goes ball-istic!

As the weather improves and the evenings lengthen towards the summer months, why not dust off your trainers and join in one of the Sports and Social Club's forthcoming sporting events?

### Bowling

For the bargain price of just £7 per person, including food, teams of six are invited to take part in this keenly contested sporting evening, to be held at The Big Apple in Crown Square. The event will be held in June (date tbc), so contact Tim Lowe for more details on ext. 3413.



### Pool knockout

Fancy yourself as a bit of a pool shark? Then the pool knockout competition is for you! The winner of each frame will go through, to play best of three games for the final. Meet in the bar at 5pm on Thursday 28 May, where names will be pulled from a hat. The cost is just £5 per entrant and, depending on how many people play, there will either be a first and second prize, or winner takes all. Interested? Then contact Sam Marshall ext. 3650.



### Rounders



Summer must be around the corner if we're talking about the rounders tournament already! As usual, the popular match will be held on the Wheatsheaf Recreation Ground, Chobham Road, from 5.30pm. Date still to be confirmed but will be sometime during August. So there's still plenty of time to practice!



### And don't forget comedy night!

Thursday 14 May, in the Phoenix Bar (see programme on page 2/3). Tickets are free but must be obtained in advance, so contact your nearest Sports and Social committee member for yours!



## From Baghdad to Byfleet

As we are all aware, the population of Woking is made up of people from many different countries, cultures and backgrounds. But, on the lead up to Equalities Week, the fascinating life of one particular Byfleet resident was drawn to the attention of the organising team by colleagues Nick Roach (Neighbourhood Team) and Sally-Ann Powell. In this article, **OK!** talks to **Mohammed Sanduk** – an Iraqi man and professor of physics who recently moved his family to Byfleet to enjoy a life of liberation and life-long learning.



Mohammed and family

When Mohammed moved to Woking Borough in 2007, he and his family had very few possessions apart from a couple of bags and the clothes that they were wearing. Although their decision to move to England had been well thought out, circumstances in Iraq at the time made it impossible for them to tell anyone about their plans for fear of reprisals from fundamentalists within the country. They therefore had to leave many of their possessions behind and start again.

For Mohammed, coming to England was something that he had been looking forward to for a very long time. Although he studied in Manchester in his late twenties, family circumstances forced him to go home. On his return to



Iraq, his passport was confiscated by the authorities and so began a restrictive 20-year period during which he felt like a prisoner in his own country as he explains: "As an academic, it was very difficult living back in Iraq. I was not allowed access to the internet, my mail was censored, I had no right to publish my work outside the country and it was impossible to lead the life that I really wanted." It was difficult to talk freely in front of his children for fear of them being interrogated by supporters of Saddam Hussain's regime and many people lived in fear of their lives. "Anyone who was considered to pose a 'threat' to the state often disappeared without explanation and over a period of time it became apparent that people were being murdered in secret."

Although Mohammed longed to enjoy the freedom of England, he was unable to get another passport until 2003 when the war began. In 2006, he managed to come over for an international conference which gave him the chance to apply for a permanent move as a "highly skilled immigrant" and, as soon as this was accepted, he and his wife planned to move to England.

In June 2007, Mohammed and his family moved into a house in Byfleet and they haven't looked back since. "We have been welcomed into the Borough by some very nice neighbours and have been accepted into the community", says Mohammed. "My family and I are very happy here and although I enjoy going back to Iraq to visit family and friends, this is where I feel my home is now." Mohammed is now a Visiting Fellow at the University of Surrey and he

also teaches at Brooklands College. Living in England allows him to do everything that he wishes as a highly intelligent scientist, without the restrictions of a cruel regime.

So what does Mohammed think about Iraq's past, present and future? "When I think about the history of the country, I am very sad. Saddam Hussain destroyed the lives of many Iraqis and he has damaged what was a great country. However, I am pleased to see that things are steadily improving and the country is moving in the right direction now. I very much hope that this process of improvement will continue."

### ★ Facts about Iraq...

- ★ **Population:** 28 million (April 2008).
- ★ **Capital city:** Baghdad.
- ★ **Geographical location:** A country in Western Asia which shares borders with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to the south, Jordan to the west, Syria to the northwest, Turkey to the north, and Iran to the east.
- ★ **Languages spoken:** Arabic and Kurdish.
- ★ **Main religions:** Islam and Christianity.
- ★ **Currency:** Iraqi dinar.
- ★ **Economy:** Iraq's economy is dominated by the oil sector, which has traditionally provided about 95% of foreign exchange earnings.
- ★ **National dish:** Rice dishes and casseroles.
- ★ **Sport:** Football is the most popular sport in Iraq.

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# My sinister life

By Kathy Hanney

As it's Equalities Week, I offered to write an article to represent a group of people that spend every day of their lives living in a world that discriminates against them. No, I am not referring to Chris DeBurgh fans but to the 10% of the population that are left handed – and that includes me!

The prejudice against the left hander goes back throughout history. The proto-Indo-European language, spoken before 3000BC, and from which languages such as Sanskrit, Greek, Latin as well as most European languages are derived, had a word for right, but not for left, because of the taboos associated with that side of the body. In Latin, the word for left is sinister, from which our word "sinister" is derived, while the word for right is dexter from which we get dextrous.

At school, I had a permanent tattoo on my left little finger from smudging my work. 'Lefties' have to push the ink



across the page, not pull it and go across what they have just written – not great with a right-handed fountain pen! Left-handed scissors were not available so any cutting out of pictures was tricky. Teachers would get annoyed as they thought I was clumsy and slow. No one considered I was using the wrong tools.

I use the keyboard and mouse like a right-hander and cannot use it any other way. I could be quicker if I had the numeric pad on the left I am sure but it would seem odd. I am quick to observe if someone is a 'South Paw' but think it can look awkward despite being one myself. Bizarre, I know, but folk wisdom says that left-handers are either geniuses or morons!

Fortunately, this has not prevented a number of left-handers going on to do great things. There is an expression "Only left-handers are in their right minds." This is because the left-side of the body is controlled by the right-side of the brain. In simple terms, we tend to be better at the arts, good at mathematics, music and have quicker reflexes. Famous left-handers have included Michelangelo, Isaac Newton, Marie Curie, Bill Gates, David Gower, Napoleon, Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great.

## Did you know?

**Did you know** that 10-16 May is M.E. Awareness Week, an initiative organised by Action for M.E., the leading charity dedicated to improving the lives of people who suffer from this condition? Here are some useful facts and figures, plus a signpost to a website where more information can be found.

M.E. is also known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). It can sometimes be diagnosed as Post-Viral Fatigue Syndrome (PVFS). It is a chronic illness that affects around 250,000 people in the UK. That's one in 250 people.

It affects men, women and children of all ages and social/ethnic backgrounds. Some estimate that as many as 25,000 young people and children have M.E. It seems to be more common to develop the illness between your early twenties and mid-forties.

It is thought that women are more prone to developing M.E. Some studies have suggested that genetics may have a role to play as the illness may be more common in certain families.

Early diagnosis improves chances of recovery. Although there is no specific test available to diagnose M.E., it can be diagnosed by identifying the symptom pattern typical of M.E. and ruling out other conditions.

The illness can last for years. Symptoms vary from person to person and often fluctuate, even daily. The most common are:

- persistent, extreme fatigue unlike normal tiredness
- muscle and joint pain, headaches
- flu-like symptoms, sore throat, swollen glands
- concentration and short-term memory problems
- sleep difficulties

- digestive disturbances
- dizziness, poor temperature control
- increased sensitivity to light and sound.

The exact cause of M.E. is unknown. People with M.E. often have abnormalities in their immune and nervous systems. Viral infections such as glandular fever and viral meningitis are known to trigger M.E. 1 in 10 people with glandular fever develop M.E. symptoms.

Up to 25% of people with M.E. are severely affected, either house or bedbound and unable to look after themselves.

There is no cure for M.E. although symptoms such as pain and sleep disturbance can be treated to improve quality of life.

For more information about M.E., visit Action for M.E. at [www.afme.org.uk](http://www.afme.org.uk)

# Life as a carer

By Diane Spencer

## Diane's story

My Mum was diagnosed with Dementia with Lewy Bodies (DLB) following tests in late 2002. She was also registered blind, owing to being partially sighted with age-related macular degeneration in both eyes (which was inoperable). We were warned that DLB as a disease is a very rapid form of dementia.

Initially, Mum stayed in her own home in Leicester, and managed to cope with various carers and services such as 'meals on wheels'. However, it soon became clear to us that things were getting out of control, as she destroyed countless toasters, microwaves and kettles, and often either burned food – causing her neighbours to panic as black smoke emanated from the kitchen - or would misunderstand instructions and end up eating uncooked food. DLB also causes hallucinations, which are unfortunately very real to the patient.

I knew I had to move closer to her and consequently gave up my role as Head of Property Services at Poole, and managed to find a job at Buckinghamshire County Council as a head of service. This meant that my journey time was substantially reduced from four hours to just over an hour but my family life was hit hard, as my husband and two children remained in Poole owing to work and education commitments.

Very often, Mum suffered from urinary tract infections, which brought down her strength and meant a number of short spells in hospital, with nurses who did not understand the condition either. Over time, Mum's condition deteriorated to the point that I decided to give up my role at Buckinghamshire in order to be with her during her last three months. Mum died last year on 1 May.

### The carer's challenges

Sorting out all the necessary paperwork and what seemed like millions of forms with Social Services was a strain but unavoidable. Over time, my sister and I took over the running of Mum's house

and eventually got power of attorney. Because of the type of dementia Mum had, she had to be stimulated every day – the care home was convenient for my sister to get to but the carers had no idea about DLB. Most people have never heard of it.



### The emotional cost

There was the emotion of seeing Mum deteriorate before our eyes in mental and physical health. The strain of the travelling distances involved and trying to hold down a responsible job, and support my family, was immense. There was also the emotion of the whole bereavement process, both before Mum had died as well as afterwards, as well as supporting my sister, who also has health issues.

### Sources of support

The family GP was very good and recognised the early signs. He described DLB as a very cruel disease and also very rapid. How right he was. The consultant was also excellent and is one of the few in the UK to be familiar with this disease, so we were very fortunate to have her help. The support of my sister, husband and our family was immense.

Sadly, The Alzheimer's Organisation and the care homes were unable to offer much support, as they didn't understand Mum's dementia. However, we managed to find The Lewy Body Society, which was very supportive towards the end ([www.lewybody.org](http://www.lewybody.org)).

## Diane's advice to people in a similar situation

- Stay focussed and never put up with second best. Remember why you are doing this and give your all, so that when you look back you know that you couldn't have done anything more.
- On a practical note, keep accurate records of everything, so that you can easily answer all the countless questions you are asked by officials.
- Make sure you also have some time for yourself – you can take a break if you know your loved one is being looked after properly.
- If there is a support group, find it, and look things up on the internet to find out as much as you can about the disease and what help is available.
- If you haven't ever thought about praying, now is the time to do so.

*If you are a carer in need of help, you can visit [www.carerswoking.co.uk](http://www.carerswoking.co.uk) to find out what support is available locally.*

# Different strokes for different folks

What is it that keeps you going when the chips are down? Who or what do you look to for guidance when you aren't sure which direction to go in? And what goes through your mind when you see something that is naturally impressive or beautiful? In this article, colleagues from across the Council explain their personal beliefs and their reasons for them.

## Bob Morgan

I am an Atheist. By that, I mean I do not believe in any kind of God or superior being and there does not appear to be any evidence of a life after death come to that. I was brought up as a Christian. At school, religious education was taught on the basis of telling us what the Bible said and an assumption that we would just accept what we were taught. Over the years, I personally have come to the conclusion that none of what we were taught is true. There does not appear to be any reason to suppose that in all the universe on all the billions of planets in all the billions of solar systems that we are someone central in all that exists.



For me, there are still many wonderful things on earth and in space to wonder at and enjoy without belief in any of the religions. In my view, there are enough great things to admire without assuming that there is one supreme being behind it all. Humans are capable of great kindness and great achievements without being motivated by a fear of punishment or reward in an afterlife.

## Nick Roach

Known by many names, including Enlightenment, God-Realisation, Self-Actualisation, and simply being 'Awake', Self-Realisation is regarded by many traditions and teachings as the pinnacle of the spiritual journey. However, because so few have attained it, and these few have come from such diverse backgrounds, it has led to much confusion as to what it is and how best to go about achieving it.

My own journey into this began at the age of 17, when I would no longer accept the emotional ups and downs that everyone around me regarded as normal. This led me through various channels to find some reason for it all, before I found a very simple approach to life and living that seemed to cut through all



the mystery which is usually associated with this search.

I could not help but notice the similarity in so many of the world's religions, when they speak of the oneness of God, or the one consciousness, or of becoming 'at one with the universe'. In fact, the deeper one goes into one's own 'Self-Realisation', the more united everything around becomes. Life becomes simpler, not necessarily in the sense of just sitting on a hillside 'being', but in a greater knowledge leading to a more philosophical perspective on life.

## Rupinder Walia



I have been brought up as a Sikh but I am not fully practising the religion. Although I think the religion is liberating, I find the traditions and rituals themselves quite suppressing.

A few years ago, I started practising yoga and initially I focussed on the yoga postures themselves. However, more recently I have been concentrating on meditation. In assisting me in this process I have been studying the Vedanta philosophy which is based upon the ancient Hindu scriptures which ultimately focus on 'self realisation'. What really inspired me about this philosophy is that it is without creed or dogma or ritual or doctrine. Vedanta is a mysticism of spirituality. It is what is left over when all the differences that separate religions have been eliminated. Therefore, it is the essence of religion, the truth embedded in the heart of every religion. Vedanta seeks to change the person him/her self rather than his/her religion and provides a strong intellectual basis for peace among all religions in our troubled world.

By practising this philosophy, it has really changed my outlook on life and has greatly impacted upon my daily living.

## Nicola Serafino



I don't believe in God and I don't recall a time when I ever did. I was brought up in a non-religious household, but I did have strong religious influences around me during my childhood.

Having faith in a Supreme Being or following one belief system does not fit with the way I approach my understanding of the world. The attitudes of organised religions often contradict my views on politics, social issues and morality. I don't believe in the after-life, that we are here for any reason or that life has a definite purpose – I think that is down to the individual to decide for themselves and I view this as a positive thing.

I believe that by not subscribing to a single philosophy of life that dominates my thinking I am open to ideas from a variety of sources. I'm not overly comfortable with labels but if I had to pick one I'd go with 'Freethinker'. For people who aren't clear on what that means, it's basically someone who uses logic and reason to form beliefs and generally doesn't look to authority or tradition for answers.

One thing I do have faith in is other people. I'm very close to my family and would always turn to them in times of need.

## Elena Kandlekar

I was brought up as a Hindu, in a family which taught me both tolerance and universal acceptance.



Hinduism, has its roots in the civilization known as Indus Valley civilization more than 5000 BC. Hinduism is a way of life as it draws its wisdom neither from a single prophet nor a sage but from collective Hindu Sanskrit Scriptures passed down as sacred texts ever changing and evolving with the times.

My Grandfather and elders in my family indoctrinated certain values

and principals, based on the Bhagavad-Gita and Puranas, that all the religions, are true and service to mankind is the most effective worship of God. Remain true all your life, guard your own honour, but never transgress the honour of others. Hence for me, religion is a way of conducting the way I exist. This is what religion means to me.

## Stephen Petford



I am an Evangelic Christian but I like to keep things simple and I am really just a follower of Jesus Christ. I became a follower of Jesus late on

in life some 12 years ago when I was serving in the RAF.

I had a radical conversion but I do not have enough space here to give my full story. However, I would like to say that Jesus did not force himself on me and he does not force me to do anything but I choose to follow him.

I have a chat with my best friend and he shows me the way and because of that choice to follow Jesus, I am a happier man than I was.

## Laura Holman



I was raised in a Christian household, which, for me, meant going to Sunday school from a young age and then to church every Sunday, until I reached 16 and started to work on weekends.

Although I haven't regularly attended church since then, I have always felt that, thanks to my upbringing, I am part of a church 'family'. This means

that I enjoy occasionally attending the church my father still goes to (and where I was married), as many people there know me and my family, and have supported us through our ups and downs. It also means that I am quite comfortable if I go to another place of worship, even if it's of another denomination or religion, because of that sense of being 'at home' with God.

That said, I don't feel the need to go to church that often, or to join another place of worship, as I'm happy to talk to God whenever I get a quiet moment or need Him. I'm not really into the formalities of worship but very much believe in a 'father almighty' and think that, whatever faith or religion we believe in, we are ultimately all praying to the same guy, for the same good reasons.