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Providing • schools • highways • trading standards • social services

Ask Shirley

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Vision's Shirley gets you the answers you need!

WIN!

p4

A trip by train to the Dales

PUPILS GAIN CLASSROOM FACELIFT

£22.4m investment will help schools to create 'exciting learning spaces' and refurbish buildings

SCHOOLS in Lancashire are benefiting from a multi-million pound cash bonanza that will lead to new and refurbished buildings and exciting new learning spaces.

The county council has just announced its Capital Strategy for 2006/08 with 20 schools getting money to carry out modernisation work with more than 30 other exciting schemes receiving money from the Opportunities Fund.

Around £18.5m will be spent on modernisation work to raise the standard of accommodation in schools.

A further £3.9m will be invested in new projects to enhance facilities in exciting ways.

Although the bulk of the money is going into education through the county council many schools are also topping-up the funds themselves.

Mike Hart, Director of Children's Strategy and Resources said: "The chance to get money from the Opportunities Fund has led to some really exciting bids from the schools."

"Lancashire County Council receives formula capital funding every year from the Government based on the number of pupils in each school and the condition of the buildings."

"The authority's Capital Strategy for schools sets out how this money will be spent in an effective way."

"Priorities for the funding are targeted at delivering better outcomes for children and young people through providing facilities that encourage creativity and enjoyment and through the improvement of specialist teaching spaces."

"In order to get to this stage the schools have had to come up with some really imaginative ideas to improve the children's enjoyment and creativity in the school."

"They are also required to provide 'match funding' so there is a great deal of hard work that has gone in even before work begins on site."

"For instance there will be outdoor learning environments created out of wasteland, new learning spaces created by converting underused space and refurbished computer and food technology suites."

"The money that has been approved through the modernisation and opportunities funds is all about doing work that will benefit the pupils that are either in school now or that will be starting in the next year or two."

There is also further work to be done on developing a programme to provide improved facilities for children with special educational needs and to invest in making schools safer.

'Vision will be taking a closer look at some of the exciting plans in the next edition.'

More than 50 Lancashire schools. . .

Example



£120,100 - Albany Science College

Example



£74,885 - Great Harwood Primary

Example



£43,000 - Kirkham and Wesham Primary

Example



£120,000 - Tulketh Community Sports College

Grants chance for 'older' groups

CASH grants are available for groups of older people following a deal between Lancashire County Council and Help The Aged.

The £10,000 Lease of Life fund is jointly funded by the charity and the council with the aim of improving the quality of life for older people.

The deal was first struck 12 months ago and has just been renewed following a meeting between County Councillor Dorothy Westell and Help The Aged representative Neil Mosley.

Councillor Westell said: "It is a relatively small fund that will typically make grants of only a few hundred pounds."

"The grants are easy to apply for and one thing we will be looking for is value for money."

Previous awards have included grants to improve men's literacy, a grant for a karaoke machine and help with an internal garden in a sheltered housing scheme.

Neil Mosley said: "One of the advantages of Lease of Life is that the application process is made as simple as possible."

"Help The Aged is keen to develop its network as widely as possible in order that we can help as many people as possible."

Giving older people the means to help themselves in this way is a highly effective way of making our money go further."

Applications should be made to:

David Halpin, Better Government for Older People, Social Services Directorate, Lancashire County Council, East Cliff County Offices, Preston PR1 3EA.

WIN!

A great time on the train in the Dales



GREAT family days out in the picturesque Lancashire, North Yorkshire and Cumbria countryside are just a train ticket away thanks to DalesRail.

And thanks to Vision and Lancashire County Council, those tickets are now free to five readers.

Imagine chugging along the famous Settle-Carlisle railway, setting for the bleak Ribblesdale viaduct.

Stop off in the Ribble Valley towns of Whalley and Clitheroe. Follow the lovely Ribble

and cross the majestic Lune.

The DalesRail service, jointly provided by Northern Rail, Lancashire County Council and Lancashire Rail Ramblers, will run on Sunday 21 May and then every Sunday through the spring and summer until 15 October.

Collecting passengers in Blackpool, Poulton, Kirkham and Wesham, Preston, Lostock Hall, Bamber Bridge, Blackburn, Ramsgrange and Wilpshire, Langho, Whalley and Clitheroe, the train heads north through:

• Settle - an excellent base for walking, the town boasts a pleasant range of shops, tearooms and pubs,

• Horton-In-Ribblesdale - the ideal place from

which to explore the magnificent Three Peaks,

• Ribblesdale - alight here for access to Hawes Market Place, Hawes Dales Museum, Aysgarth, Thwaite, Muker and Reeth.

• Kirkby Stephen - offering a large range of accommodation, places to eat and shop and also the nearby ruins of Pendragon Castle.

For the more active, the Lancashire Rail Ramblers organise walks for all abilities around various locations.

Fares are reasonable, starting at £15 for adults, £7.50 for children - and discounts are available for groups.

Vision readers can win themselves one of five family tickets, each worth £35 readers just for

answering the following simple question:

On which day are the great-value DalesRail outings held?

Reply by 15 May to DalesRail competition, Vision, Corporate Communications, County Hall, Preston PR1 8XJ. Employees of Lancashire County Council are not allowed to enter.

For more information about DalesRail fares and timetables, or to request a timetable by post, call **01200 429832**.

You can also visit **www.dalesrail.com** or pick up a timetable from county information centres, tourist information centres or railway stations.

School Report



Janet Walsh, head, Colne Primet High School

THE photographer who came to school to take pictures for our new prospectus mentioned that he had been into a school recently that did 'A' level photography and still used old fashioned film and a dark room to develop the photographs.

When he expressed his view to the teacher that they should move on to digital photography, the teacher said that the pupils enjoyed the experience of watching the pictures develop slowly rather than getting the immediate gratification of a computer image that can be instantly printed.

I think that most children would enjoy 'waiting' for things instead of the instant satisfaction that our fast moving world provides. Maybe that's why so many young people seem to be hyper-active, easily frustrated

and sometimes suffer from anxiety or depressions - they have lost touch with experiences that nurture the soul and are never properly satisfied - they watch the film instead of reading the book and fast forward the DVD to get to the end more quickly.

I read a newspaper article a couple of years ago about how chopping logs for a fire gave the writer a deep sense of well being and got him back in touch with something which was real and purposeful and, in his words, got rid of his sense of alienation from the world and society.

I'm going to start looking for some activities and resources that I can use in school to help my pupils become less alienated, more patient and more in touch with their souls - they all got totally hooked on weaving bits of plastic cords together to make 'scoobies' last year - so I think I'll start with knitting.

Fun in store for longer summer

COUNCIL staff are working flat out to ensure that Burnley and Pendle pupils do not get bored in this year's long summer holiday.

Changes to the school year mean that schools in the area will close for nine weeks this sum-

mer - great news for children but potentially difficult for parents who work.

Lancashire County Council is teaming up with borough councils to produce a guide of events to keep children occupied.

Booklets detailing activities will be sent home with children in June. Watch this space!

More Vision winners

The winner of last month's London competition was L.M.P Moss from Ormskirk who gets a day-trip to the capital.

Three runners-up were Stephen Holt from Burnley, Susan Everard from Clitheroe and Brenda Newton from Higher Walton.

They win Richard Branson's new book.



You're telling us!

Send your letters to:

The Editor, Vision, Corporate Communications Group, County Hall, Preston PR1 8XJ. neil.graham@css.lancscc.gov.uk

Letters containing a name and address will be given priority. Letters may be edited.

We are unable to provide individual replies.

A taxing debate

COUNCIL Tax should be abolished (Stop Right Now, Vision, April) and replaced with a rating system.

The old rates penalised people who improved their homes and rewarded people who allowed their properties to decline into disrepair. The same is true of Council Tax.

In Canada, Denmark and some other countries, two values are included on the rating registers. One value relates to the building, the other to the site.

The value adopted for rating purposes should be that of the site and should exclude the value of the building. Such a system would not penalise those who properly maintain or improve their property. The location value of each property would reflect the amenities available.

Location is the main element of property prices and access to roads, schools, parks etc is

reflected in these prices.

I do not agree that local taxes should be linked to income. The disincentive effect of taxes on work and sales is damaging.

NORMAN SLATER
Rossendale

Rates ok

I THINK the Council Tax should be abolished (Stop Right Now, Vision, April).

The old rates system was better. I look at things such as the bin collection system and wonder where the money goes. I write as a former refuse collector and it is my view that there is less work involved in that today. These days members of the public take out their own bins.

Bring back the rates.

BLAZEAWAY

Unfair to pensioners

THE Council Tax system should be abolished (Stop Right Now, Vision, April). It is an unfair tax.

As pensioners we do not get £93 per week but that is what we have to pay each month and we are in the lowest band.

Local government should go back to the former rates system as it was fairer. You bought the house that you could afford and you paid accordingly.

We once paid £100 per year. It is much higher now. My payments have to come out of my pension and amount to a lot of money.

I hope policy-makers will take us back to the old rates system. I believe that is what people want.

MRS B GIDLEY
Burnley

> THE Council Tax system is currently being reviewed in an inquiry headed by Sir Michael Lyons. His brief is to look at different methods of local government finance as well as local government's areas of responsibility - Editor

Parking poser

I AM told it is not an offence to park a vehicle on the footpath.

I wonder if someone in

authority can tell me if I can place a tub of daffodils outside my home to prevent vehicles parking and damaging the path. I must add that I always park my car in my garage or driveway.

The road is wide enough to park in the gutter, so it is totally unnecessary to park on the path.

A number of my neighbours have been badly injured through tripping on paths that have been damaged by cars.

Interestingly, there is a £50 fine for cycling on the pavement but no fine for parking a car there. Ridiculous!

ORMSKIRK RESIDENT

> It is an offence to wilfully obstruct the highway, regardless of whether it is with a car or a plantpot - Editor

Charity solution to bag waste

RECYCLING plastic bags may be a problem (Vision, April), but I would like to suggest taking them to charity shops.

A Lancashire poet writes...

I MOVED to Lancashire from Durham in 1946 and love it so much that I like to write poetry about the place.

My first poem was for the Queen's Silver Jubilee and I have written 421 poems so far. I am now 88 and enclose a poem I wrote about the beauty of Rossendale.

J McDONNELL
Waterfoot

*I've travelled far over hill and vale,
Especially during the war,
Yet there's beauty here in Rossendale,
I have never seen before.*

*Surrounded by fine green hills,
Proud sentinels they stand,
Keeping a watchful eye upon,*

This special bit of land.

*Men came to this valley,
And saw these fine green hills,
Decided it was the perfect spot,
On which to build their mills.*

*The women then in clogs and shawl,
The men in clogs and cap.
All of them hard-working folk,
Before the unemployment trap.*

*I am glad I came to live here,
Long may I abide,
There's beauty here in Rossendale,
If your eyes you open wide.*

I have found that even market traders take them willingly as they need them for their own customers.

This may not be recycling as such, but it does give them one more use before being dumped.

Of course, as your previous correspondent said, we could all stop the darn things breeding in cup-

boards and drawers by using our existing stock more often and even declaring our ownership of existing bags when we go to the shops.

Let us reduce them to an endangered species!

D F WILLIAMS
Chorley

Carrier answer

I TAKE my plastic bags (You're Telling Us, April) to one of my local supermarkets which has a letterbox-type box in which bags can be posted.

D WORTHINGTON
Fulwood

Backyards make a comeback

BACKYARDS can be beautiful – that's the message to the residents of 160,000 terraced homes in Lancashire that have one. The Lancashire Back Yard Project encourages residents to make the most of them by making attractive gardens.

As part of the project, Lancashire County Council's Environmental Projects Team, supported by Elevate, recently ran a competition for

Myerscough College students to design a model garden in a small space.

The winning garden design, by Alison Culshaw, was pretty and colourful and focused on how to produce food in a small area while still being able to use the garden as a place to entertain, relax and play.

The design also included elements such as wildlife habitat, sustainability, recycling, composting, water conservation and re-use, and storage.

K. Horsley, Lancashire County Council's projects officer, said: "We want people to think about their back-

yards and change the way they view them, and give some thought to using space in a more holistic and sustainable way.

"The competition attracted some very creative entries and generated ideas that we hope will inspire people."

Amanda Richardson, from Elevate's Design East Lancashire programme, said: "A great number of backyards sit behind terraced houses in East Lancashire, where millions of pounds are being invested in housing market renewal."



Ask Shirley

Are you having difficulties knowing who to contact when you need help? Are you baffled when you open the phone book to ring for help? Then this new section is for you.

IF you are having problems getting hold of someone to help, Lancashire County Council has many staff trained and willing to assist.

Sometimes you just can't think who to ask - and this is where Vision's Shirley can help. Shirley answers all the letters she receives and some will feature on this page. Others may take a while as Shirley will seek responses from other council teams. Shirley is not able to offer legal advice.

Light duties

Mrs B writes:

I am concerned about the lighting in my street. There is a lamp posts that has not been working for quite some time.

I am 80 years old and feel vulnerable when out after dark. I feel much safer when the street is properly lit up when I come home.

To whom should I report the fault?

Lancashire County Council is responsible for maintenance, repairs and faults of street lighting.

You need to contact the Lancashire Highways Partnership to report the faulty lamp posts.

The number is 0845 053 0011 or alternatively email enquiries@lancashirehighwayspartnership.gov.uk

Cash for students

Sarah from Lancaster writes:

I am about to start my first year of study at a sixth form college that is five miles away from my home.

My friend has told me that she is going to get an EMA grant. What is this and how can I find out if I am entitled to claim for it?

This is a payment that depends on household income. The money is intended to help with day-to-day costs when 16-year-olds stay on at school or college.

You can qualify for an Educational Maintenance Allowance if your parent or carer's household income is up to £30,000 per year. More information can be obtained by calling free on 0808 1016219.

Cheap bus travel

Mrs L from Preston writes:

I am a 71-year-old lady living in Preston and I have a NoW card bus pass.

My daughter lives in Blackpool. Can I use my card to visit her and my grandchildren at the weekends?

From 1 April 2006, the concessionary



* SATISFYING and useful work is available with Lancashire County Council across the entire Lancashire area.

travel scheme for citizens who are over 60 or disabled changed.

These changes mean that you can travel in Preston at no charge as this is your home borough and to go to Blackpool would cost you 50p per single journey as long as this is one consecutive journey starting in Preston and ending in Blackpool. For more info call the NoW card information line on 0845 058 1096.

Rotting job

Mr D from Rossendale writes:

I have recently moved to a new property and I am very interested in recycling and composting as I feel I should be doing my bit for the environment.

Could you please tell me how I can get a composting bin?

You can get a free compost bin, kitchen caddy and instructions by calling 0845 658 8550.

As well as the free bin there is a new bin that is ideal for the smaller garden and costs £10.

For the larger garden there is a hexagonal bin and this costs £20. All composting helps keep Council Tax bills down by reducing Landfill Tax.

For more details visit:

<http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/waste/reduction/homecomp.asp>

Workers on the web

Mrs B from South Ribble writes: could you please tell me how Lancashire County Council advertises its job vacancies?

I am moving into the Preston area and would like to start looking for employment straight away.

Lancashire County Council advertises all of its vacancies in the local papers throughout Lancashire.

As you are moving to the Preston area I would advise you to read the local evening paper on Thursday.

There are vacancies, however, all across Lancashire. All vacancies are also posted on the website.

Please visit www.lancashire.gov.uk

Email: enquiries@css.lancscc.gov.uk or write to: Ask Shirley, Customer Service Centre, The Red Rose Hub, Bluebell Way, Preston PR2 5PX. Telephone 0845 0530000.

Roadlife mag is a beauty



* WATCH out for Samia.

CORONATION Street's Samia Smith will be helping to push the road safety message in this year's Roadlife magazine, due out in June.

As the face of the fourth edition she will be talking about the stress of being a young driver.

Other features to look out for include all the latest on the Road Safety Group's courses, Jim Bowen talks speed, Eastenders' Dot highlights some of the problems faced by older drivers and look out for the football competition and a chance to win a digital camera.

See next month's Vision for details of the launch and the chance to grab a copy or visit

www.lancashireroadsafety.co.uk

Novel steps put you in charge

NOVEL steps to increase citizen involvement in Lancashire County Council point the way ahead for almost 500 other councils, according to the Deputy Prime Minister.

Of all the councils in England and Wales, it is Lancashire County Council's webcasts and Cabinet in the Community initiatives that John Prescott's department says point the way ahead for local government.

The webcasts allow members of the public to witness county council meetings without having to travel to County Hall. Cabinet in the Community involves senior councillors answering questions direct from members of the public in venues around the county.

County Councillor Hazel Harding, Lancashire County Council leader, said: "Relationships between local government and its citizens are changing radically. Almost everyone in local government these days accepts that we are merely servants of the people and that we need an informed citizenry to make democracy work."

"We face genuinely tough questions at each of our monthly Cabinet in the Community evenings while our webcasts mean that everyone can see decision-making in action. We cannot expect that people will want to travel all the way to Preston to influence us and there is no reason why they should."

Up to 1,000 people, including members of the media, watch each webcast. Archives also allow people to see meetings from more than three years ago.

Free-to-use computers in public libraries mean that every citizen of Lancashire can see the webcasts at www.lancashire.gov.uk

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister report that singles out Lancashire says: "Effective citizenship means people having the knowledge, skills and sense of empowerment to play a meaningful role in local decision-making."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Held to account

SENIOR county councillors will be put on the spot when Cabinet in the Community goes to Colne and Preston.

Cabinet in the Community is a prime chance for members of the public to meet the decision-makers who guide 85 per cent of local government services in the county.

The evenings take the form of a no-holds-barred question and answer session. Subjects are chosen by members of the public and entry is free.

The first of May's two events will be at 7.15pm on Wednesday 24 May at County Hall on Fishergate Hill, Preston (opposite the train station). County councillors on the spot will include leader and deputy leader Hazel Harding and Doreen Pollitt, environment and highways chief Tony Martin and organisation boss Vali Patel.

Next event in May will be at 7.15pm on Wednesday 31 May at Colne Municipal Hall. Councillors will include Hazel Harding, community planning leader Jean Battle, adult and community services chief Chris Cheetham, children and young people boss Clive Grunshaw and planning and environment chief Marcus Johnstone.

Return of the train

SCENIC trips through the breathtaking countryside of Lancashire, North Yorkshire and Cumbria are being organised for spring and summer.

DalesRail, a venture between Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Rail Ramblers and Northern Rail, is running a trip from Blackpool, Preston, Blackburn and Clitheroe to Carlisle along the Settle-Carlisle line.

Lancashire Rail Ramblers organise walks around various locations on the route.

Next trip is 21 May. For details on fares and times, telephone 01200 429832, visit www.dalesrail.com or visit a county information centre.

Win a trip - p4

Challenge

TEAMS of hill walkers are needed for the Bowland Challenge, a test of navigation skills in the Forest of Bowland.

Teams of four to six adults will compete to visit as many grid reference points as possible within a 10-hour period on 2 and 3 June. Proceeds will go towards Bowland Pennine Mountain Rescue Team.

Details from: www.bowlandchallenge.co.uk or on 07738 395698.

Civil disaster - here's how we'll cope

Work starts on new centres for if trouble strikes



'BE PREPARED if the worst happens: work is starting to establish new Family Assistance Centres.

A COMMITMENT has been given that people in Lancashire will receive first-class support in the event of civil or terrorist disaster.

Emergency planners from Lancashire County Council travelled to London to see the capital city's Family Assistance Centre in the immediate aftermath of July's transport bombings.

They, and colleagues in social services, district councils and the emergency services, now plan a similar centre for if trouble hits Lancashire.

A search will soon start for premises that will offer the widest range of financial, emotional and communication support.

A mini-conference last month, which included

London emergency planners, heard that a short-term Family and Friends' Centre would be established after any disaster - with a more wide-ranging and long-term Family Assistance Centre expected to start work after that.

Bernard Kershaw, county emergency planning officer, said: "Everyone takes it for granted that help will be available if disaster strikes. It needs, however, a great deal of planning ahead.

"The Family Assistance Centre proved itself vital in London and we are laying plans for something similar in Lancashire.

"The service we expect it will offer will include information for victims' families, help with travel and accommodation, childcare, financial help and information about services that are available

to help people."

The experience in London was that victims needed help claiming benefits due to their changed health circumstances. Others, who had lost limbs, needed help with adaptations to their homes.

If an emergency was of such a scale to need a Family Assistance Centre, buildings are being identified around the county that could be adapted to provide this kind of support for as long as it was needed.

Bernard added: "The premises we identify must have the correct ambience. They will be a busy focus for distressed and even grieving relatives and so they must contain private facilities as well as public areas."

Coronation Street Tracy shares secret of job success

KATE FORD, Coronation Street's meddling Tracy Barlow, took a break from the street to present the Children's Society's AQA Achievements Awards at the "LACES" celebration event at County Hall recently.

The Looked After Children Employability Scheme, (known as LACES) is managed by The Children's Society and funded by Lancashire County Council. The scheme helps young people in care and care leavers by equipping them with skills to enter the workforce.

The AQA awards (Assessment and Qualification Alliance Unit) are special qualifications developed for young people who have limited GCSE qualifications. Actress Kate Ford presented the awards to young people who have undertaken training courses in public speaking, story writing and training seminars.

Kate said: "Trying to find a job without any qualifications is difficult enough. LACES helps young people overcome these obstacles by giving them a real chance."

Katrina Miller, project development worker, added: "We are really pleased Kate can be with us to make the presentation and meet the young people. It helps to make the day extra special and one which we hope the young people who have worked so hard, will remember for a long time."

County Councillor Clive Grunshaw, Cabinet member for Children and Young People at Lancashire County Council, said: "Children and young people looked after in care often face difficulties in their lives and this can have an impact on their education and confidence.

"The work between the county council and the Children's Society means that the LACES project continues to give young people the opportunity to get involved in a variety of projects and work placements, learn new skills and meet new people.

"LACES aims to build confidence and develop skills that will help young people find employment opportunities and reach their potential. This is an excellent opportunity to celebrate the success and achievements of those young people involved in this project.

"Congratulations to you all."



'CORONATION Street's Kate Ford with Kirsty Smith.

Cabinet member backs sporting hopefuls

THE next generation of Olympians could be produced at a Lancashire school following the official opening of a new sports hall in Leyland.

Wellfield Business and Enterprise College's new facility was officially opened by a senior national educationalist.

The project was funded with a £1.7m award from the Big Lottery Fund.

"The sports hall design and other additional work was carried out by Lancashire County Council's Property Group.

During a tour of the new facility, the visitor watched students taking part in a variety of sporting activities including table tennis, badminton, trampolining and dancing.

The sports hall has been built to high specifications and includes a number of energy-saving features consistent with Wellfield's reputation and status as a Green Flag Eco-School.

Headteacher Martin Ainsworth said: "It means students will have first-class indoor sporting facilities.

"As a result we are confident more of them will take part in physical activities.

"We have enjoyed an excellent working relationship with our contractors, Marlands.

"Indeed two of the key managers are former Wellfield pupils, who I know take pride in the quality of this new facility."

Out of school hours the local community will have access to the new facility, encouraging adults and young people to become involved in sport - and, therefore, to become healthier.

Civil funerals on way

LANCASHIRE County Council's Registration Service is to start civil funeral services from later this year.

The services give people an alternative to a religious service and can be conducted in funeral parlours, in crematoria or at the grave-side.

Gillian Greeson, superintendent registrar for Lancashire, said: "These services have been popular elsewhere in the country.

"Not everyone wants a religious ceremony and these proposed services give them an alternative."

The services, to be run at an affordable cost, will start on 1 October.

County's new children's centres unite health, daycare, education and family support

Lune Park Children's Centre, Lancaster:

Egg-cellent for children



CHILDREN'S centres are the tops, according to parents in Lancaster.

Lancashire now has 30 of the centres – the largest number in the country. Lancaster's Lune Park centre was in festive mood this Easter when children and parents staged an Easter bonnet parade.

The centre helps more than 600 families with everything from clubs and classes for babies, "Inbetweenies" and toddlers to careers advice, a dads' club and health sessions for parents.

Staff have even arranged for a midwife to visit while help available includes visits from the local Citizens' Advice Bureau.

Vickie Richardson, mum to one-year-old Owen and two-year-old Courtney, said: "I've been coming here for nearly three years and like everything about it."

"It gets me out of the house and I get the opportunity to learn many different things."

Rachael Leatham, mum to one-year-old Poppy, said: "I've been coming here for three months."

"There is little else for parents and children around here. I think it is brilliant."

Centre manager Judith Thomas explained that the centre brings together a number of facilities that formerly existed on separate sites. The new centre opened in January this year.

Facilities include a stop-smoking service, a sexual health service, pre-school "stay and play", a toddler group, activity times, a toy library, storytelling sessions, a toddlers' club, book-swap facilities and baby massage sessions.

She said: "We look at the needs of the whole family to ensure a good start for all children."

"We still offer traditional pleasures for children, such as the sandpit and water-play."

"But we also offer facilities for the entire family. The centre is about more than the children who actually come here – we also offer facilities to childminders in the area and that benefits many more parents and children."

' (Left) SOMETHING for everyone at Lune Park Children's Centre: Poppy Willetts (1), daughter of Rachael, is cradled in the arms of Jaki Leatham, Rachael's sister.



' EGGHEAD: Jorja Grounds (3) celebrates Easter with a balloon on her bonnet.



' Left, bottom, EASTER ducklings look good on the hat of Courtney Corless (2).



' OWEN Corless (1) enjoys children's centre fun.

Where will the children's centres be located?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Burnley - four children's centres › Chorley - one children's centre › Hyndburn - three children's centres › Lancaster and Morecambe - two children's centres › Pendle - four children's centres › Preston - six children's centres | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Ribblesdale - one children's centre › Rossendale - three children's centres › South Ribble - one children's centre › West Lancashire - three children's centres › Wyre - two children's centres |
|---|---|

The above represent Phase One. There will be a further 31 by 2008.

There's one near you!

Telephone the Childcare Information Service on freephone 0800 1950137, email LancsCIS@ed.lancscc.gov.uk or visit: www.children-first.lancashire.gov.uk

Drivers warned of drowsiness

AS RESEARCH reveals that men are more likely to drive while tired Lancashire County Council is urging all drivers to "make time for a break".

The authority's Road Safety Group is warning all drivers not to take unnecessary risks as research of 1,000 drivers from the RAC found that almost half drove when they were drowsy.

Men aged 35-64 were found to be the

biggest risk-takers.

The Road Safety Group's sponsored player at Burnley football club, John McGreal, is supporting the Road Safety Group's campaign. John said: "I'm used to travelling across the country for Burnley's away fixtures and the team always travels by coach to avoid the risk of fatigue both on the road and on the pitch."

"If you do have to drive long distances, make sure you get a good night's sleep before your journey begins, try to share the driving and always make time for a break."

LCDL update

Lancashire County Developments Ltd
The County Council's economic development department



Engaero Taking off with Rosebud

Lancashire based business Engaero Ltd is growing – thanks to the Rosebud scheme offered by Lancashire County Developments Ltd, the County Council's economic regeneration department.

Managing Director of Engaero, Jonathan Norris was one of the guests at the launch of Triplane to Typhoon, a special book written by James H. Longworth outlining the history of aircraft produced in Lancashire and the North West from 1910.

Lancashire County Developments Ltd, the County Council's economic development company, published the book with support from BAE Systems. Networking at the launch event brought together Jonathan and Managing Director of LCDL, Steve Dean.

Engaero was one of the first companies to take up an incubator unit in the Lancashire Digital Technology Centre, a unique development in Burnley. This new build centre has been specifically designed to encourage and enhance the advanced manufacturing and digital technology industries in Lancashire.

The development is a result of a ground breaking partnership between the public and private sectors with partners including Lancashire County Developments, Burnley Borough Council and Burnley College all working together to make it happen at the Bancroft Road site in Burnley.

The new building houses incubation units for high tech businesses, lecture rooms and teaching space for the College, a special showcase area for local companies to demonstrate their latest products and state of the art conference facilities.

Engaero provides design services and design/engineering consultancy to the aircraft industry. Since moving into the Lancashire Digital Technology Centre the company has seen a huge boost in business and needed to purchase computer hard and software to service the growing aerospace market.

Steve Dean suggested looking at a loan from Rosebud, Lancashire's unique scheme to provide finance for businesses within the county to grow the business. Jonathan did just that and his successful application to Rosebud has enabled the company to purchase computer equipment and licences that will allow the business to expand and prosper over the coming year.

Engaero is penetrating markets not only in the UK but throughout Europe and looks set to go from strength to strength, providing employment for even more people in the future.

Rosebud offers financial help by way of loan, equity or a combination of the two to businesses in Lancashire. Support from £5000 to £500,000 and above is available across all business sectors and, generally, for all purposes.

The repayment term is usually up to five years. Joint funding packages are preferred, whereby a proportion of the total funding needed has already been secured or applied for. The typical interest rate payable on a Rosebud loan is 2% over Base Rate, with an arrangement fee of 2.5%.

Rosebud has been investing in Lancashire businesses for nearly twenty years, boosting local economies and helping create thousands of jobs.

Other businesses or people wanting to start a new business in Lancashire can contact Rosebud on 01772 538989 (twenty four hour answermachine) for a free information pack.

Triplane to Typhoon costs £19.99 and is available from Borders, Deepdale Retail Park, Preston, or from Lancashire County Council's Environment Directorate – either from Reception, Winckley House, Cross Street, Preston, Tel: 01772 534468 or send cheque payable to 'Lancashire County Council' to LCC Environment Directorate, PO Box 9 Guild House, Cross Street, Preston, PR1 8RD for £19.99 + £5 P&P.

**Lancashire County
Developments Ltd.**

Lancashire
County Council

Digital centre points way for IT crowd



PEOPLE with learning disabilities across Preston are to benefit from a new state-of-the-art information technology suite and dedicated website at Marian House, Ashton in Preston.

The new community-based ICT interactive learning suite is fully catered for people with disabilities and will be available for those of any age with a learning disability and complex needs with support from care workers.

Users will be able to access a range of specialist IT equipment and computer software to assist them in developing their "Person Centred Plans" which help them plan their future and decide what support they need to fulfil their lives and live independently as valued members of their local community.

The suite will also house a resource library with camera and video equipment and software for users to borrow. Users will also be able access a range of information on the internet.

The ICT suite has been installed at Marian House offices at Catholic

Caring Services in Ashton and will be managed by people with learning disabilities themselves through their REACT team.

The new facility has been developed by the Preston Learning Disability Partnership Board following the successful bid of £25,000 funding from the Government's Learning Disabilities Development Fund (LDDF).

These funds are used through Partnership Boards as part of pooled budgets between health and social services.

Agencies involved in the Preston Learning Disability Partnership Board include Lancashire County Council Adult Social Services, Preston Primary Care Trust, Catholic Caring Services, service providers, service users and carer representatives.

The Preston Partnership Board has also launched its new website to coincide with the opening of the new IT facility.

The unique website portal, www.prestonpartnershipboard.com, provides a wide range of information and online support for service users and carers about the work of the partnership board and information about

accessing transport, education, leisure and employment services.

Mark O'Farrell, a service user representative on the Partnership Board from Preston, said: "My role on the Partnership Board is to represent the views of others with a learning disability and make sure information about the board is easy for people to understand."

"I've been involved in setting up the new website and making sure it is easy for people with a learning disability to use."

Jim Cullen, Director of Catholic Caring Services, added: "We are delighted to partner the Preston Learning Disability Partnership Board in delivering a thorough, accessible, focussed and personal planning tool for people with learning disabilities."

"The state of the art equipment will enable people with learning disabilities to put together their own plans for their own future - designed to put them in the driving seat."

Lancashire County Council currently supports over 250 adults with a learning disability to live independently at home across the Preston district.

New schools go on public display

BRAND new secondary schools are to be built across Lancashire as part of a county-wide Building Schools for the Future programme.

The initial phase of the project will benefit Burnley and parts of Pendle. The aim is to extend the programme across Lancashire.

Completely outdated schools will be demolished and rebuilt while it is expected that most schools will be extensively refurbished.

'LOOKS good: parents Kathy Rycroft and Elaine Moulton investigate the school-building plans at a recent exhibition.



When I get older, losing my hair, many years from now...

‘EVERYONE needs to stop and think about parents.’

Who will look after me when I'm older and frail? Will I have to live in a residential home? Will I be cared for properly? Who will pay for my care?

THESE are questions that many people may be asking. Whether considering retirement, caring for an elderly relative or spouse, reading reports in the media or following Mike Baldwin's storyline in Coronation Street, care in old age is a topical issue and a growing concern for many people.

Social care services for older people in Lancashire are provided locally in partnership with health services, the private and voluntary sector, and focus on promoting choice, independence and protection.

"Lancashire County Council's older people's services provide a range of support to enable older people to live independently and safely in their homes", says Olive Carroll, director of older people's services.

"Generally people are living longer, staying healthier and more active in older age. But the needs of older people vary considerably depending on an individual's circumstances, their health, well-being and ability to manage on their own", she says.

Some people may need extra support to live independently in their own home as they get older. This can be in the form of home help, personal care or the use and installation of specialist aids and disability equipment.

Currently the county council helps around 14,500 older people to live at home.

Over 3,700 households also receive intensive care packages at home for those who are 65 and over and disabled. This means a care worker helping with personal care for 10 hours or more and six visits a week.

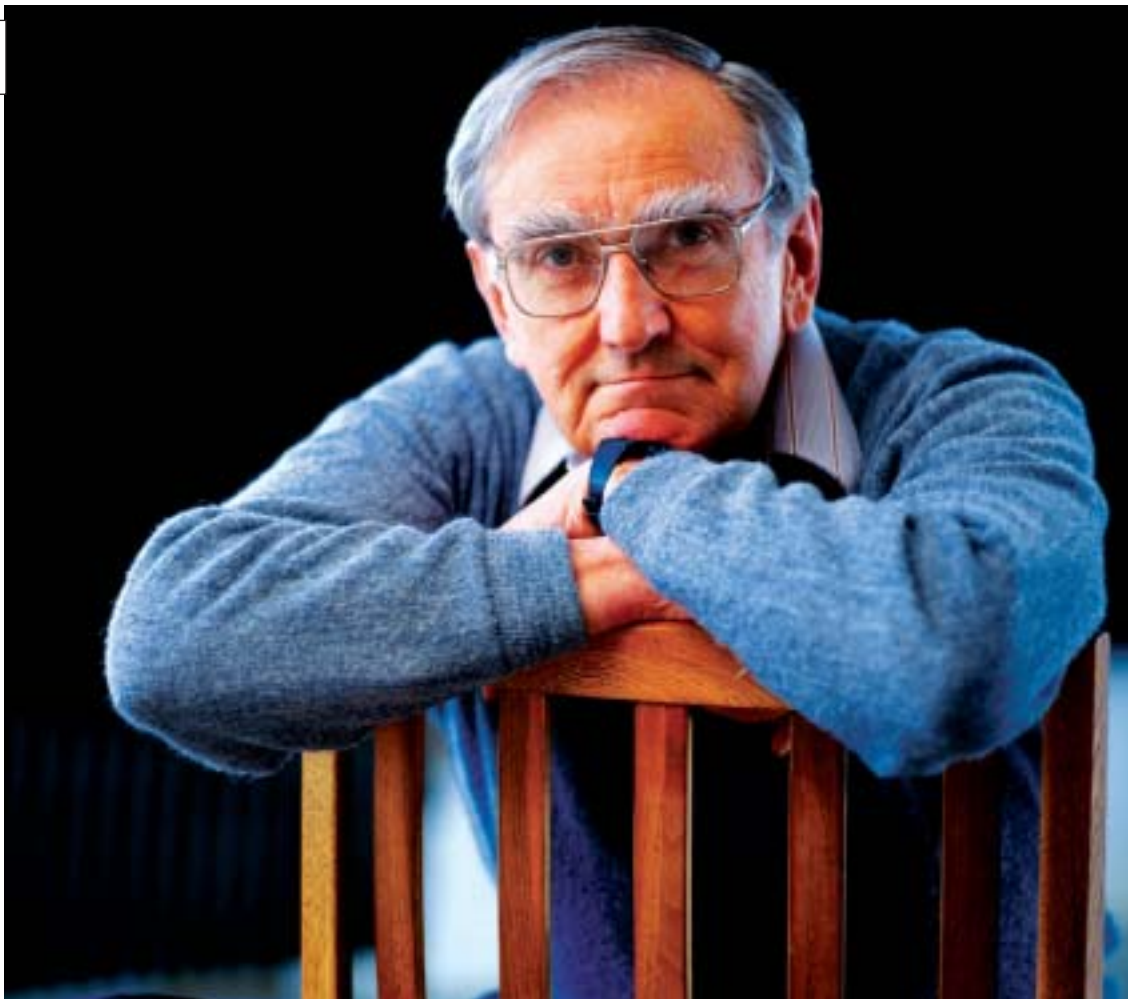
The Department of Health states that a government commitment to independent living and new technology has enabled 32 per cent of older people to remain living at home.

Others may feel they are unable to live on their own and would prefer choice of support in either sheltered or extra care housing or residential care with around 2,000 older people admitted to supported residential and nursing care every year in Lancashire.

"Some older people, who may have recently been discharged from hospital perhaps following a fall, stroke or ill health, may benefit from short-term rehabilitation or intermediate care services which are designed to develop their confidence and ability to regain skills helping them get back on their feet before returning home," says Olive.

Day care services also offer older people the opportunity to meet others outside of their home and in the community, share activities and have a meal during the week. Day care often enables those looking after older people to have a break whilst supporting them in their own home.

In addition, if you are a carer or being cared for by another person, respite care offers the chance of a short break. This may take the form of either someone coming in to take over care in the home for a limited period,



or a short stay arranged in a care home depending on the individual's situation.

Many older people receive a combination of health and social care services. Unlike the NHS, social care services provided by the local authority are based on an assessment of need.

This means a qualified social worker carrying out an assessment of an individual's situation by talking with them and their family. From this assessment they are able to decide whether they are eligible for help and most importantly what sort of support would best suit their needs.

Care for older people is the largest area of

expenditure by local authorities in England, amounting to over £8b last year, an 8 per cent rise on the previous year. And according to a recent report by Sir Derek Wanless for The Kings Fund, spending on personal care for older people in England will have to treble to about £30bn a year by 2026 to meet the needs of an ageing population.

By 2026 the number of people in England over the age of 85 will have risen by two-thirds and those aged over 65 with a long-term condition will double each decade.

Up to 450,000 more people will need a care home place or social care services to help stay at home.

Key facts:

- > 20 per cent of older people use social care services in the UK
- > 15 per cent of older people have a home care support to help their independence
- > 5 per cent of older people are cared for in residential and nursing homes

Find out more about Social Work opportunities

Whether you're qualified, unqualified, studying or returning to Social Work, SOCNOW's free event allows you to find out more about the wide range of career opportunities open to you.

Qualified or unqualified, this is a unique opportunity for you to meet with North West Local Authorities and a wide range of Social Care organisations - then see which one best suits your needs and lifestyle.

North West Social Work Event

23rd May 10am - 4pm, Manchester Town Hall

Book your FREE WORKSHOP now at www.socnow.co.uk or telephone 020 8652 3724



Lancashire Adult and Community Services and Children's Social Care will be attending this event at stand 22



The help you need is just a simple phone call away

ASKING for help is sometimes the hardest thing we have to do.

But a range of support is available and could really improve the quality of life for older people and their family.

If you are an older person or a carer looking after an older person who may be experiencing problems coping at home, we may be able to help you.

Help can involve personal care and much practical help.

Contact your local social services office or visit www.lancashire.gov.uk

Free Nursery Education places in Lancashire for all 3 and 4 year olds

If you have a child born on or between 1 April 2001 and 31 March 2003 your child is entitled to a free part-time pre-school nursery education place from the start of the Summer Term 2006 commencing in April.

A free place consists of a maximum of five sessions per week and no more than sixty five sessions for the Summer term. A free session is for a period of 2.5 hours in length. There are three terms in the year, covering a total of 38 weeks per year.

Places are available from any of Lancashire County Council's eligible providers of pre-school nursery education.

These can be Local Authority (LA) maintained nursery schools and nursery classes, providers in the independent, private and voluntary sectors or accredited childminders on an approved National Childminding Association (NCMA) Children Come First Network.

Further information including a parent guide and lists of eligible providers within your area may be obtained from the Childcare Information Service on Freephone 0800 195 0137.





A full job description
of all vacancies is available
on our website

www.lancashire.gov.uk/vacancies



OVERVIEW



Overview and Scrutiny committees fulfill a similar role in local authority life as parliamentary select committees play in Westminster - they ensure that decision-makers are held to account.

Checks on schools

MEMBERS of the Education Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee visited a new special school in Burnley recently to see the result of changes being made to special schools across the county.

Ridgewood Community High School is one of two new special schools in the town opened following a reorganisation in 2003 under which three others in Burnley were closed.

Ridgewood Community High School is the result of the amalgamation of Westway and Calder Vale Special Schools.

County Councillor Tom Burns, Chairman of the Committee, said: "The reorganisation of special schools was needed to improve children's prospects and is already having a positive effect."

"We need to see for ourselves that the time and money invested in improving them is being well spent."

Special schools were reviewed following legislation aimed at ensuring social services, education and health agencies work together.

Youngsters sign up to careers with a future

County backs apprentice scheme to get young into work

A GROUP of school pupils are getting a head start in the world of work by swapping the classroom for the office as young apprentices at Lancashire County Council.

Six Year-10 students are working one day a week as part of the new Young Apprenticeship scheme which offers pupils the chance to achieve work-based vocational qualifications alongside traditional GCSEs.

The programme gives well-motivated pupils the opportunity to experience workplace life, giving them valuable experience for if they wish to apply for full-time business admin apprenticeships at 16.

Sophie McBride (14), from Tulketh High School, Preston, has joined the county's Legal Services team where she will be working until July 2007.

She said: "It's nice to be doing something different and learn things that my friends won't have a chance to try until they've left school."

"At the moment I'm learning a lot of administration skills. Everyone I work with is friendly so I ask them about what they do in their jobs and the cases they're involved with which is very interesting."

"Working in Legal Services has inspired me. I would quite like to be lawyer so it's good experience."

The Young Apprenticeship Programme is a two-year scheme being supported by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Department for Education and Skills.

Pupils spend three days a week working for their chosen GCSEs in school, one day working with an employer and one day receiving vocational training.

The six pupils working at Lancashire County Council receive their vocational training at Age Concern Training-North West Training Centre where they are studying for a range of business administration qualifications.



' YOUNG apprentices, from left, Emma Wignall, Sophie McBride and Rosie McConville. Also on the scheme from Lancashire schools are Nancy Livesey, Catherine Cookson and Dominic Connor.

Anne-Marie Morgan, Corporate Human Resources, said: "This scheme has great benefits for both the pupils and the county council. As a public service organisation we have a duty to ensure our employee profile reflects the population we serve so we're always keen to attract younger people to work for local government."

"The pupils we've had on the scheme so far have been very quick to learn and I know that our employees get a great deal of satisfaction from helping them."

Emma Rose, Age Concern Training, added:

"We are really pleased to be working alongside such a supportive and positive partner as Lancashire County Council. The pupils involved are very motivated and enjoying applying theory into practice".

> For more information on the Young Apprenticeship Programme, please contact Age Concern on (01772) 254581.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Healthy start in life

A LANCASHIRE education service helping students with health needs to continue studying has received a strong rating from inspectors.

Lancashire Education Medical Service (LEMS) received its first Ofsted inspection in March and has received an excellent report. The inspectors judged LEMS to be "at the very top end of 'good' with many 'outstanding' features".

Lancashire Education Medical Service is a county-wide Pupil Referral Unit providing part-time education for pupils temporarily out of school for medical reasons. The service operates in seven centres and four hospitals across the county.

Teachers in post

STAFF have received offers of appointment to the new schools in Lancashire County Council's multi-million pound Building Schools for the Future project in Burnley and Pendle.

Over 1,100 teachers and support staff in the current schools received job offers in April after being matched to posts in the new schools by two independent staffing commissions. 97% have been allocated one of their three preferences.

Union officials said they had been impressed by the professional handling of the reorganisation process and the treatment of staff.

Chance to speak

FURTHER consultation is taking place over the planning application for a new road to link Heysham to the M6 motorway, allowing key groups to register their views.

The planning application, submitted last December, was originally scheduled to be determined by Lancashire County Council's Development Control Committee in May.

In order to allow the relevant bodies to make their views known and to allow any issues to be addressed, it is now likely that the application will be reported to either the June or August meetings of the committee.

Children 'drive the bus' to get to school

CHILDREN formed an orderly queue when Teachers' TV visited Lancashire.

The pupils really had little option ... their parents and teachers had organised two "walking buses" and the camera crew was there to see how Lancashire gets children safely to school.

The "buses" involve children and volunteers meeting on streets and roads in the vicinity of Clayton Brook Primary School, Bamber Bridge and then walking together to school.

As well as road safety, the children act as civic-minded eyes and ears of a local neighbourhood warden scheme - and their reports of rubbish and graffiti lead to swift official action.

Steve Murfitt, learning mentor at the school, said: "The bus gets children to school safely and has the added bonus of keeping absenteeism down as parents now only need to get their children to collection points rather than all the way to school."

"Our wider purpose is to promote healthy

and responsible lifestyles.

"Pupils also report litter and dumped rubbish to their teacher who then contacts the council which soon tidies up."

"The television company was interested in how we are creating the next generation of civic minded members of the community."

ANY parent can ask for a walking bus - simply ask your headteacher first.

Lancashire County Council has a team of school travel advisers whose job it is to look closely at routes to each school.

They investigate ways to get children safely to school without requiring parents to use cars.

Walking buses are one option, but advisers also look at issues such as siting of bus stops, busy road junctions and location of safe road crossings.

The council can also help with providing high-visibility "diddy" jackets.



LOOK LIVELY

Fair trade boost for tasty fare



PLAY Fair: from left, George Alagiah and Tim Ormrod with mango producers Issaka Sommande and Arsene Sourabie.

WORKERS in developing countries are set for a fairer deal following the launch of a campaign to make Lancashire a Fairtrade county.

Lancashire County Council signed up to support the county's progress towards Fairtrade at an event in Garstang to mark the town's fifth year as the world's first Fairtrade town.

To achieve Fairtrade status the council has pledged to support local Fairtrade campaigns and undertaken to use Fairtrade products within the organisation wherever possible.

The council recently held a forum to seek to establish a Lancashire Fairtrade group to help promote Fairtrade in co-operation with local partners, producers and the Fairtrade Foundation.

BBC Newsreader George Alagiah,

patron of the Fairtrade Foundation, visited Garstang to lend his support to the cause.

He said: "During my days as a war correspondent I learned that the most important way to prevent conflict is to give families independence with regular work.

"Fairtrade does just that, and I congratulate and thank both Garstang and the county of Lancashire."

The celebration event, hosted by the Garstang Fairtrade Steering Group, was also attended by Issaka Sommande and Arsene Sourabie, mango producers from Burkino Faso.

County Councillor Tim Ormrod, representing Lancashire County Council, said.

He said: "Much of our food and drink comes from the third world, where growers find it very hard to make a decent living.

"When linked to other initiatives such as local purchasing, it could benefit both businesses and the people of Lancashire."

Care in old age

Should people have to use their savings and sell their homes?

EVERYONE has read about older people having to sell their homes to pay for their own care - care ranging from home-helps to going into a care home.

It is a distressing time of life. It is made even more distressing to many as the law requires that people with assets of over £20,500 should pay their own way.

It means people having to sell their homes, while people without savings receive precisely the same level of care for free.

It is a tricky issue because few, if any, people would want people without assets to be left without care. At the same time, the present system is a disincentive to people saving for their old age and can even lead people to disguise or hide assets.

It is all very stressful. A new King's Fund report by Sir Derek Wanless recommends that all people, regardless of assets, should receive taxpayer-funded care to cover all basic needs. Anyone should then be free to spend their own money as they like - to buy, for instance, a level of care above the basic level.

Sir Derek says he wants the report to prompt a national debate. Vision went to Clitheroe's recently-opened transport interchange to see what the man and woman on the bus thinks...

WIDOWER

Henry Ainsworth (92), from Hurst Green, thought the dilemma could not be resolved. Henry, a former farmer who took his first holiday at age 63, said: "The present system is unfair.

"My wife died 10 years ago and I was on the verge of having to sell the house, but I kept her at home and cared for her at home.

"It is a problem that cannot be tackled. Society has to look after people who are down. We cannot just tell people to go away."

The present system already provides health care for the elderly. That will continue. What is at issue is the social care element. Social workers will still arrange care.

Shopper **Barbara Blank** said: "It's unfair when the authorities make people give up their homes to pay for care.

"You work all your life and save to buy a house of your own but, when it

comes to the crunch, the house is no longer yours.

"Even so, if you are wealthy and have a lovely house then you should pay some of your care cost - but not all of it. It is a very hard subject."

Some critics of the current system, it is argued, simply want someone else to pay for their care so they can leave their children an inheritance. In effect, it is said, they want the taxpayer to pay their bills while the family money remains within the family.

Lillian Brass said: "People should have to sell their homes, but the cost of care should be subsidised.

"The fairest way would be for everyone to receive the same basic level of care so their basic needs are met - and they can buy extra care for themselves if they choose."

Mrs Hardman said: "It is the responsibility of the person themselves to pay for their own support if they can afford it.

"There are people who have spent

all their money all their lives, knowing the state will pay when they do not have anything.

"On balance I would rather pay more income tax to support people who need care. You have been lucky in life if you have a lot of money and, if you have capital, you should pay some of it for your own care."

Train passenger **Valerie Davies** basically supported the Wanless proposals - that everyone should receive free basic care.

She said: "It is wrong to have to sell your house.

"People who have worked hard and saved money shouldn't be put in this position. My mother had to sell her house and that was awful.

"People should get the same level of free care. They should then buy more if they want it."

Mrs Loveridge added: "People work hard all their lives and they find they are kicked in the teeth when they get older and need help.

"People should get the same level of care, regardless of their assets."

Who should pay the bill?

Write to: Stop Right Now, Vision, Corporate Communications Group, County Hall, Preston PR1 8XJ

HELPING people and making a real difference to their lives can be very rewarding.

The county council's Welfare Rights Service exists to help Lancashire's residents through the "benefits maze". Their team of advisors speak to people on the phone and often meet face to face to make sure our residents get what they are entitled to.

Vision met Linda Dean one of the front-line workers who are helping Lancashire residents with their claims.

What does your work involve?

At the moment I am working to help people aged 60 and over to claim the benefits they are entitled to.

I speak with people on the phone and then visit them in their homes. Many of the older people we deal with wouldn't normally come into contact with us either because they are not very mobile or because they simply think they would not be entitled to anything.

How do you get in touch with people?

People find us either by being referred by other agencies such as Social Services or by doctors. We also publicise the service and run take-up campaigns aimed at specific groups of people.

voice of *Vision*

So why do you visit people at home?

We would first speak to them on the phone and do a check to see if there are any benefits that they could be entitled to. If the answer is yes then we will sit down with them and fill in forms for them.

There are allsorts of forms ranging from pension credits to things like Attendance Allowance to help insulate homes. I make sure that the forms are filled in correctly and, just as importantly, that they get completed in the first place.

Is the job rewarding?

Extremely. A few extra pounds can make quite a difference to people's lives. The work we do can help restore people's faith in the world.

I also get involved with appeals when someone has been turned down for benefits. That can be very rewarding because if we didn't help the people could just give up. Quite often when they get refused they think it's a lost cause.

Besides finding out if you are entitled to benefits, what else do people get out of Welfare Rights?

Although we deal with benefits we have very good links with other agencies that provide things like Warm Front grants to insulate homes.

When we meet clients we always see whether they need any other help and will point them towards other agencies if we think it necessary.



Linda Dean - welfare rights officer



TEACHER of Year Heather with Mayfield pupils.

Design maestro

INNOVATIVE ideas on helping children with special needs has brought a national honour to a Lancashire teacher.

Assistant headteacher Heather Wither studied home economics at college many years ago - and more recently found herself teaching design technology.

Enthusiasm and imagination caught on with pupils who found great pleasure in construction, textiles, food technology and industry days.

And now, her efforts have made her into the United Kingdom Design Technology Teacher of the Year.

Heather, of Mayfield School, Chorley, said: "Design technology involves skills that pupils here really relate to.

"Pupils here have a variety of learning difficulties and design technology really lends itself to developing their minds."

Part of her work has involved taking the Mayfield experience and explaining it to outside agencies in order to develop the subject at a national level.

Step outside to the good life

Lancashire's beautiful countryside has something for everyone - and our Countryside Service summer programme details it all



WALKERS enjoy the scenic Hodder valley - but similar beauty can be found in many urban and rural parts of the county.



MANMADE improvements at Wycoller.

Safety first for harriers

ABOUT 85 per cent of Britain's hen harriers live in Lancashire's Forest of Bowland area.

Increased public access in recent years could have damaged their habitat and disrupted their breeding.

Careful siting of stiles, paths and gates, however, has guaranteed they are left in peace.

THERE is plenty to do in the countryside this year – so long as you do not mind getting dirty.

From walks to Trammer treks, from map workshops to bike trips, Lancashire County Council's Countryside Service staff are busy organising something for nearly everyone.

Each year the service compiles an events programme. But that is only part of the staff's work.

Nick Osborne, principal countryside officer, said: "The events we run are where the public meets directly with the countryside rangers and information staff. They can be a gateway to a lifelong appreciation of the country.

"Our work as stewards of the countryside goes much deeper than just the events. Everyone has the right to enjoy the beautiful scenery and that underlies all the work that we do.

"We have country parks, woodland sites and picnic areas – more than 80 places in total."

The service's best known sites include Wycoller, near Colne, Bowland's Beacon Fell, Crook 'O Lune, near Lancaster, Spring Wood, near Whalley and the Lancaster area's Conder Green.

Wycoller, formerly a deserted textile village, is famed for its riverside walk, historic bridges and Wycoller Hall – allegedly the siting of a Bronte novel.

"Our staff maintain these areas and organise events for the public and for schools," Nick said.

"One recent major project was the expansion of open-access areas. Much previously private land was opened to all and we try to balance the needs of the public with those of landowners and of wildlife.

"We organise open days which give people confidence to venture out into the country and also gain an understanding of its needs.

"The advantages of getting into the country are many. Walking improves general health but people also gain a feeling of spiritual nourishment.

"Best of all it is free. Almost everyone in Lancashire is within half an hour of some facility we run."

The county council employs six full-time rangers. They are spread across Lancashire and maintain the country areas and organise educational events. They have a role in enforcing rights of way.

The largest single group of people working for the service are actually volunteers. About 100 of them give up part of their weekends and, as well as practical tidying up, they act as the service's eyes and ears.

A separate team ensures that the county's 4,000 miles of public footpaths and bridleways is kept safe.

Nick adds: "People think the countryside looks after itself because it has always been there.

"Like everything else, however, it will deteriorate without constant attention. Our staff dedicate themselves to preserving its beauty and keeping it open to all."



WYCOLLER'S prehistoric stone bridge was damaged by floods and then repaired by Lancashire County Council.



PROGRAMME of events includes many bike trips as well as walking and educational sessions.

Why not help us?

PUBLIC-spirited people are always needed to be volunteers in Lancashire's countryside.

They should be able to work well with members of the public – and to pass on their enthusiasm!

Volunteers should be reasonably physically fit. Typical projects include trimming hedges and being involved in running visitor centres. Training is available.

Anyone interested should telephone 01772 534709 or write to: Countryside Service, Guild House, Cross Street, Preston.

PUT A NOTE IN YOUR DIARY

FORTHCOMING Countryside Service events are as follows:

Saturday 6 May 10am-4pm – Friends of Spring Wood Open Day. Spring Wood picnic site, near Whalley. Fun activities and learn more about the ancient woodland and of the volunteers who take care of it.

Saturday 13 May – map and compass workshop, Downham. All-day workshop homing in on the basics of navigation. **BOOKING**

ESSENTIAL. Phone for details.

Sunday 14 May 10.30am – challenging six-hour walk entitled "Boulsworth Hill and Beyond". Highest point in south Pennines. Starts Pepper Hill Barn, Wycoller.

Saturday 20 May 1pm – Trammer trek, Conder Green and The Coastal Way. Conder Green picnic site. Free use of electric buggies for disabled people. All walkers welcome and buggies must be booked in advance.

Events in **June** include:

Saturday 10 June - Bronte country discovery walk, Wycoller. **BOOKING ESSENTIAL.** The walk is classed as "hard".

Sunday 18 June 10am - Clowbridge family bike circuit. Three-to-four hour bike ride for those aged 11 to adult. Near Rawtenstall.

Wednesday 21 June - Mary Towneley cycle loop. Starting Clowbridge reservoir, near Rawtenstall. This 50-mile bike ride will take approximately 11 hours.

Ring 01995 640557 for event details.

A listing of events is available on 01995 640557 or at: <http://lccweb/environment/countryside/events>



' (Left) DANCE: a taste of the Caribbean will be seen on Lancashire's streets.

' (Above) CARIBBEAN carnival will be a colourful affair.

Caribbean comes to city streets

Sunday
28
May

THE colours, sights and sounds of the Caribbean will be coming to Lancashire later this month.

More than 20,000 people from across Lancashire and the nation descended on Preston last time as the annual Caribbean Carnival transformed the streets into a sea of dance and music.

This year's 32nd carnival on Sunday 28 May includes music from Preston and from the more populous Caribbean centres in Leeds, Birmingham and London.

Ronald Clarke, one of the organisers, said: "We have a superb line-up of spectacular costumes, dancing, competitions, soca, reggae and calypso music."

"There will also be traditional steel bands and an annual procession led by the king and queen."

The carnival's Trinidadian tradition reflects Preston's own Caribbean community.

It has always been small, but keen to involve the entire population in its cultural activities.

Be a king or queen for a day

Carnival organisers are looking for children aged seven to 10 to be carnival princes and princesses.

Interested? Time is running out so move fast. Email: info@prestoncarnival.co.uk or ring Hannah Lefeuvre on 01772 849210.

Practical workshops are already underway in which people of all ages and talents can become involved in everything from costume design and construction to vocal workshops.

Friday 26 May will see a competition at Preston's Ritz nightclub to crown the winners as Procession King and Queen - a great honour for the young.

Winners will have to impress judges with displays of colourful dancing and costumes.

The main carnival action will start from Moor Park Avenue at noon when the procession will make its way through the streets of Preston to the main performance stage in Preston city centre by 4pm.

You can listen to carnival music, taste carnival food and do some carnival dancing until 8pm and, afterwards, until the early hours at the Ritz nightclub.

Support for the carnival comes from Arts Council England (North West), Preston City Council and Lancashire County Council.

Healthy school

STUDENTS at Tor View Special School in Rossendale are celebrating becoming the first school in the county to achieve Lancashire Healthy Schools flagship status.

The Healthy Schools Programme encourages schools to adopt measures which benefit the whole school community to create a happy and healthy academic environment.

Help is at hand

Slowcoach builders

Trading Standards can be contacted via Consumer Direct on 08454 040506

Q: A BUILDER I hired is taking a very long time to complete the work. Is there any way I can make him finish the job?

A: WHEN you hire a builder to work for you, you are buying a service and are entitled to expect that it should be done with reasonable care and skill that you would expect from a tradesman and within a reasonable period of time.

You do not need to have agreed a

time scale before the work is started but you can expect it to be carried out within a "reasonable" period of time.

There is no legal definition of "reasonable" but it would not be reasonable to expect a builder to build a house in two weeks but conversely you wouldn't expect a barbecue to take six months to build.

If you think that a builder is taking an unreasonable period of time, you could begin by keeping a diary of the times that the builder is doing your work.

If you talk to the builder about your concerns and this makes no difference, it would be advisable to put your concerns in writing to the trader and keep a copy of it.

You should also indicate in the letter what you want from him and giving him a deadline by which you

want it.

If this makes no difference, you would then need to consider pursuing the matter in the Small Claims Section of the County Court to obtain redress for the cost of any work that needs doing to finish the work or a refund of monies that have been paid to the builder for any work that has not been completed.

Be aware, however, that simply issuing a claim in the Small Claims Court does not guarantee that your claim will be successful or indeed that you will get any money back from the trader.

Lancashire residents over the age of 60 can contact their local Home Improvement Agency for advice and help. You can find their number in your local yellow pages.

Check up local web of crime

RESIDENTS will be able to find out more about crime levels in their neighbourhood thanks to a new website being launched this month.

By simply entering their postcode, people who log onto the "Lancashire MADE Public" area of the Safer Lancashire website will be able to access a wide range of statistics on crime and disorder.

The aim of the initiative is to make people aware of actual levels of crime and disorder in Lancashire and so reduce fear of crime. Surveys have shown that people's perception of crime in the county is greater than actual levels of crime.

The information is organised by electoral ward and contains facts on calls to the emergency services, violent crime, anti-social behaviour, deliberate fire setting, vehicle crime, road safety and domestic burglaries.

Information on educational achievement,

demographics, levels of deprivation, the economy and police performance puts the data on crime into context.

A number of "drop in" sessions have been organised at libraries around the county where MADE project staff are available to give a tour of the website and answer any questions people might have.

Contact Carole Swift (01772 530732) if you wish to book a place at a specific time. There will be some places available for those who prefer to call in on the day.

Dates and times are as follows: 10 May 2006, **Preston** (Harris) 10am to 2pm; 11 May 2006, **Skelmersdale** 10am to 12.30pm; 15 May 2006, **Burnley** 1.30pm to 3.30pm; 16 May 2006, **Lancaster** Central 10am to 12.30 pm; 18 May 2006, **Chorley** 10am to 12.30pm; 22 May 2006, **Blackburn** 1pm to 4pm; 23 May 2006, **Accrington** 10am to 12.30pm; 25 May 2006, **Blackpool** (Palatine) 1.30pm to 3.30pm.

Website address is www.saferlancashire.co.uk/statistics.

We don't blame Jamie!

Healthy lunches were here already.

SCHOOL lunches have undergone something of a transformation in recent years. A national revolution occurred when TV chef Jamie Oliver increased awareness of healthy eating and in some cases the sad state of Britain's school lunches.

Our plans predated Jamie

The county's school lunch provider, Lancashire County Commercial Services (LCCS), had already developed action plans to increase the amount spent on food and provide nutritious options. This term sees a further 20 percent increase in food allowance which has been used to improve the quality of lunches. Menus will comply with new standards and have been planned to be popular, as well as nutritious. In Lancashire, school lunches are freshly cooked each day and offer a choice of main dish or filled freshly baked jacket potato together with fresh vegetables and a choice of dessert, fruit or yoghurt. Salads, fresh milk and fruit juices are also available each day.

No products containing mechanically recovered meat are used and fish products only contain natural fish fillet with added Omega 3. Vegetarian menu choices are served where needed.

Chunky chips are served just one per week in primary and special schools. Secondary schools are gradually moving towards the September target of just two servings of chips per week.

All of which means that the days of turkey twizzlers and a daily chip fix are

now a thing of the past. It's now possible for primary school children to take three of the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables per day with their school lunch.

“...turkey twizzlers and a daily chip fix are now a thing of the past.”

Who are we?

LCCS provides more than 55,000 lunches each day, to 520 primary and special schools and 35 secondary schools. Individually tailored catering contracts are managed directly for schools and primary school menus are based around balanced lunches containing all the key nutrients - lunches that students want to eat and parents are happy to pay for.

As students move to secondary school, their tastes become increasingly more sophisticated. The accent is on choice with a wide range of balanced meal options. LCCS are pleased to be members of the Eat to Learn Partnership, a group formed with Lancashire Healthy

Schools to develop food and nutrition policy and local food procurement. The partnership, which also involves other agencies, is tasked with delivering the new school food standards.

This recently formed group is currently developing the increase in fresh and local food for the county's school lunches and staff training programmes.

It all adds up to a great lunches being served in Lancashire schools every day by dedicated staff, who really care about their customers - the pupils.

For more information about LCCS and school lunches visit www.servinglancashire.org.uk or contact your local school.



Sample from the new primary school menu

Available daily

Fresh Vegetables, Freshly Made Salads, help yourself Bread Basket

Fresh Fruit Yoghurts, Medley of Fresh Fruits, Fresh Milk, Pure Fruit Juice and Chilled Water

*Halal alternative will be served in schools where this is required.

Menu one

Homemade Turkey Lasagne*, Sweetcorn or Freshly Made Pizza (v), Jacket Potato, Baked Beans. Ice Cream Tub / Wafer and Pure Fruit Juice.

Menu two

Roast Beef*, Yorkshire Pudding, Gravy, Roast Potatoes, Broccoli and Roast Parsnips or, Vegetarian Meatballs (v) in Tomato Sauce served with Pasta, and Broccoli. Peach Tart and Crème Freche.

Menu three

Hot Soup, Filled Rolls, Sandwiches and Jackets or Cod and Salmon Slice, Vegetable Sticks and Dip, Garden Peas. Shortbread Fingers and Pure Fruit Juice.

Menu four

Chip Shop Style Baked Fish, Chunky Chips or Home made Cheese and Potato Layer (v), Mushy Peas and Baton Carrots. Apple Sponge and Vanilla Sauce.

Menu five

Pork Steak*, Apple Sauce, Gravy, Creamed Potatoes or Risotto (v), Sweetcorn. Peach Melba Sponge and Custard Sauce.

Menu six

Salmon, Prawn and Broccoli Pasta Bake, or Freshly Made Cheese and Pineapple Pizza (v), Jacket Potato, Baked Beans. Apple and Cherry Paris Sandwich and Sauce.

St Teresa's Catholic Primary

"Fantastic" is the word most youngsters seem to use when asked about school dinners at St Teresa's Catholic Primary in Penwortham.

Lancashire County Council's school catering service, LCCS, reviewed the service with the school in September last year. Since then the number eating school meals has risen from around 65 a day to more than 120 - almost double the previous number!

The South Ribble pupils have rejected burgers and chips, replacing them with "home cooked" fare, more nutritionally balanced delights and more helpings of fruit and vegetables.

The difference is also clear when it comes to drinks with children swapping sugary flavoured drinks for fruit juices or water.

Abigail, a pupil who only started having school meals in January, described the choice as "fantastic".

Melissa's favourites on the menu included melon and other fruit, while her friend Laura opted for pasta and even a curry. Tom was a big fan of cheese wraps as they're "really cheesy and go with anything". School staff are equally enthusiastic about the improvements.

Teacher Justine Venables, one of the school's healthy eating champions, feels the changes have made a big difference to the school.

"We worked with LCCS to design new menus and we've sent questionnaires home to parents. The governors have also been involved, along with parents and, of course, pupils.

"We're very keen to develop a healthy eating ethos and a healthy school.

"LCCS held a food sampling where parents could see the new ideas and people could try the new food. It was very successful."

Another successful innovation has been the



creation of a 'Top Table'. Every Friday, pupils who've eaten the healthiest meals during the week could be rewarded with a place at the Top Table. Places at the table are now highly prized. "Dinner lady" Cheryl couldn't be happier with the changes. She said: "There's a lot less waste with the new menu. The children are clearing their plates now. "It's also much more enjoyable cooking and baking what I'd consider to be real food."

Primary school lunches remain excellent value at around £1.65 per day

Commercial services

Lancashire
County Council