



## Dreamschemes back for 2009

**MULTI-AREA** The popular school holiday 'Dreamschemes' (run by the street-based youth workers that Westlea co-funds with Wiltshire Council) have returned for 2009 and will be running this summer for young people living in Westlea's key regeneration areas.

Dreamschemes consist of 1-3 days of community-based work followed by a 'reward' activity chosen by the

young people involved. This year's focus will be on getting young people who have not previously been involved in a Dreamscheme activity to participate in the work and enjoy the pleasure of the reward! Rewards have included trips to water parks, canoeing, camping, and mountain biking in the New Forest.

**>CONTACT** Sophie Grist on 01249 655249 or email [sophiegrist@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:sophiegrist@wiltshire.gov.uk)

## Westlea Forums

These established groups provide an excellent way to consult, inform, and learn from particular groups of Westlea residents.

- The **Disability Forum** meets three times a year. The meetings are organised by an enthusiastic steering group of residents who take an active role in running the events. They are increasingly interested in promoting good practice and recognising local services that are disabled-friendly.
- The **Older Persons' Forum** also meets three times a year and serves to advise and consult older residents around Westlea's plans and to raise

awareness of agencies and services for older people in the community. It also provides social events and activities. The Forum has a superb relationship with Age Concern Wiltshire with whom they produce a regular newsletter.

- The **Young Person's Resident Business Plan Forum** gives young people the chance to discuss issues in their local community. Meeting monthly, young people talk about their ideas can help shape how Westlea should be spending its money to improve their estates. They have also set up a discussion board on Facebook to communicate with each other and Westlea between meetings.

**Contact the Westlea Housing Neighbourhood Involvement Team on 01249 466163 or email [neighbourhood.involvement@westlea.co.uk](mailto:neighbourhood.involvement@westlea.co.uk)**

If you would like to have any part of this document explained or translated, or in a different format such as in larger print, in braille or on audio tape, please contact us on 01249 465465 to discuss your needs.

**Westlea Housing • Part of GreenSquare Group**  
Methuen Park • Chippenham SN14 0GU  
tel 01249 465465 • fax 01249 461136 • [enquiries@westlea.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@westlea.co.uk)



## Support for young carers

**MULTI-AREA** When Westlea realised that a number of our younger residents were acting as carers for a family member, we sought and established a partnership with Wiltshire Young Carers to provide the young carers with some support and help.

Young carers are children and young people aged 5 – 25 that provide a significant level of care for a relative who is seriously ill or disabled. This can be very hard for them and interfere with their schoolwork and social life. The Wiltshire Young Carers group provides a range of support from mentoring sessions and a counselling service to weekly fun activities that just allow the young carers to relax away from their caring responsibilities.



**>CONTACT** please call on 01380 720671 or email [yc@youthactionwiltshire.org](mailto:yc@youthactionwiltshire.org)

Many of these projects have been carried out with the support of partner organisations and residents. Westlea aims to deliver projects that improve the quality of life for residents within their communities. These projects are a key part of Westlea's community development strategy and our aim to be a partner of choice.

**Do any of these projects spark ideas or connect with something that you are doing? Then please get in touch – together we can make a difference!**

# COMMUNITIES COUNT

Community development project news from Westlea Housing

## The Pod has landed!

**CHIPPENHAM** A fledgling community centre is now in place in the Hill Rise area of Chippenham – the result of two years' community consultation and a lot of hard work by all involved in turning an idea into a reality.

Westlea Housing gained planning permission from the former North Wiltshire District Council several months ago to put a large portacabin (known as 'the Pod') on Barrow Green for one year to act as a base for community activities. "This is something that's been talked about for a long time so it's great that to see it finally open!" says

Katie Scaife, Westlea Housing's Neighbourhood Worker for the area. "I guess the idea came from young people in the local area telling us that there was nowhere for them to go – they could only hang out in the street which wasn't great given the usual British weather and wasn't always appreciated by other, older, residents."

Working with the local street-based youth workers (co-funded by Westlea and Wiltshire Council), the young people consulted with other residents to see how they felt about having a community building on the Green and found that there was support for the idea. **>PAGE 2**

The Pod on Barrow Green had a successful public launch in April with a free barbeque, free games organised by local young people, stalls for all the agencies delivering services from the Pod, and the premiere showing of the DVD 'The Magic Pod'. The DVD, featuring young people and their thoughts on how the Pod could be used as a community asset, was produced by local young people in conjunction with Kandu Arts.



### in this issue

- page 2** Community allotments
- page 3** Abberd Brook restoration
- page 4** Dreamscheme for summer
- page 4** Support for young carers

[www.westlea.co.uk](http://www.westlea.co.uk)



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Residents understood that there was a lack of things for young people to do and also talked about other things a community space could be used for - like coffee mornings and parent and toddler groups," says Katie. "And we at Westlea realised that the Pod could help us provide residents with better access to services by providing somewhere in the community where we could hold drop-in sessions and advice surgeries. It took a while to research the options and get a planning application together, but the young people were patient and now can see the result!"

The Pod is a flexible, adaptable space and features a main room, an office, kitchen area and toilet. Already the Pod is now a base for nine local agencies as an outreach/satellite office/workspace. The street-based youth workers are running a group for young people on Monday nights and the RISE Trust run another evening drop-in on alternate Wednesdays. Coffee mornings are held on Saturdays. Key Westlea staff run weekly 'surgery' hours in the Pod; and Knightstone Housing, which made a generous contribution to the Pod, also has a monthly surgery there.

The Council also agreed a standing licence for the use of the Green for Pod activities which means that it will be easy to run spontaneous outdoor activities centred at the Pod in the future. "Residents are involved in deciding what goes into the Pod, what the Pod is used for, and how the Pod is used," says Katie Scaife. "Local residents are the Pod's cleaners and the new Pod Planning Committee is made up of residents of all ages."

Westlea says that if the Hill Rise Pod proves a lively, growing community facility, they will work together with residents, the Council, and other partner agencies to consider how best to make the Pod a permanent community asset.

>CONTACT Katie Scaife at Westlea, phone 01249 466015 or email katie.scaife@westlea.co.uk

# Community allotment scheme takes root

**CORSHAM** Westlea has set up an allotments scheme in the Potley and Pockeridge area of Corsham - working with residents there who have agreed to let their gardens be used for an allotment scheme on a one-year trial basis.



residents also living in the area; 15 people have signed up already and are getting on with planting! Local young people have expressed a keen interest in the scheme and Westlea is set to link with the local Health Visitors to deliver cooking courses for allotment users so they can make sure they get the most out of their fresh produce!

Another community allotment scheme - aimed in part at teaching children about gardening and healthy eating - is also now in development, using land donated by Corsham Primary School's Broadwood Avenue site in Rudloe.

>CONTACT Emma Jane at Westlea, phone 01249 466156 or email emma.jane@westlea.co.uk

**Taking on an allotment can be a daunting prospect. Where to begin? What equipment is needed? What's best to grow? And how can you get the best from your plants? Recognising these possible barriers, Westlea has taken steps to encourage and support beginners:**

- The allotments are of a usable but not massive size and Westlea carried out all the groundwork (like roto-tilling) to prepare the soil
- Links with Lackham College, Whitehall Garden Centre and Corsham Gardeners Society have resulted in training and support
- BTCV will help the Wiltshire Young Carers grow more confident in the allotment they are sharing with residents

The Potley and Pockeridge allotment scheme is open only to other

# A brook runs through it!

**CALNE** Community momentum is growing for plans - supported and encouraged by Westlea - to restore a neglected brook to a living, biologically diverse local amenity for Calne.

The Abberd Brook, running through the Coleman's Farm neighbourhood in Calne, has sadly been reduced to the state of little more than a ditch over the years. Water voles and ducks contend with litter and shopping trolleys as they forage. The water is dark, sluggish and muddy and has little life left in it. But all this seems set to change. Westlea is proud to be working with local residents on a big, bold plan to bring the brook back to life.

Working with the River Restoration Centre, the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, local government, and Black & Veatch Engineering, residents and community groups are coming together to plan a way forward. There is now a report on the engineering needed to restore the brook to a diverse, life-supporting waterway. This includes not only how to improve water flow but also how to create a variety of habitats along the brook's route. Careful thought is being given to how the works can help reduce the threat of flooding to buildings close to the

brook during wet years. What sort of indigenous plants can be planted along the borders, ideas for a boardwalk and a duck feeding platform, and strategies for protecting the water voles resident along the brook and hopefully encouraging some otters back into the area are all part of the wide-reaching plan.

This plan can go nowhere, however, without the full support of area residents. Westlea is helping to foster the support that is growing hand-in-hand with the planning. Residents will be getting together to consider not just the technical aspects of re-engineering the brook but the wider opportunity this work creates for the community: How is the area used now? Where do people like to stop along the brook? Where would benches be best placed? Where would people like to be able to get down to the brook and explore it? These are planning tasks that residents are taking on with Westlea's help.

With organisational support from Westlea, the Abberd Brook Watchers group walks along the brook and make notes of littered areas, items dumped in the brook, and how people are using the paths, so they can build up a picture of how the area is currently used.

All residents recently came together for a Brook Clean Up event supported by the BTCV and Westlea staff. A huge turn out scoured the brook and filled a skip with plastic bags, crisp packets, bike wheels, bottles, scrap metal, even a Hoover! And following the Clean Up there was the first of a series of consultations, organised by local young people working together with Community First Consultancy and Westlea. These young people, supported by the street-based Youth Workers, had built a model of the brook as a tool to use during the consultations alongside the engineers' plans. Residents shared their opinions on and ideas for the restoration of the brook and its adjoining parklands, clarifying an Abberd Brook action plan. Two lovely local residents provided much needed refreshments while all this hard work was going on!

Children are getting involved too. The Abberd Brook Explorers group, run by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT), offers family sessions during school holidays. The Explorers get right down into the brook, examining the kind of creatures living there, learning more about them and what can help the creatures thrive. Other activities include making nesting boxes or feeding stations for local birds.

These explorations of the brook are then turned into crafty fun with the help of Wiltshire Scrapstore. Children create something that reflects what they discovered with WWT whilst reusing 'rubbish' creatively rather than just tossing it away! Raising awareness of the brook helps children to understand the importance of the brook and to value its role in the health of the community. Westlea financially supports these sessions so they can be offered free of charge.

>CONTACT Denise Cooper at Westlea, phone 01249 466052 or email denise.cooper@westlea.co.uk

