

## **TSA AGM 2007 Key Note Speaker: Philippa Russell. “Aiming High”**

We were extremely fortunate to have as our key note speaker Philippa Russell. Philippa was a Disability Rights Commissioner; has been Disability Policy Adviser to the National Children’s Bureau, and Director of the Council for Disabled Children. She was appointed Chair of the Standing Commission on Carers by Gordon Brown in 2007.

Philippa’s presentation focused on “Aiming High – A New Agenda for Disabled Children and their Families”. This government document came out of a joint review of disabled children’s services undertaken by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and HM Treasury.

(Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit 2005) **“by 2025 all disabled people (and family carers) in Britain should have full opportunities and chances to improve their quality of life and they will be respected and included as equal members of society.”**

Philippa has a son, Simon, who has learning disabilities and hydrocephalus; her grandson has significant problems also. She also has experience of TSC, because Simon’s oldest friend of many years standing has TSC.

Philippa included many personal touches and anecdotes in her presentation, which served to remind the audience that our speaker has personal experience of all she’s talking about which undoubtedly brings much benefit to her work.

She told us she’d like to say things have got better since Simon was born in 1963, but actually feels she got a better service for Simon than her grandson is receiving now, due in no small part because of the patchiness of service provision – known as the ‘postcode lottery’.

She clearly feels passionately about this lack of equality of provision.

Philippa also came across as being a great believer in the role of parents in developing appropriate services: “We all need to be very clear about what we want for our sons and daughters and how to push our priorities up the political agenda”.

Although her presentation focused on children and young people and their families, Philippa has a long-term view that there is a ‘bigger picture’ involved: “If we want to get services right for adults we need to get them right for children”.

Philippa has great concern that disabled people are seen as “people who receive care” as opposed to people who can contribute.

“Aiming High” intends to provide new opportunities by having the 5 outcomes (for children and for parents) as defined in ‘Every Child Matters’ (*being healthy; being safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; economic wellbeing*) as the common principles right across children’s services.

Philippa emphasised that the 5 outcomes should span across **all** age groups, (not just children and young people) and then helped us see some of the current barriers to achieving these through the use of personal stories about Simon and the barriers he's experienced in his aspirations to work. She elaborated on the contradictions that exist which block people from achieving.

"Aiming High" is for children and young people, but it has real implications for adult services. The money is backed by new national indicators with targets for disabled people that the public sector must have regard to.

It has a significant amount of money attached to it to make its targets achievable (£340 million over 2008 – 2011). The intention is that everyone will have

Better information and advice

Transparency (eg published eligibility criteria)

Participation

Assessment (integrated across agencies)

Feedback

Philippa identified some of the areas where 'pots' of money will be targeted (such as short breaks options; development of parent forums).

"Aiming High" intends to tackle issues of inclusion and exclusion; which led Philippa to refer to the ongoing debate about inclusion and what it is: and summed it up as "choice" - eg day centres have been closed because not inclusive enough and folk should be in their community. But what's happened when they've been closed and there hasn't been any community options available? Day services need to be "modernised to offer a real ladder for achievement and opportunity"

She reflected on the ambivalence of services about the role of family carers for adults with additional needs, and shared that she worries – as surely so many carers do – what will happen to her son when she's no longer able to pick up where services fall short. Or when she's not there.

Philippa closed with looking at what are the key policy initiatives of the future:

Disability Rights need to remain on the agenda –the Disability Discrimination Act is still variably implemented.

Public Sector services need advice on how they manage access and inclusion.

Direct Payments and Individual Budgets have the challenge that they are sufficiently funded and have good brokerage systems.

Further development of Key Worker systems, and budget-holding lead professionals.

Her final comments:

"There are huge opportunities and challenges ahead...

The TSA has a role to ensure that TSC remains on the agenda...."

"We are still on a long journey....." – words which must resonate with every reader of SCAN, and every listener at the AGM.

*The slides from Philippa's presentation are also on the TSA website.*

*If you don't have access to this, please phone Diane Sanson who will be pleased to send them to you.*