

# FamilyMatters

The newsletter for parents, families and practitioners



## Welcome to Family Matters

**Family Matters is the newsletter for Warwickshire families with children and young people aged 0-20. The Family Information Service created the publication to help you find out more about local services and support.**

The Government's Every Child Matters: Change for Children agenda has influenced the content of the magazine and each issue will focus on one of the five outcomes identified by children as being important to them.

This particular issue focuses on the outcome 'Achieve Economic Wellbeing' and so all articles are related to how different services strive to help local children, young people and their families to achieve this.

We have only included a selection of the services currently working towards this aim. To find out more about Warwickshire County Council services that are available to residents, visit [www.warwickshire.gov.uk](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk)

We hope that you enjoy reading Family Matters. If you would like to comment on anything you have read or make suggestions for future articles then please get in touch.



## From Care to Work

**Once a local authority has taken the difficult decision to remove a child from their family, with all the disruption and distress that can involve, it is then the duty of the local authority to 'safeguard and promote their welfare!'**

However, young people leaving care have significantly poorer outcomes than their peers in relation to education, training and employment. For example, nationally, only 13% of looked after children gain 5 A-C grade GCSE's compared to 62% of all children. This generally does not reflect ability or ambition, but is more likely to be a consequence of interrupted education.

Care2Work is a new national employability scheme which helps to support young care leavers to overcome these barriers. The scheme offers supported learning opportunities, the chance to develop employment skills and to gain qualifications which helps enhance the individual's employability and future prospects.

The scheme is led by the young people involved who indicate where they would like to gain experience in the public and private sector. Then through building a supportive relationship between the young person, their leaving care service and the employer, the scheme helps to ensure that the opportunities offered meets the individual needs of the care leaver involved.

By increasing the profile of young people leaving care within their organisation, creating opportunities and ensuring a quality experience is offered, all employers involved can also help to raise the aspirations and future prospects of the next generation leaving care.

For more information on Care2Work in Warwickshire, email Hazel Mills, Project Coordinator [hazelmills@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:hazelmills@warwickshire.gov.uk) or Susan Holden, Leaving Care Development Officer at [susanholden@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:susanholden@warwickshire.gov.uk)

# Working to **Eliminate Child Poverty** in Warwickshire

**In Warwickshire, nearly 15000 children (13.4% of all children) are considered to be living in poverty. The Child Poverty Act, passed into law earlier this year aims to eliminate child poverty nationwide by 2020.**

The act requires the Government to produce a Child Poverty strategy every 3 years. At a local level, Warwickshire County Council is required to carry out a needs assessment in order to gain a better understanding of the problem within the county. Then, working together with partners including the District Councils, Police, Health, Transport and Jobcentre Plus, they will need to produce a joint Child Poverty Strategy, setting out how they are going to reduce and lessen the effects of the problem within Warwickshire.

With the help of the Warwickshire Observatory, we are currently collecting information including the views of people who are either experiencing or working with those experiencing poverty. We are trying to consider as many points of view as possible, including those of children, parents and professionals working with families to gain a better understanding of the problems people are facing.

Unfortunately, it is often the children who suffer when their parents get into debt. So much of the parents' time is spent working to pay off the debt or worrying about it, that issues at home can often be overlooked. For example, a



child with anger issues at school was identified through the Common Assessment Framework process as being at risk of homelessness through parental debt. By managing the rent arrears, the child had a more stable home life, and so the behavioural issues have been resolved.

In another example, a mother came into a Credit Union with a carrier bag full of bills, many of which were unopened as she couldn't cope with her mounting debts and the impact it was having on her children. The Credit Union helped to prioritise her bills and work out exactly what she owed.

Eliminating child poverty will not be easy. It is therefore vital that every agency and every community gets to grips with the challenge. By working together, we hope to reduce child poverty and improve children's opportunities and life chances, allowing them to realise their aspirations for a better and brighter future.

To find out more about the Child Poverty Strategy, to contribute your views or to tell us about how you are addressing the issue in your area, please contact either Julie E Smith at [julieesmith@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:julieesmith@warwickshire.gov.uk) or Tel: **01926 412537** or Jane Carter at [janecarter@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:janecarter@warwickshire.gov.uk) or Tel: **01926 742347**.

jobcentreplus

Department for  
Work and Pensions

# Supporting Lone Parents back into work

**October 25th 2010 will see a change in benefit legislation for most lone parents with a youngest child aged 7 years or older as they will no longer be entitled to claim Income Support if they are only claiming it because they are a lone parent.**

Instead, those able to work will be able to claim Job Seekers Allowance, providing they are looking for suitable work, while lone parents with a health condition or a disability may be able to claim Employment and Support Allowance.

A degree of flexibility has been introduced as a result of these changes to help ensure that all parents affected are able to maintain a healthy work life balance and any lone parents who are currently claiming Income Support will receive support during the change over to Job Seekers Allowance.

The thought of trying to find a job can be a daunting prospect, but paid employment can help families to achieve economic well-being by, for example, providing families with financial stability and security, helping to pay for a better life both now and in the future and helping to ensure any children involved have a better start in life as well.



## How can Jobcentre Plus help?

Lone parents can access support through the New Deal for Lone Parents programme where they will receive:

- Regular one-to-one interviews with a personal adviser, tailored to their individual needs
- Help in finding the right job for them
- Information on the latest job vacancies
- Access to training programmes
- A 'Better Off In-work' calculation and advice on in - work benefits
- Help with childcare costs
- Continued help once they have moved into work with access to their personal adviser
- Help with writing a CV and preparing for interviews

- Work trials – the chance to try a job to see if it's right for them
- In-work Emergency Discretion Fund - this provides access to in-work financial help to enable a parent to overcome unexpected difficulties that otherwise could make it difficult for them to remain in employment.

To make a new claim to Job Seekers Allowance customers can apply online at **www.direct.gov.uk/jsaonline** or they can contact Jobcentre Plus on **0800 055 66 88** or for further information on how Jobcentre Plus can help you back into work, call **0845 604 3719** or visit **www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/Jobseekers**

# Help with the Costs of Childcare

**Whether already in work or looking for work, the cost of childcare can put real pressure upon the family finances and potentially act as a barrier to those families achieving economic well being. There are, however, a number of schemes which can help to ensure that childcare doesn't cost the earth.**

## **Nursery Education Funding:**

The Government pays childcare providers so that all 3 and 4 year olds across the country can have part-time, free early years care and education. Childcare providers need to be Ofsted registered and registered with Warwickshire County Council to receive this funding.

In Warwickshire, this free entitlement is for 570 hours per year, over a minimum of 38 weeks of the year. This works out to about 15 hours of free care a week. Nursery Funding may be taken flexibly but you will need to discuss this with your childcare provider.

Funding starts the term after the child's third birthday and continues to statutory school age.

## **Tax Credits:**

Working Tax Credit is a state benefit for people who are in work but who are on a fairly low income. If a parent works 16 hours or more each week and uses registered or approved childcare to be able to work, they may be able to get help with up to 80% of their childcare costs, up to a maximum of £175 a week for one child and £300 per week for two or more children. The actual amount you get will depend on your income – the lower your income, the more tax credits you can get.



## **Childcare Vouchers:**

Childcare vouchers can also help parents to pay for childcare and are one of the ways in which employers can help to support them with their childcare costs.

Each month, parents can set aside a portion of their salary which they will then receive in the form of childcare vouchers. The first £55 per week (£243 per month) provided through childcare vouchers are exempt from tax and National Insurance Contributions meaning that a two parent family could save up to £2,390 per year on the cost of childcare, depending on individual circumstances.

For further information on all of these schemes, lists of registered and approved childcare in your area and other financial support that may be available to parents and families, contact the Family Information Service on **0845 090 8044**, email: [fis@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:fis@warwickshire.gov.uk) or visit our website: [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/fis](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/fis)

# Does your Child qualify for **Free School Meals?**



**Free school meals are available to children up to 19 years of age who attend Warwickshire County Council (WCC) maintained schools and maintained nursery schools on a full-time basis (i.e. before and after the lunch period) and whose parents or guardians claim a qualifying benefit.**

Families can claim free school meals if they receive:

- Income Support or Income-Based Job Seekers Allowance
- Child Tax Credit and have an annual taxable income, as assessed by the Inland Revenue that does not exceed £15,575. Note: families who also receive Working Tax Credit do not qualify to claim free school meals
- the Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

You can apply by:

- contacting the Customer Service Centre (01926 742060), who will take application details over the phone
- completing an on-line application form which is available at: [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals)
- by completing a paper application form which are available from schools, the Customer Service Centre and One Stop Shops.

**Current proof of a relevant benefit must accompany the application form.**

For more information on free school meals  
call **01926 742060**,  
email: [freemeals@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:freemeals@warwickshire.gov.uk)  
or visit:  
[www.warwickshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals)

## Helping vulnerable families to achieve economic wellbeing



**The Family Information Service (FIS) has recently created a brand new resource for professionals working with some of Warwickshire's most**

**vulnerable families to help ensure that they are getting the financial help to which they may be entitled.**

The 'Financial Support Checklist for Parents on a Low Income', 'Financial Support for Parents or Carers of a Child with a Disability' and 'Financial Support Checklist for when a Parent or Carer has a Serious Illness' factsheets offer a comprehensive list of the benefits,

grants and other financial help currently available to families facing such circumstances.

These simple to use resources are already being used to great effect by health visitors, Children's Centres and the Integrated Disability Service throughout the county.

The information contained within each factsheet has been supplied by extremely reliable sources and will be reviewed every six months to ensure it is accurate and up to date.

Each factsheet also provides the contact details of services that will be able to provide further in-depth information and support should it be required by particular families.



If you are a professional working with families and you would like more information on these resources, contact the FIS on **0845 090 8044** or email: [fis@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:fis@warwickshire.gov.uk)

# Warwickshire families continue to benefit with the help of WWRAS



Established in 1986, Warwickshire Welfare Rights Advice Service (WWRAS) is an independent charity and not-for-profit advice agency which can help local families to achieve economic well-being by raising awareness of Social Security Benefits that they might be entitled to and by providing information on how to claim them.



The service is free and has been able to help thousands of families over the years. Last year alone, WWRAS assisted the people of Warwickshire in claiming an extra £2,147,599 in benefits.

WWRAS acts as a specialist information resource on benefits and anti-poverty issues to local authorities and other advice agencies across Warwickshire. It does not deal with members of the public directly, but tends to see clients who have been referred to them by services such as the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) or from Adult and Children's Services Departments.

For example, anyone with a benefits enquiry should first of all contact one of WWRAS's partner services, such as the CAB who will be able to provide them with initial advice. A list of these 'first point of contact' agencies and services can be found on the WWRAS website at [www.wwras.org.uk](http://www.wwras.org.uk)

If the case was then to require more detailed work such as representation at a tribunal, then the agency involved may arrange for the person to see a WWRAS worker. WWRAS would then either visit the person at home or discuss their case over the telephone.

Among its many services, WWRAS currently provides a benefit take up service to users of Nuneaton and Bedworth Children's Centres in order to maximise the income for families in that area. Referrals are made directly by the Children's Centres and last year raised £231,593 in increased benefits for local families. WWRAS is also hoping to start delivering an increased take up service to families in deprived communities across the county later this year.

WWRAS also provides a number of services and resources for professionals working on behalf of children, young people and families. This includes a benefits enquiry line, where advisers and council staff can find out information on behalf of their clients. They also provide training on Social Security benefits and produce a number of leaflets, fact sheets and a quarterly information bulletin – all of which helps to raise awareness of benefits that can make a real difference to the economic wellbeing of those families who need them most.

For further information about WWRAS and the services that they offer, visit their website at: [www.wwras.org.uk](http://www.wwras.org.uk)

# WEBP - Helping young people achieve economic wellbeing

**The Warwickshire Education Business Partnership (WEBP) has been building education-business links with local and national employers, for over 18 years -working in partnership with schools, colleges and businesses to prepare young people for their adult and working life.**

Recently published figures show that almost a million 16 to 25 year olds are currently unemployed. There has never been a more critically important time to ensure that all young people are equipped with skills, appropriate attitudes and the experience they need to meet the economic demands they will face as our future workforce. Economic Wellbeing is paramount and present in all the activities run by the WEBP.

All WEBP events and activities introduce students to the world of work. Students work together, testing skills such as their decision making abilities but also developing a sense team spirit and healthy competition in the process. Students are required to simulate a business environment, where they make key financial decisions in order to stay in profit.

Through interactive games and exercises they learn about profit



and loss, basic accounting and how to manage money and the pitfalls of debt.

The competition between teams is often tough and the exercises are fast and furious, simulating the pace and uncertainty of our current economic climate. Events are accompanied by people from the real world of work, who work together with students to help them understand the importance

of the skills required for their own entry into the work place and the importance of financial literacy for their own personal wellbeing.

The WEBP engage with all secondary schools within Warwickshire as well as a significant number of primary schools throughout the county. The service is also a STEMPOINT contract holder on behalf of STEMNET working to promote the subjects of Science,

Technology, Engineering and Maths and their related skills to young people.

Over the last academic year the WEBP have delivered 190 events to over 26,000 students involving nearly 1,500 local employers – not only providing young people with valuable lessons and experiences, but helping them to develop the skills which will prove to be invaluable to all of their futures.

For further information on these events and activities and to find out more about the work of WEBP, please contact: Gail Wright, Operations Manager, Warwickshire Education Business Partnership on **02476 325336** or email: **[gailwright@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:gailwright@warwickshire.gov.uk)**

# Financial Help for Warwickshire Families Online



**With the country currently in a climate of economic uncertainty and the potential knock-on effects of the Government's spending cuts looming large on the horizon, there has never been a greater need for information on financial help and support for families.**

The Financial Help section of the FIS website is crammed full with useful information for Warwickshire families on a number of important financial issues. Each page offers support and detailed advice from organisations and services who are experts in that particular field and the site has been designed so that users can find the information that they need, quickly and easily.

For example, parents and carers, as well as professionals who work with families will be able to find essential information on subjects such as money management and budgeting, dealing with debt, consumer credit advice and credit unions in Warwickshire on our 'Financial Help – General Information' page.

Other pages provide information on benefits, grants and other financial support packages that are available whether you are bringing up children on your own or as a couple, expecting children or if a family member is sick or disabled. Our 'Bringing up Children' web page also includes information on Child Maintenance options and payments for lone parents.

Parents can also access information on help with paying childcare costs as well as information about any financial support available for students with children and for parents or their children who are thinking of entering higher or further education.

Finally, for families who are struggling to pay their household bills, we have provided the details of a number of schemes which may be able to offer financial help with paying council tax, gas, electricity and water bills as well as information on the Government's Cold Weather Payment and Warm Front grant schemes, which families may be able to claim.

For more detailed information about the types of financial help that may be available to you and your family, visit [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/fis](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/fis) and then click on 'Financial Help' within the Parents and Carers section of the website. Alternatively you can ring us on **0845 090 8044**.

## FamilyMatters

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this issue. The theme of the next issue is 'Enjoy and Achieve' and will be available in January 2011.

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