

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**19 October 2010**

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**Public Participation**

**Statement by Mrs Leila Gunning**

**The Portage Service**

My Name is Leila Gunning, I am a concerned parent of a little girl who has SMS. She spent the 1<sup>st</sup> 4months of her life in hospital. Following many investigations and finally major Lung surgery we were discharged, with a 4 month old baby, who had the potential to stop breathing at any point with no support or help. After expressing repetitively concerns about her development we were finally referred to Stepping Stones our DSC and WWPs.

WWP, for those of you who do not know, is a home education service for 0-5 year olds with difficulties and disabilities, such as DS, CP and ASD. It works in partnership with local children services including the Local District Centre, but is unique as it uses an allocated home visitor, who visits the family on a weekly basis, allowing continuity and a trusting relationship to be formed.

As well as providing the educational needs of the child in a safe and familiar environment, the WWP HV addresses the needs of the whole family, giving them the confidence and tools to become the Childs teacher. HV's also act as an essential key worker who helps to co-ordinate the complex and confusing world of "Special Needs". They are always at the end of a phone or an email.

**SOME PERSONAL REFERENCES...**

WWP is a small charity which works under the guidelines set by the National Portage Service. There are many Portage services across the county who receive their funding in different ways, but WWP, which has been running for 30 years, is partly funded by Wiltshire Council which allows 18 families to access the service; it then raises funds to enable it to provide the service to a further 12 families.

As you may be aware, the provision for children with disabilities is subject to the procurement process. This will mean a considerable change to the way in which WWP receive local authority funding in 2011. This will result in Portage only being able to provide a service for 0-2 year olds and reducing the numbers of children visited from the current 30 to only 9. This means Portage may not remain viable and could have to cease altogether from April 2011; like its colleagues in Salisbury who

have had their funding from their NHS PCT stopped from April 2011.

This will be catastrophic! Not only is there the risk for children with ASD for example, which often does not become apparent until this age, receiving less support but a large number of families and children will be left without this unique and life changing service.

Therefore I am here to ask how the cabinet will ensure that this service will not be lost and all families who need it will still be able to receive this essential life line.