

Report of Meeting with Regional Officer and MENCAP and Wycombe Branch Chairman

March 8 2002

I visited the Regional Office of MENCAP on March 8 and spoke to the officer who co-ordinates MENCAP's work in three counties. The Chairman of the Wycombe Branch was also present. It was explained that MENCAP is a large national body with a number of regional offices. The office in Wycombe co-ordinates the work of branches in the County and they also have a section that deals with residential homes.

They do not receive a grant from Social Services and provide no direct services for the County. Their role is representational and from time to time they consult about issues that affect the interests of the learning disabled. They referred to various consultative bodies and opportunities that they have to discuss issues affecting the learning disabled. They referred to consultation about the recently introduced "eligibility criteria" and the discussions that they had had about this. They were concerned about the effects that this might eventually have on the provision of day services.

The Wycombe Branch did receive some financial help for their work with carers, it was a modest sum that allowed them organise activities that gave carers some free time. They also support the local Gateway Club, which is a Club for the learning disabled. Their officers participated in the various consultative bodies and were members of the Wycombe Locality Forum.

They were very concerned about their ability to continue as a branch because of lack of support. They said it was difficult to recruit volunteers and many parents of learning disabled children were kept very busy.

I asked them questions from our questionnaire but they felt that many of them did not apply to their circumstances. Generally they thought that communication with the County could be better, many of the discussions that they had were inconclusive. I asked whether monitoring was a problem, they said it was not onerous.

I asked what their priority would be if they given more resources. The Wycombe Branch Chairman said that they would like to give more help to carers but he was concerned that they would have sufficient help to manage it.

The Regional Office administers a number of residential homes and they have contracts with the Buckinghamshire and other authorities.