Welcome to the first edition of the UKC–PostCarD study newsletter (*Understanding Knowledge & Confidence in daytime Postural Care for Children with a Disability*). We hope to publish a newsletter three times a year in order to keep those interested in our study updated about our progress. In this first edition we introduce key members of the research team and advisory group for the study.

The study is funded from an award from the NIHR Research for Patient Benefit scheme (Ref: PB-PG-0110-21045). The study is based on a collaboration involving four institutions across the south east of England.

### The Research Team

**Eve Hutton** is the Chief Investigator for the study. She is an occupational therapist and researcher. Eve is happy to answer any questions about the research study; she can be contacted by email eve.hutton@canterbury.ac.uk.

**Kate Hamilton-West** is a co-investigator on the project. She is a chartered psychologist, research fellow (CHSS) and quantitative research advisor (NIHR Research Design Service South East).

**Sarah Hotham** is a Research Associate at the University of Kent. Her background is in psychology and research methods. Her role is focused on managing the project on a day-to-day basis, alongside analysing the data and disseminating the results.

**Annette King** is a co-investigator on the Study. Her background is in qualitative methods. She is leading on the qualitative arm of the study: the focus groups and interviews with children.

**Maggie Gurr** is the research physiotherapist on the team. Her professional background is mainly in community paediatric physiotherapy. She is currently combining this research position with a clinical role in Folkestone.

**Ian Townsend** is the advisory teacher for physical impairment in Medway, working with pupils of all ages, their parents and schools. He is also a counsellor. His particular interest in the project is in ensuring that pupils’ posture is seen as crucial to their inclusion across the curriculum and in all school activities.

**Jan Jensen** is Principal Lecturer in the Department of Allied Health Professions at Canterbury Christ Church University. Before entering higher education she worked as an occupational therapist in several areas of practice including children’s services.

**Judi Mortimer** is a mum of two boys, the eldest of whom has a physical disability and attends a mainstream primary school. I’ve been involved in the project from its early stages when the A-Z booklet was initially produced. I feel that my role on the project is to represent a parent’s perspective, to try and help to make the research as relevant and understandable to other parents as possible.
Why are we conducting this research?
We know from previous research that those who manage the day time postural care needs of children with a physical disability at home and school can feel unsupported and overwhelmed. There are particular challenges for teachers in mainstream schools who have limited experience of teaching a child with a physical disability. The research team is currently in the final stages of developing an education programme, based on an awareness raising booklet called the A-Z of postural care. NHS therapists will be delivering this programme in specific localities within Surrey, Sussex and Kent (see map overleaf) with the aim of improving the confidence of parents and teachers. Once the therapists have delivered the education programme we will evaluate how effective this approach has been.

What does the research involve?
The education programme will recruit parents, teachers and teaching assistants in to a 6-week intervention that will comprise workshop-based training in postural care and one-to-one support from physiotherapists and occupational therapists. This programme will be rolled out across Kent, Surrey and Sussex over the next 18 months. Workshop participants’ knowledge of postural care and confidence in providing care will be assessed before and after participation using a validated tool that was developed specifically for this study. The evaluation will also involve focus groups to consider the benefits of the intervention from the perspective of workshop participants and the children of these participants. The project has been developed in cooperation with a long-standing advisory group, comprising professionals and parents with a range of experience in caring for children with disabilities. The group will provide input and guidance throughout the study.

Time line of project
February 2012 – March 2012: Ethics amendments, visiting sites
March 2012 – July 2012: Training of therapists who will deliver intervention in all sites
May 2012 – July 2012: Data collection at first site
September 2012 – November 2012: Data collection at second site
December 2012 – February 2013: Data collection at third site
February 2013 – April 2013: Data analysis and dissemination

Targets over the next two months
The next few months of the project are crucial and will be focused on a number of key areas. First, we will continue to build links with each locality sites in West Kent, Sussex and Surrey and recruit therapists from these therapy teams to deliver the training. Second, the research team will continue with the development of the training manual and training slides. These tools will be a key resource for the therapists, providing a complete package to support them when delivering the sessions.

Results from the outcome measure study
We are reaching the conclusion of the first phase of the study which focused on producing a unique validated tool to measure knowledge and understanding of postural care. We asked occupational therapists, physiotherapists, parents, educators and other professional involved in postural care to complete a new questionnaire that the research team designed. We received a fantastic response from the various recruitment adverts we placed and completed this part of the research at the end of summer 2011. Analysis of the responses established that, as expected, those individuals with more knowledge and understanding of postural care also felt more confident and had fewer concerns when providing postural care. Now the outcome measure has been validated we are able to utilise it as part of the education programme.