

Over a period of three weeks in April 2013, Nadrasca ran a “Respite for Carers” workshop for parents who have their son or daughter living with them. The workshop provided participants with the opportunity to come together in a small group to share ideas, experiences and information. Some of the topics covered included understanding the disability system, especially in relationship to Respite and Accommodation. The workshop was run by Mark Riches of Level Consulting. Due to its success, based on feedback from the parents, we may run this workshop again later in the year. The following are the observations and reflections of one of the participants:

*“We came into the meeting on the first day as strangers, seeking guidance and answers to the underlying concerns we have about the future of our sons and daughters. Each session took four hours - the quickest four hours I’ve gone through in a long time - and by the third session, we were friends, with a slightly more optimistic view of how to negotiate that path. We were led throughout the sessions by Mark Riches from Level Consulting Services, who made the sessions interesting and informative in a relaxed, professional manner.*

*Mark posed some provocative questions then let the group make its own way and the conversations/discussions, which often involved personal insights into each other’s lives, were illuminating. Our “children” – 35 years and older – have different degrees of disability but all are living with us at home and their presence shapes our own lives and those of their siblings. It was great sharing stories of just how we all manage – or don’t sometimes. It was helpful to realize that we are not alone in our frustrations and hopes regarding the future for our sons and daughters.*

*Raeoni joined us for part of each session, the second was most informative about the various changes within Nadrasca itself – its management, its various work-place situations, provision of accommodation in our own and DHS owned ‘houses’ and the involvement Nadrasca has with DHS as a result. (Actually I think she came for the delicious sandwiches and fruit platter that Mark’s organization provided.)*

*We will meet again less often to see how much we have digested and to discuss other problems that come up along the way. Mark gave us a little homework at the end of each session. “Do something for yourself and report back.” As parents we can get lost in the day-to-day routines involved in caring for our ‘care-ees’ and need to find ways to de-stress our lives in small ways, so that the big stuff doesn’t over-whelm us.*

*Thank you, Raeoni, for initiating the programme and to Mark for running it so well - and for the new friends that we have met and feel a closer bond of understanding with. If anyone else from within the Nadrasca community gets a chance to do the sessions, it’s well worth the effort.*

*One happy participant!*