

**yourvoice**  
August 2011



# Geoff has the last word!

## SDN's retiring founder will stay on Steering Group

Hi everyone

Before stepping down after three years as chair of SDN I would like to thank you all for the marvellous support in helping to build our continually growing network. Special thanks must go to you our supporters, the many contributing members of our Steering Group and our funders Shropshire Partnership, the Big Lottery, the Community Council of Shropshire, Grassroots, and more recently, Shropshire Council. Shropshire Disability Network was formed in 2008 to provide a powerful collective voice for people with disabilities across Shropshire. Our aim was to bring together individuals and organisations to identify issues and work with government, statutory bodies and the community to achieve improvements for the disabled, their families and carers.



persuasion, and to carers and disability organisations.

By joining, you will not only enable us to represent your views to local and national government, and statutory bodies such as social services and the NHS, but you will also be kept up to date with what's going on. Please click on the 'Join' tab on our website.

Decisions in the Network are taken by all its members, with disabled individuals having a constitutional majority on the Steering Group. Our Steering Group currently consists of nine members of a possible 12. The majority of us are disabled and we cover physical and mental disability, carers and disability organisations.

Our Vision is that by 2025 disabled people in Shropshire will have the same opportunities, choices and responsibilities as non-disabled people to be respected and included as equal members of society. In spite of the challenges of the Government cuts steady progress is being made every year. Fulfilment of our vision will mean considerable improvement for people with disability in opportunities and choices for their:

- Education and training
- Employment
- Everyday life and leisure
- Health care and support
- Home and housing options
- Motoring and transport

Membership of Shropshire Disability Network is open to all disabled people living or working in Shropshire who define themselves as disabled, regardless of their age, sex, gender, race, colour, religion, sexuality or political

I am delighted to report that Ann Johnson, head of our employment sub-group has, together with the group, launched a new company called Wavelength to take forward the work of the sub-group. Wavelength is a new, innovative, not-for-profit social marketing company. It aims to linkup support organisations within Shropshire to collectively help increase and improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Watch their website [www.wave-length.org.uk](http://www.wave-length.org.uk), the waves are getting bigger!

Finally, I would like to invite anyone interested in helping Shropshire Disability Network or Wavelength to email [chair@shropshire-disability.net](mailto:chair@shropshire-disability.net) We need all kinds of skills: fundraising, secretarial, policies and procedures, event management, research, IT, and more.

Thank you all again for your support. – Geoff Forgie

Footnote: Geoff may be stepping down from the chair but will remain a member of the Steering Group

## Need info?

**X marks the spot on  
the back page**

On the back page this month, and in the future, we're building a directory of useful contacts for people with disabilities, their families, carers and friends. It will list disability organisations, local and national government contact details, media contacts and as much detail about each as we can manage. Postal addresses and/or phone numbers will get as much prominence as email addresses, See what you think of Page X. Please get in touch if you would like a particular organisation included, or to make a correction.

**Peter's journey highlights the devastating nature of MND. The documentary was very sensitively handled and makes an important contribution to the debate around dying and assisted suicide.**

'As an Association we neither support nor oppose any attempt to change the law regarding assisted suicide because we believe it a matter of individual choice.'

However we believe that assisted suicide is an issue for government and parliament to consider and legislate upon, reflecting the values and views of society.

This is why the MND Association is calling for a public inquiry on end of life decision-making, preferably in the form of a Royal Commission.'

## Dying for relief

This article is taken from the Motor Neurone Disease Association's website and offers some thoughts on the 'Choosing to Die' documentary shown on BBC 2 in June.

The programme concerns Peter Smedley, a 71-year-old diagnosed with MND, as he ends his life at Dignitas in Switzerland. It follows Sir Terry Pratchett, the novelist, who has Alzheimer's, as he explores the reality of dying and assisted suicide.

Peter's death at Dignitas was widely reported and is the first time assisted suicide has been screened on terrestrial TV.

The documentary also features a London taxi drivernamed Mick who has had MND for over seven years. Mick was interviewed at his hospice and said that whilst everyone has the right to a choice in how they die he wouldn't want to take that option.

In recognition of the complexity and importance of this issue the MND Association has commissioned a study into the views of people with MND on death and dying which is due to report in the autumn."

The MND website address is <http://www.mndassociation.org/>



# Mapping Big Society - Shropshire is in top 5

**A new report from localism think tank the New Local Government Network shows which areas of the country are most ready to benefit and which are most at risk from the Government's Big Society agenda. The report shows that:**

- ☐ There is no strong link between a community's wealth and its 'Big Society' resources, with some deprived areas comparatively rich in community wealth. A poll of local authorities suggested that even in areas facing the steepest budget reductions, ingredients of the Big Society are often strong.
- ☐ Communities faced with 'double deprivation' - those lacking both financial wealth and community resources such as volunteering - should be targeted for extra help to cope with the withdrawal of traditional state services
- ☐ In a boost to the Government's agenda, new polling

by Ipsos Mori shows that there is an untapped well of people willing to get more involved in community work through staffing libraries, sharing skills or mentoring children.

<http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/2011/realising-community-wealth-local-government-and-the-big-society/>  
A map of areas across England giving their 'Big Society score' is available on The Guardian's Datablog.

Sorting the data by score shows that Shropshire has the fifth highest Big Value Score. See: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/jun/29/big-society-data-mapped> [from Voluntary & Community Sector Assembly]

## Where to read the care funding report

The Government created an independent Commission on Funding of Care and Support in July 2010 to review the social care funding system and the future demands on it. The commission's report was published last month (July) and recommends major changes. To find out more about how this will work and to read the whole report, visit: [www.dilnotcommission.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dilnotcommission.dh.gov.uk) A leaflet summarising the main changes is also available.

- ☐ An item on the commission in the "Salix Newsflash" of 1 July, before the report was published, says: "Ministers in England must not shy away from finding more money to fix the 'broken' social care system, the [independent review] will recommend an overhaul of the support given to the elderly and adults with disabilities... to create a system where no-one pays any more than they do now - and some pay a lot less."

Should that well-known book have been called ...

# Lies, Damned Lies and the Benefits System

**The latest national statistics report, 'Fraud and Error in the Benefit System', produced by the Department for Work and Pensions shows some interesting figures:**

In 2010-11 a total of £154 billion was paid in benefits. Of this,

- ❑ £3.4bn (2.2%) is estimated to have been overpaid in error
- ❑ £1.3bn (0.9%) was lost because of customer error
- ❑ £1.2bn was lost to fraud
- ❑ £0.9bn was lost to official error

❑ £1.3bn is estimated to have been underpaid through fraud/ error.

The DWP says the findings are similar to recent years. It has previously published research showing millions of people who are entitled miss out on benefits and tax credits every year.

Yet the Government is using these figures to justify the introduction of a civil penalty.

[from July 2011 Benefits Newsletter for Professionals from Social Welfare Training

## Nearly half carers do not claim Carer's Allowance

**A survey commissioned by Turn2us, part of the national charity Elizabeth Finn Care, has revealed that large numbers of carers are not receiving Carer's Allowance, yet many are facing financial hardship.**

Almost half of the people who care for a relative or friend were not claiming the allowance and nearly a third of those surveyed said they were regularly skipping meals to make ends meet.

Care provided by friends and family members to ill, frail or disabled relatives is now worth £119 billion every year, according to Carers UK.

Yet nearly 300,000 carers are missing out on a total of £840 million worth of Carer's Allowance each year.

Carer's Allowance provides support to full-time carers who are not in education or earn no more than £100 a week.

However, the survey shows that many carers are unlikely to believe they could or should claim. Over two-fifths struggle to pay their energy bills, and the need to raise awareness is all the more urgent because many carers fall into debt.

**£840m remains unclaimed each year**

Last year a fifth of carers surveyed amassed debts totalling over £600 on average as they struggled to pay bills.

Alison Taylor, Director of Turn2us, said: "Carer's Allowance is a crucial, albeit limited source of income for carers who often have demanding responsibilities which limit their access to paid employment and education.

"Many of the carers who have used Turn2us to access benefits say that before coming to us they were simply unaware of what they were entitled to or put off from claiming by the sheer complexity of the benefits system."

Turn2us has an easy to use, free benefits checker at [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk), which carers can use to make sure they are claiming everything to which they are entitled.

[from Turn2Us newsletter 13.06.11]

# Cash for carers?

**Do you look after an adult other than a spouse or partner? If you look after someone over 18 who is not your spouse or your partner you may be entitled to a Council Tax Carers Discount.**

- ☐ The person you look after must receive the higher rate of Disability Living Allowance Care Component (or higher rate Attendance Allowance).
- ☐ You must care for that person for a minimum of 35 hours per week.
- ☐ The person must live with you.

## How it works

Council Tax bills are based on two adults living at an address. If your house is empty you must pay half the bill. If only one person is counted you get a 25 percent discount. Usually if two people live at an address you cannot get a discount.

## Carers get special treatment

It doesn't matter if you have savings. If you fit the situation described above you will get money off your Council Tax Bill and you may be able to claim some money back.

If at least two people provide care for more than 35 hours each week you can get a maximum discount amounting to half your bill.

If you are a carer and get the Invalid Care Allowance you will already have proved that you care for someone for more than 35 hours per week.

## Claiming money back

If you have been a carer for a long time, ask for your

Omega, the National Association for End of Life Care, spells out how carers may be entitled to claim a Council Tax Carers Discount

Carers Discount to be backdated to when the person you are looking after reached 18.

## It's the Law

This rule is explained in a legal document called Statutory Instrument No 552/92 The Council Tax (Additional Provisions for Discount Disregards)

## Talk to Omega

Omega is keen to share useful information with carers. If you have benefitted from a similar concession and would like us to tell other unpaid carer-givers, please contact us. If you encounter difficulties claiming benefits, we might be able to help you clarify your entitlement.

How to contact Omega: Email: [carers@omega.uk.net](mailto:carers@omega.uk.net); Phone: 0845 259 3163 (local rate); Web: [www.omega.uk.net](http://www.omega.uk.net).

This link to a Government website could be useful: [www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/Yourlocalcounciland-CouncilTax/CouncilTax/DG\\_10037383](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/Yourlocalcounciland-CouncilTax/CouncilTax/DG_10037383)

## Help Omega to compile a list of useful services

Unpaid carers, former carers and the bereaved are being asked to help Omega to compile a list of sources of information and help.

"Tell us about the services you have found most useful and let us know where more support could be provided. Contact us to make suggestions: include websites, organisations, individuals, books, anything which has worked well for you," says the charity in its Bulletin. Go to [www.omega.uk.net](http://www.omega.uk.net)

## What the 'Reform' Bill is going to mean...

The Welfare Reform Bill is grinding its way through Parliament. If it becomes law the Bill will mean:

- ☐ Personal Independence Payments replace Disability Living Allowance
- ☐ Restrictions on Housing Benefit entitlement for social housing tenants whose accommodation is larger than they 'need'
- ☐ Local Housing Allowance rates being linked to the Consumer Price Index
- ☐ Amendments to the forthcoming statutory child maintenance scheme
- ☐ Limits on the payment of Employment and Support Allowance (Contributory) to a 12-month period
- ☐ A cap on the total amount of benefit that can be claimed
- ☐ New penalties for failure to provide information or 'negligently' giving information

[from July 2011 Benefits Newsletter for Professionals from Social Welfare Training]



# Fashion fund raiser proves a real boost for the Disability Network

The fashion event organised by Allcare Shropshire Ltd for SDN proved a great success, not only as a fund-raiser but also in raising public interest and awareness of SDN's work. There are high hopes of a membership boost after more than 50 of those attending the evening took membership forms home with them. And there was a lot of interest in flyers outlining how volunteers can help in many different ways at SDN.

"It was a fantastic evening and we certainly raised enough money to buy a digital video camera to record out meetings and other events to upload onto the web," said SDN steering group member Ruby Hartshorn. "There will also be enough over to make a worthwhile contribution to the cost of other projects.

"Allcare very kindly staged the event at Westbury Village Hall on our behalf and we are very grateful to them for all they have done. We not only had a fashion event but a sale of ex-chainstore clothes and a cheese and wine party.

"Not only were Allcare brilliant but we also had generous support from the business community and individuals. Raffle prizes were donated by Hignetts of Pontesbury; Oswestry Show Committee; The Beaten Track, Shrewsbury; AMF Bowling, Shrewsbury; Marks & Spencer, Shrewsbury; Boots, Shrewsbury; Mr & Mrs Hamer of Pontesbury, who gave Minsterley Show tickets, and Mr & Mrs King of Shrewsbury who gave gift sets. Sabrina donated a family ticket for a boat trip along the Severn. Other sponsorship for the event came from Lindsey Edwards Cheese Company in Oswestry; Co-op stores at Radbrook, Minsterley & Pontesbury; Morrison's in Shrewsbury and Asda in Shrewsbury.

SDN patron Emma Suddaby joined in the evening and Westbury WI members modelled the fashions.

## Why not join us at SDN - there's a lot going on!

Membership of Shropshire Disability Network is free and open to all disabled adults and parents of children with disabilities - living or working in Shropshire - and to carers, family members, advocates, and disability organisations.

By joining, you will not only enable us to represent your views to local and national government, and statutory bodies such as social services and the NHS, but you will also be kept up to date with what's going on.

Benefits also include the opportunity to meet new people, increase your support network, gain and share coping strategies, raise issues affecting you, become involved in sub-groups and join our campaigns to achieve improvements and make a difference.

### How to join

Please download a membership form. You can print and complete this and then post it back to the address given. Alternatively, you can email your details to [membership@shropshire-disability.net](mailto:membership@shropshire-disability.net). Shropshire Disability Network values all feedback and welcomes any queries or suggestions you may have. You can email us directly: [info@shropshire-disability.net](mailto:info@shropshire-disability.net).

## Mum and toddler heart activity funding

Sport 4 Life UK has received funding from Heart Research UK to set up free mother and toddler heart-themed physical activity classes that enable mothers and their children (18 months - 5 years) to learn about heart health while exercising together.

The Get Heart Active project is a 10-week programme that will teach mothers about the links between obesity, physical inactivity and poor heart health by exercising more and eating more healthily, and educate them in how to champion a heart healthy lifestyle for their children and families.

Sport 4 Life UK is looking for partner organisations to host these classes from September onwards.

For more details contact Matthew Forsyth at Sport 4 Life on 0121 4294700 (office) or email [matthew@sport4life.org.uk](mailto:matthew@sport4life.org.uk)

# Housing Allowances cut 'will cost £41 per week'

**An Equality Impact Assessment by the Department for Work and Pensions has estimated that around 36,000 people will lose an average of £41 per week in expected changes to Local Housing Allowances.**

Of these, the majority will be single males; and/or not in employment; and/or on income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.

From January 1 next year the age threshold for the Local Housing Allowance shared accommodation rate will increase from 25 to 35.

The changes have been brought in to prevent claimants having '...an advantage over those who are not on benefit...ensure that Housing Benefit rules reflect the housing expectations of people of a similar age not on benefits...help contain growing Housing Benefit expenditure...remove a potential work disincentive.'

The Treasury is expected to save around £200 million per year. There will be limited transitional protection for

existing claimants, normally between 9 and 21 months depending on when the renewal date for the Local Housing Allowance falls.

Existing exemptions, including those for care leavers, those in receipt of the severe disability premium and those with a non-resident carer will continue to apply. [from July 2011 Benefits Newsletter for Professionals from Social Welfare Training]

❑ Is Shropshire Council bidding for a share of the fund set up to help smooth the effects of reductions in Local Housing Allowances? The fund consists of £4m in 2011/12 and £15m for each of the following three years.

It is aimed at supporting people who will be affected by the changes in LHA rates. It will help people in areas where the impact of the change is most severe. Local Housing Allowance rates can be checked by going to the DirectGov website at

<https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx>

[from July 2011 Benefits Newsletter for Professionals from Social Welfare Training]

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## Rebekah Brooks declines radio job about disability

Able Radio, a Welsh station which focuses on disability issues, has offered ex News International Chief Executive, Rebekah Brooks, a job. They have described the voluntary position as an opportunity to "rebuild her career".

Station manager Malcolm John said, "We, to date, have no evidence she has ever been embroiled in any story that is negative to disability". Listeners, who met the suggestion with "near-universal disapproval", will be pleased to note that Rebekah Brooks has "politely declined" the offer via her PR representative.

Another big disability story is amputee athlete Oscar Pistorius sprinting to victory in Italy. The runner, who wears carbon fibre blades instead of his regular prosthetic limbs while racing, knocked half a second off his personal best. The win makes him eligible to compete against non-disabled athletes in the World Athletics Championships. It also puts him within the qualifying time for the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Pistorius, 24, is the double below-the-knee amputee



world record holder in the 100, 200 and 400 metres and has four Paralympic gold medals. In the past his endeavours to race alongside non-disabled athletes have been met

with varying levels of support. In January 2008, the International Association of Athletic Federations released research which compared Pistorius with six non-disabled athletes capable of a similar performance. The study claimed that his famous carbon fibre blades allowed him to use 25 percent less energy than his counterparts. He argued that he was disadvantaged by having less blood in his body and no calf muscles. Five months later, the Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled that the report was inconclusive and cleared him to compete.

[from [www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/)]

# Why the police are trying to collar the disabled

**West Mercia Constabulary is looking for volunteers to join an Independent Advisory Group on disability issues relating to policing. The group has been in existence for over three years.**

The police are looking for people with a wide range of disabilities who will help make the service as inclusive and accessible as possible.

Members advise on how the police service can be improved and how the police can better work with disabled people to build trust and understanding.

This may include advising on policies and procedures

and also the impact a critical incident could have on a community and how hate crime is tackled. Ten million people in the UK consider themselves to have a disability and this is an important opportunity to make sure that West Mercia Constabulary delivers the right service for those who live in its area.

Anyone interested should contact Kate Arnett (chair), Disability Independent Advisory Group, c/o The Diversity Team, West Mercia Constabulary Headquarters, Hindlip Hall, PO Box 55, Worcester. Tel: 01905 747080, Fax: 01905 747073, or e-mail: [diversity.team.hq@westmercia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:diversity.team.hq@westmercia.pnn.police.uk)

[From Droitwich Advertiser 18/07/2011]

## Well, if you're being chased by the police perhaps you should learn to run ...

**In people aged over 50, running may improve functional ability and increase their lifespan. Researchers at Stanford University in the US have found that vigorous exercise at middle and older ages reduces the likelihood of disability in later life.**

The authors state "With the rise in life expectancy, it becomes necessary to focus on improving the quality of life and functional abilities as people reach older ages. Regular exercise, including running, may contribute to improved health among older adults."

The researchers followed 284 members of a running club from 1984 and 156 healthy controls (i.e. people of the same age and health who did not run).

After 19 years 15% of the runners had died, as against 34% of the control group.

Disability increased with age overall, but was less marked in the running group. As people got older, the advantages of the exercise group became greater and the benefits of continuing with vigorous exercise also became greater.

The researchers conclude: "Our findings of decreased disability in addition to prolonged survival among middle-aged and older adults participating in routine physical activities further support recommendations to encourage moderate to vigorous physical activity at all ages."

from The Physiotherapy site:

[www.thephysiotherapysite.co.uk/physiotherapy/physiotherapists/articles/7/running-improves-disability-and-lifespan-in-older-people](http://www.thephysiotherapysite.co.uk/physiotherapy/physiotherapists/articles/7/running-improves-disability-and-lifespan-in-older-people)

## Recruiter Ruby gets to work!

SDN Steering Group member Ruby Hartshorn was asked to be guest speaker at a meeting of the Shropshire Council Employees Disability Network. Not being one to miss an opportunity, Ruby not only waxed lyrical about the joys of the Disability Network but also enrolled half the people at the meeting as new members.

Admittedly, there were just six members in the audience – but a 50% success rate is pretty good going! If you are reading this and thinking "I should join SDN, we need a collective voice for disabled people in this county" – then please do. Full details are in this newsletter and on the website.

## Guardian Voluntary Sector Q&A sessions

The Guardian hosts online panel discussions around hot topics in the voluntary sector, including a recent one on "how to get money from grant-making trusts".

A host of experts participate in them. It's a great platform to put across your questions and to follow current debates.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/voluntary-sector-network/series/live-q-as>

[From Small Charities Bulletin]



# Public more positive on mental health

A new survey from the NHS Information Centre suggests public opinion on a number of mental health issues has become more positive, but some less favourable views still exist.

Findings from the survey, carried out for the first time in England 17 years ago, suggest more people now view mental health as an illness like any other. But one in six people believe a main cause of mental illness is lack of self-discipline and willpower, about the same level as first reported in 1994.

Of the 1,741 adults interviewed in February and March 2011 for the survey:

- ❑ 77% said 'mental illness is an illness like any other' compared to 71% in 1994.
- ❑ 70% would be comfortable talking to their family and friends about their mental health, compared to 66% in 2009 (the first year this question was asked)
- ❑ 43% would be uncomfortable talking to their employer about their mental health, compared to 50% in 2010 (the first year this question was asked).

The survey is 'Attitudes to Mental Illness, 2011 survey report', available at: [www.ic.nhs.uk/webfiles/publications/mental%20health/mental%20health%20act/Mental\\_illness\\_report.pdf](http://www.ic.nhs.uk/webfiles/publications/mental%20health/mental%20health%20act/Mental_illness_report.pdf)

## Mindful Forum

The Mental Health Providers Forum has launched an interactive new website for providers and users of

mental health services. Called Mindful Forum, the site aims to be a platform for all mental health stakeholders to generate discussion and profile and promote ideas for practical improvement to services. The Forum wants to capture those ideas that highlight what well thought out mental health service delivery looks like, from policy through to delivery. The forum space will feature full length articles and shorter pieces giving a quick overview of innovative ideas that have been put into practice. Go to: [www.mindfulforum-mhpf.org.uk/](http://www.mindfulforum-mhpf.org.uk/)

## Return to work

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has launched a new online resource offering information and guidance about returning to work after a period of mental ill-health. The Work and Mental Health website is divided into four main parts, and is aimed at workers, carers, employers and clinicians. The website explains how work can be good for people's mental health and well-being – and can play a positive part in people's recovery. It shows how employers may provide effective support at work for people with a history of mental ill-health, and how clinicians can support people returning to work. Go to: [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/press/pressreleases2011/workandmentalhealth-website.aspx](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/press/pressreleases2011/workandmentalhealth-website.aspx) [From Health Information News July 2011]

## Mental health leaflets

A new series of leaflets created to provide accessible information for people with mental health problems and learning disabilities has been produced by the Royal College of Psychiatrists and Leicestershire NHS Trust. They cover anxiety disorder, autism spectrum disorder, bipolar disorder, challenging behaviour, dementia, depression, epilepsy, psychosis, and specific medications. All the materials have been written and tested with people with learning disabilities and their carers. Go to: [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo/problems/learningdisabilities.aspx](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo/problems/learningdisabilities.aspx)

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# Good start for iPad appeal

An appeal launched by Shrewsbury-based charity Omega to buy iPads for Motor Neurone Disease sufferers has already raised enough money to buy four of the tablet computers pre-loaded with speech synthesis software. The computers will be released on loan to patients in Shropshire and Montgomeryshire.

A recent appearance by specialist nurse Helen Harris on BBC Radio Shropshire helped raise awareness and boosted donations.

Listeners heard an extract from a moving personal account of life with the condition, written by James Shaw. To read the full article, visit the Omega website.

Each iPad package, including software and accessories, costs approximately £700. Omega's target is to raise the funding needed for 10 iPads and any help with fund-raising, or a donation, will be greatly appreciated. Please get in touch for details.

The charity is also gathering information from other tablet users already benefitting from different types of speech synthesis software. This is also something that our readers may be able to help with.

Omega is the National Association for End of Life Care.



**The BSL Bible Translation Project has produced a DVD of the opening chapters of the Gospel of Mark in British Sign Language. This marks a new development in Bible translation in the UK and coincides with the 400th anniversary of the Authorised Version.**

Like the AV, the BSL Bible uses new technology: 400 years ago it was the printing press and today it is digital visual media. Also like the AV, the BSL Bible expresses the belief that God's Word should be received 'in the language of the people': BSL was recognised by the British Government in 2003 as a national minority language.

The BSL Bible is a new departure in providing a BSL 'text'. It aims to be a translation which is both scholarly and accessible: to offer in natural BSL the meaning of a two thousand year old text, with historical accuracy, and informed by theological discussion. English readers have had this in their language for over 400 years.

Many deaf people experience deaf ministers or BSL interpreters translating passages of the Bible out of English into BSL, with some preparation or on the spot. They may also have watched BSL versions of Bible stories that are not exactly translations but are free versions or re-telling of the stories with dramatic embellishments or other adaptations. What has never

# Deaf Bible reaches historic moment

been available is a recorded scholarly version of full texts of the Bible in BSL, translating the original Hebrew and Greek texts.

This is not an easy or a small task, but the BSL Bible Translation Project has made a start, and presents a pilot version of the first section of Mark's Gospel (1:1–3:6) for consultation with the broadest possible range of users. Response to the pilot will guide the Project on how it proceeds with the enormous task it has embarked on.

The Project was launched in September 2006 and publication of the pilot is a chance to take soundings from the deaf community, the deaf church and all interested parties.

The BSL version, like all translations of the Bible, is a necessary compromise between two methods, sometimes called 'literal translation' and 'dynamic equivalence' (or 'form-equivalence' and 'function equivalence'). Bilingual Deaf people and BSL interpreters are usually used to the idea of 'dynamic' interpretation (where the guiding principle is thought-for-thought rather than word-for-word) because of the very different ways English and BSL are structured grammatically. However, the Christian tradition of the authority of the Bible as 'the Word of God' exercises a constraint on most Bible translations to be as 'literal' as possible and not to depart far from the 'actual words' of the text – although this can result in a translation which is not natural in the target language.

## Google backs charities group

The Sales division of Google UK has joined the Small Charities Coalition as a supporting partner. The top dog at Google's Global Sales Division has launched an initiative to encourage his staff to volunteer at least 1% of their time to a good cause.

Google staff (or Googlers as they're called) will be offering their skills and expertise through the Coalition's skills matching services.

To get help maximising the use of any Google products and services, or improving search-engine optimisation, volunteer efforts, marketing, basically anything you think a Googler might like to get involved with, simply complete the short form at this link: <http://www.clicktools.com/survey?iv=3913074d4b086e9>

The Coalition helps its members through its skills sharing and mentoring service. It encourages staff from large organisations (mainly charities) to help by either working through a particular problem or by supporting longer term through mentoring. [www.smallcharities.org.uk/matching](http://www.smallcharities.org.uk/matching)

## Young trustees

A Charity Trustee Networks 'Trustee of the Week' has set up a LinkedIn Group called 'Young Charity Trustees' and is inviting other young trustees and individuals wanting to support or learn more about trusteeship for young people to join.

Follow this link or type 'young charity trustees' into LinkedIn.

[http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Young-Charity-Trustees-3904769?trk=myg\\_ugrp\\_ovr](http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Young-Charity-Trustees-3904769?trk=myg_ugrp_ovr)

## Other trustee support

And if you want to see what other trustee support networks exist out there, visit the Trustee Networks page on the Charity Trustee Networks website [www.trusteenet.org.uk/networks/browse](http://www.trusteenet.org.uk/networks/browse).

[From Small Charities Bulletin]

# Have your say in bringing social care up to date

**Adult Social Care Services have changed little over the past 30 years, but the people served by Shropshire Council and the county itself have changed greatly. Now the council is giving people the chance to get involved to help create a new shared vision that fits the needs of Shropshire's residents.**

A series of events is being held across Shropshire, giving the opportunity to share your views and experiences, helping to develop the best range of services. They will be held on the following dates:

- ❑ 29 July, Shrewsbury Town Football Club, 9:30 – 12:00
- ❑ 4 August, The Marches School, Oswestry, 1:30 – 4:00
- ❑ 18 August, Bridgnorth Leisure Centre, 1:30 – 4:00
- ❑ 22 August, Whitchurch Leisure Centre, 1:30 – 4:00
- ❑ 24 August, Ludlow Food Centre, 1:30 – 4:00

- ❑ 23 September, Feedback event in Council Chamber, Shirehall, Shrewsbury, 9:30 – 12:00

The first phase of consultation ends on 30 September.

The council's Strategic Planning Team says it wants to develop a 21st century service and urges people to come along to any of the sessions and 'have your say' about the future of care and support in the county.

The team can be contacted by the following means:

Email: [livelifeyourway@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:livelifeyourway@shropshire.gov.uk)

Phone: 0345 678 9005

Facebook: Go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for: Shropshire:livelifeyourway

Twitter: Go to [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) and search for: @livelifeyourway

***See the advertisement on the next page for "Live Life Your Way"***

**Personal Budgets (also known as Self Directed Support) were introduced by Shropshire Council last year. They are a new way of receiving social care.**

Traditionally, Social Services would assess individuals and, providing they met the criteria for care, it would put a care package in place.

The user would be told how they would receive their care and from whom. The cost of the care package would not be known to the service user, who had little say and virtually no choice.

Under the Personal Budgets system, the user still has an assessment and must meet the criteria for care, but also has a lot more input into the process.

All service users know how much their care package costs and they have choices on how that money is spent, within the "agreed outcomes" of the care package.

It is a far more flexible system and it gives individuals

## Personal Budgets are giving disabled a say on care packages

the opportunity to be creative with their budgets.

The user has a self-assessment questionnaire to complete with their family/carer, and their care manager (formally known as social worker) does the same.

For each answer on the questionnaire points are allocated. These points are converted into money, so the user knows how much finance will be given for their care.

There are various options on how to manage the financial side of Personal Budgets. For instance, if users decide to deal with their budget personally, in whole or part, they will have some records to keep that must be submitted to Shropshire Council periodically for checking.

Once the user knows how much money they have to spend, they write a support plan. This is different to a care plan, being more detailed. After it has been agreed by their care manager, the user can proceed to put it all in place. – Ruby Hartshorn (Ruby was a pioneer for Personal Budgets in Shropshire)

Help us shape the vision for future care and support for adults in Shropshire. Work with us to shape a new vision.

# Tell us how you want to live life: your way

**Your  
support**

**Your  
health**

**Your  
independence**

**Your  
active life**

**Your care**

**There are many ways to get involved. We want you to tell us your thoughts in your way.** Using the themes above, send us your pictures, letters, videos and suggestions.



**0345 678 9005**



**[www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk)**



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search for: @livelifyourway



**[livelifyourway@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:livelifyourway@shropshire.gov.uk)**

Or write to us at:

**Live Life – Your Way, Shropshire Council**

Ptarmigan, Shrewsbury Business Park, Shrewsbury SY2 6LG



## Researchers ask elderly for help

Elderly deaf sign language users are being sought to take part in a study organised by two researchers who both have close personal experience of deafness.

They are looking for people aged 80-89 who use deaf sign language to help explore changes in thinking, memory and language in healthy deaf people as they get older.

"We will develop a new memory test for deaf people who use sign language," say researchers Tanya and Jo, who are based at the Deafness, Cognition and Language Research Centre at University College London. Tanya's parents are deaf and Jo is deaf, so they are both members of the deaf community.

"The new memory test will help deaf people to get better NHS services, so that they can have an equal service to hearing people. Our tasks are fun and enjoyable. They take about an hour to do. We can meet you at your local deaf club or at your home. You will also receive a £5 Boots voucher."

Apart from being aged 80-89, those offering to take part need to have been deaf since before the age of 10 and not to suffer from stroke, dementia, MS or Parkinson's.

If you can help, or know anyone who can, contact: Tanya Denmark, DCAL Centre, 49 Gordon Square, London, WC1H 0PD; email: [t.denmark@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:t.denmark@ucl.ac.uk); SMS: 0771 2527126; Fax: 020 7679 8691; Minicom: 020 7679 8693

DeafPLUS has organised the following events:

23 August, 2.00: Birmingham Football Club tour; £6.50



30 August, 1.00 -3.00: Norman Power Centre, Skipton Road, Birmingham; Kevin Watts from Deaf Blind UK speaks about Deaf-blindness.

6 Sept, 1.00 -3.00: Norman Power Centre, Jo Min on Alzheimer disease

16 Sept, 2.00: Birmingham Museum of Jewellery Quarter tour, £4

20 Sept and 4 Oct, 2.00: Café at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Chamberlain Square, to meet deaf and hard of hearing people and have a chat! Free entry, all welcome. Sign language Interpreter provided.

26 Sept, 2.30: Oratory tour, £4 (pay on the day) free for children and carers. Contact Olivier Jamin, Community Development Officer, DeafPLUS; [olivier.jamin@deafplus.org](mailto:olivier.jamin@deafplus.org); [www.deafplus.org](http://www.deafplus.org)

### Deaf theatre

'Twice Told' is a new Birmingham-based theatre company for deaf and hearing actors who use British Sign Language. A meeting is planned for 3 August to discuss deaf theatre across the West Midlands. Everyone involved will need to be a native BSL user or have minimum level 3. The meeting will be at the British Oak Pub, Pershore Road, Stirchley, B30 2XS, from 7:30-9:00.

**deaf athletics day**  
for 8 - 18 years  
(all abilities welcome)

**Saturday 17th September 2011**  
(Registration at 8.30am, finish at 3.30pm)

**Competitions**  
Jumps Relays Sprints Throws

Alexander Stadium  
Walsall Road, Perry Barr, Birmingham, B42 2LR

All children must be registered prior to the event.  
Cost: £2.50 each, cheque payable to "BID Services".  
Deadline: Friday 26th August 2011

Contact Alison Leach for an information pack:  
BID Services, Deaf Cultural Centre, Ladywood Road, Birmingham B16 8SZ  
Telephone: 0121 246 6101 Tel: 0121 246 6100 Fax: 0121 246 6125  
Email: [alison.leach@bid.org.uk](mailto:alison.leach@bid.org.uk)



If you would like more information about working with deaf people please email [training@deafdirect.org.uk](mailto:training@deafdirect.org.uk) or contact its head office in Worcester.

**Could you make money from your disability? That is exactly what some disabled people did three centuries ago. Their stories were told for the first time in a recent exhibition at the Royal College of Physicians.**

Disability was seen as a sign of the devil for many centuries. By the 18th century it was thought to be due to women having vivid imaginations during pregnancy. The majority of disabled people were either confined to institutions or left to die in poverty.

Yet the exhibition, *Re-framing Disability*, demonstrated that not everyone accepted their fate: they wanted more from their lives. And the pictures - of well-dressed disabled people totally in control of their lives - prove they got it. But there was a price.

These disabled people made money by exhibiting themselves: the public paid to gawp either in private viewings or at touring "freak shows".

Although many people today feel uncomfortable with the idea of "freak shows", there are still a few left - including one at Coney Island in New York.

A wheelchair-user named Sophie who visited the exhibition said: "If people feel happy appearing in the shows then that's OK. If you're going to get stared at, you might as well get paid for it. Besides, performers turn freak shows on their head now. They get what they want out of it these days." Sophie is used to being stared at, she's an actress, but there are limits.

"Some people are persistently rude. They just won't stop staring. I try not to be angry because I don't want to come across as the 'bitter crip'. As a disabled person you are walking a very fine line all the time."

For some disabled people, particularly those with hidden disabilities, unsolicited staring is the least of their problems. Blogger and disability rights activist Sue Marsh said: "I heard a mother say to her child in the supermarket that if she didn't eat more she'd end up looking like me." Sue recalls a time when she asked a builder to move his van from a disabled parking space. "The phrase he used was: 'What's wrong with you then, you fucking Belsen refugee bitch?'"

Tim, another visitor to the exhibition, has had a different experience. Blind since birth, he believes that those with visual impairments are more readily accepted by society

# When people used their disabilities to make a living



**Violetta and many other disabled people survived by selling themselves as freaks for public entertainment.**

because the disability is obvious to outsiders. But Lee, who has cerebral palsy, said society tends to notice his disability a bit too much. "There is definitely a lack of understanding about disability, and I think it is this ignorance that causes half the problems. Yes, I am disabled but I'm not stupid, and I'm not deaf - I can hear what people are saying."

On top of the seemingly intrusive attitudes which don't seem to have changed since previous centuries, Sue is concerned that these attitudes could take a more sinister turn. Citing politicians like George Osborne and Chris Grayling who use inflammatory language such as "scroungers mugging the state" she says: "It's become almost state endorsed: there is the sense that it is now OK to start speaking like this, it is OK to start judging disabled people. We are portrayed as a burden on the state."

Set against a background of benefits shake-up and media spin, she believes control and independence are being taken from disabled people under the guise of "savings". Added to that is the concern that few politicians are standing up for the disabled community - disenfranchising a significant part of the electorate.

"If you are the sort of person who easily believes what politicians tell you - and why wouldn't you if everyone is saying it? - and you believed that disabled people are a burden on society and shouldn't be supported by the state, how far does that go? The line is very, very close."

Certainly in the last five years there have been some improvements towards disability on television. More disabled people are appearing in soaps (Peter Mitchell in *Hollyoaks* or Andy Walker in *Emmerdale*, for example) and there are a lot more programmes about disability issues than there were.

Yet Sophie thinks programme makers still haven't got the balance right. The portrayal of disability is one of extremes: Disabled people are either vulnerable and incapable or brave and wheeling up mountains in their chairs.

"You only have media stereotypes to go on," Sophie says. "It's not that I want 'positive representation' necessarily, I just want real representation. I have this real bugbear with wanting to tell it like it is. I don't want to be anyone's hero, I just want to be able to live my life."

[Edited from *Disability Now*: <http://www.disabilitynow.org.uk/living/features/public-image-disability-on-show>]

# Speaker tells of long road back

SMEG's annual conference was held in Bayston Hill Memorial Hall and proved a good event. This is a summary:

"The speaker, Jane Colby, is the author of medical and educational articles on ME, is a lecturer on the subject and was a member of the Chief Medical Officer's Working Group. She collaborated with Dr Elizabeth Dowsett on papers on ME, particularly in children and its link with polio, and has been the Director of the Tymes Trust for many years. Her main qualification, however, is that she was diagnosed by Dr Dowsett with severe ME in 1985, which incapacitated her and ended her career as a head teacher.

"She said that she felt that the long, severe illness was not so much a test of hope but of endurance: how to get through the next month, week, day, hour...However, she said that now, many years later, she is able to go for walks and she even plays golf! She joked that this sport doesn't require you to respond to a ball that someone else is sending at you!

"Chairman David Reeves warned that funding was a problem and mentioned that the newsletter was our core function for supporting members. He asked members to give feedback. He was particularly interested to know how more can be done to increase help to members; what projects we would like to see implemented and what extra equipment we feel would be useful.

He outlined plans for introducing a logo, showing design already produced as an example; revising the website; branding and gaining sponsorship from local or other firms that our members or their family members or friends might have contact with. He concluded with the memorable quote: "It's all about ME . . . and we can't do it without YOU."

## Informal meetings

All are welcome to drop in for a chat.

**Bridgnorth:** The first Tuesday of each month, around

## Shropshire ME Group

For those affected by MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS  
Chronic Fatigue Syndrome or Post-Viral Fatigue Syndrome

12–2.00 at Parlour's Hall Hotel. Note change of day.

**Oswestry:** The Wynnstay Hotel, Church Street, 11.00–1.00, on third Thursday each month. Phone Meg Campbell to confirm venue before the meeting.

**Shrewsbury:** Front foyer lounge of Lord Hill Hotel, Abbey Foregate, first Thursday each month, 11.00–1.00.

**Telford and North Shropshire:** Meetings are no longer viable because of low numbers.

## CHUMS

CHUMS Befriending Service covers the whole of Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin.

It is primarily for disabled adults and SMEG members are eligible. It exists to offer support to people who feel isolated because they live in a rural area or feel lonely and depressed. Depending on interests and level of mobility, the volunteer can just phone or meet the client in their own home, often taking them out for a coffee and chat or to the cinema, bowling or swimming. All clients have a risk and a needs assessment and volunteers have an enhanced CRB check, their references are taken up and they attend a day's training on Befriending. CHUMS can also offer advocacy and counselling at no cost. For more information Contact: Alli Wreford, Co-ordinator, Powis Hall Offices, Bailey Head, Oswestry; Telephone: 01691 656133; [chumsbefriending@btconnect.com](mailto:chumsbefriending@btconnect.com)

## ME Connect

The ME Association's ME Connect helpline is available every day of the week on 0844 576 5326. Please phone between 10am–noon, 2–4pm and 7–9pm. You can also email ME Connect [meconnect@meassociation.org.uk](mailto:meconnect@meassociation.org.uk)

## Support for carers

Telford area support group meets every third Wednesday of the month at 10.30am in Room 8 in Leegomery Community Centre. For more information call Lara 01952 240209 of the Telford and Wrekin Council for Voluntary Service (the umbrella body for the voluntary and community sector).

Community Council of Shropshire Carers' Support Service: 01743 341995 or email [carersupport@shropshire-rcc.org.uk](mailto:carersupport@shropshire-rcc.org.uk) for full information on help available and free newsletter.

## New number

There is a new mobile number for making enquiries about membership matters: 07516 401097

## Warning on questionnaire

**The new ESA50 medical questionnaire for Employment and Support Allowance misleads claimants into not giving the evidence needed to score all the points they are entitled to. In addition, Atos health professionals are being seriously misadvised about how to assess claimants at medicals.**

**These are the conclusions that Benefits and Work has reached, having researched and published highly detailed guides to the new work capability assessment.**

[from the Benefits and Work website]



### Red Tape Report

The Red Tape Taskforce has published its report called "Unshackling Good Neighbours." It contains a lot of interesting ideas and supports the use of grants in a section on commissioning and calculating social value when judging tenders. Read the report here:

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/unshacklinggood-neighbours.pdf>

[From Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership Newsletter 31 May 2011]

### Why do people participate?

The National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has published the latest in a series of almanacs on "Participation: Trends, Facts and Figures." It takes a thorough look at reasons for engagement with charities, campaigning and political activity and maps current trends in giving both time and money. See <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/news/civil-society/participation-trends-facts-figures> to download the guide. [Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership Newsletter]

### Care project 'not value'

The £2.7bn spent on creating electronic care records for every patient has not provided value for money, according to the National Audit Office. In a report the NAO says it has "no grounds for confidence" that the remaining planned spend of £4.3bn for the electronic care records will deliver value for money.

### Plotting your financial course

Charities can now map how far down the road they are to being financially sustainable with a Needs Analysis Tool from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. You can download it as a PDF from [http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/sites/default/files/Sun\\_Tool\\_for\\_A4\\_printing.pdf](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/sites/default/files/Sun_Tool_for_A4_printing.pdf)

### Family signing

A new grants scheme is available to organisations wanting to deliver Family Sign Language courses using the NDCS curriculum. For an application form and details email [sign@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:sign@ndcs.org.uk)

### Deaf children's athletics

A Deaf Children's Athletics Day will be held in Birmingham on Saturday 17 September, for youngsters aged between 8 and 18. It costs £2.50 per child. The deadline to register is Friday 26 August. Contact: Alison Leach: email [alison.leach@bid.org.uk](mailto:alison.leach@bid.org.uk); tel 0121 246 6100; fax 0121 246 6189; Minicom 0121 246 6101

### NHS pressure

Mounting pressure on hospital waiting lists in England has left the NHS "creaking at the seams," doctors say. Overall, the health service is still hitting its 18-week deadline, but performance is dropping in some areas. official NHS data for May showed more people waiting over 18 weeks than in May 2010. [from Salix Newsflash 15/07/11]

### Cancer rates

Rising cancer rates mean four in 10 people in the UK will get the disease at some point in their lives, according to Macmillan Cancer Support. The figure has risen significantly in the past decade. The charity says the rise poses a "massive challenge" for the NHS. [from Salix Newsflash 15/07/11]

### From skin to brain

Skin cells from a woman have been turned directly into mature nerve cells similar to those found in the brain, using a procedure that promises to revolutionise regenerative medicine. Scientists said they were astonished to discover that they could convert a person's skin tissue into functioning nerve cells by the relatively simple procedure of adding a few short strands of RNA, a genetic molecule similar to DNA.

### Name change

Action on Hearing Loss is the new name for the Royal National Institute for the Deaf. It says that although the name has changed, the vision hasn't – 'a world where hearing loss doesn't limit or label people, where tinnitus is silenced and where people value their hearing enough to look after it.' There is also a new website at [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)

### Windpipe transplant

Surgeons in Sweden have carried out the world's first synthetic organ transplant, using an artificial windpipe created by scientists in London, which was then coated in stem cells from the patient. Crucially, the technique does not need a donor, and there is no risk of the organ being rejected. A windpipe can be made within days. [From Salix Newsflash 080711]

### Chance on Channel 5

Channel 5 is starting a new prime-time TV show this autumn called Celebrity Wish-List, to raise awareness of and reward health-related small charities, community groups and hard-working individuals. It's a great opportunity to get national publicity. Check out the website at [www.channel5.com/wishlist](http://www.channel5.com/wishlist) and get in touch with Kat or Jo on 020 7308 5447/5446 or email [wishlist@channel5.com](mailto:wishlist@channel5.com). [From Small Charities Bulletin]

### BT Award scheme

Small charities with a BT landline that help their beneficiaries get online or teach them how to use digital technology can apply for BT's Community Connections Award and possibly win a year's free broadband.

A key condition is that you have a BT business landline which you can change to for free if you have a residential BT line. Find out more and how to apply on this link:

<http://www.btplc.com/Responsiblebusiness/Supportingourcommunities/Digitalinclusion/BTCommunityConnections/ApplyingforaCommunityConnectionsAward/index.htm>

# MPs attack fit-to-work tests

## 'Many failings' in £100m Atos service

**The Government accepts that its drive to retest sickness benefits claimants has been a "flawed" process, according to a critical report by MPs into welfare reform.**

The introduction of new medical assessments to decide whether claimants are eligible for sickness benefits has prompted "fear and anxiety among vulnerable people", the committee of MPs concludes, partly because the tests have resulted in large numbers of seriously unwell claimants being refused support.

The report states: "It is widely accepted that the Work Capability Assessment [WCA], as introduced in 2008, was flawed. This has been borne out by the high number of appeals and the high success rate of appellants. It was also reflected in the amount of evidence from individuals which expressed grievances with the way they were treated during the process and the accuracy of the outcome."

The MPs estimate the cost to the taxpayer of these appeals at around £50m a year.

Employment Minister Chris Grayling has accepted that the WCA was initially "flawed" but stressed that significant changes have been introduced. The Government acknowledges that "further refinements to the test" are still needed, says the report.

Government officials have failed to highlight the positive goals of helping more people back into work, the report adds, allowing the retesting process to be cast by parts of the media as a mission to weed out the "workshy", "scroungers" and "benefit cheats".

The work and pensions select committee chair Anne Begg MP said: "The Government's aim of helping benefit claimants back into work is laudable, but the scale of the challenge should not be underestimated and nor should the level of anxiety which surrounds the process."

There was also criticism of Atos Healthcare, the company that receives £100m a year to carry out the medical tests to determine whether claimants are fit for work.

Atos staff are currently testing around 11,000 incapacity benefit claimants a week, to help judge whether they are eligible for benefit payments. Charities and MPs say they have been contacted by large numbers of people who



Getting the message across in London about the fit-for-work panels. (Photograph: Guardian)

felt their test results were simply wrong.

Begg said: "There have been failings in the service Atos Healthcare has provided, which has often fallen short of what claimants can rightly expect. This has contributed significantly to the mistrust which many claimants feel about the whole process.

"We accept that considerable efforts have been made on the part of both Atos Healthcare and DWP to improve the quality of assessments, but the department needs to do more to ensure that Atos treats claimants properly and that it produces accurate assessments."

Sue Royston of Citizens Advice told the committee: "A lot of disabled people want to get back into work, and we welcomed the help and support it would give. We are not very happy about the way it is working. We feel the test is too crude a test, and there are also problems with the way the assessment is actually carried out in practice."

The report highlighted concerns about the number of testing centres that were not accessible to people with disabilities.

"It is unacceptable that disabled people should be called to attend an assessment at a centre which is inappropriately located, inaccessible to them or where reasonable adjustments cannot be made to accommodate special requirements arising from their health condition," the report states.

The report concluded that the Government needs to try harder to explain its aims and to spread the "positive messages about the benefits of work and the support which is available to find work", but adds: "A suspicion persists that the only objective of the Government is to save money."

The DWP said: "The assessment is about helping people who can work get back into employment and we have been clear that disabled people who need unconditional support will receive it.

"It is vital that we also support people who were written off to a lifetime on benefits into jobs and our new Work Programme will help them overcome the barriers they face to get back into work." [edited, from The Guardian, 26 July 2011]

**Diagnosing a learning disability in children can be difficult, and it isn't always clear what the learning disability is or why it happened. But abilities and needs can be assessed to make sure children get the support they need.**

Some learning disabilities are discovered at birth and others are not diagnosed until much later. If a child is diagnosed at or around birth, for example with Down's syndrome, doctors probably won't be able to say exactly how it will affect their development. The extent of the disability will become clearer as they reach the ages when they should be talking, walking or reading.

For children who are not diagnosed at birth, finding out that they have a learning disability can take time. "The main problem is that they are quite hard to diagnose very early in life," says consultant paediatrician Dr Martin Ward Platt.

"There may be very little in the way of developmental signs. If a child hasn't started talking by the age of two, that can be linked to learning problems later on, but this is not certain."

Most learning disabilities are obvious by the age of five. "Intellectual function (also known as cognitive ability) can only be assessed by testing children from the age of five, so most children with these disabilities are only diagnosed when they start school," says Dr Ward Platt.

Even after a diagnosis is made, it can be hard to tell how it will affect a child in the future. Lesley Campbell of Mencap says: "At a very young age it is hard to predict what the abilities of a child are going to be at the age of, for example, five, 11 or 16 and beyond. And although that's often what parents do want help with, all of the research indicates that it's pretty difficult to predict."

However, current needs can be assessed to work out what kind of support will help, and children will be referred to a paediatrician (a specialist in child health). Mencap can help families find a local learning disabilities support group. Go to: <http://www.mencap.org.uk/node/3832>

## **New service for additional needs children**

Barnardo's has been commissioned to deliver a new inclusion service for children aged 4-18 with additional needs/disabilities. Promotional information is now available in the form of leaflets and many organisations may find this helpful. Volunteering opportunities are also available. To request copies of leaflets or to find out more please contact Vicky Campbell, telephone 01743 248094 or email the Barnardo's Shropshire Project at: [Shropshire.project@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:Shropshire.project@barnardos.org.uk)

# **Learning disabilities: coping with a diagnosis**

Most parents assume their children will be healthy and develop normally, so hearing that your child has a learning disability can come as a shock. It takes time to accept the diagnosis, and to mourn the child you might feel you have lost. Talking to your child's doctors, nurses, support groups or friends and family can help, although friends and family might need their own time to accept what has happened.

Many parents find it helpful to contact other families who have been through the same thing. "In the very early stages, talking to other parents is a useful source of support," says Campbell. "It's only other parents who can help you in this situation. They might be able to recommend a good playgroup or counselling service, for example, or the name of someone at the local authority who can help you to find out about the services available for you and your child."

Counselling can also help, so ask your health visitor or GP for recommendations.

## **Developmental delay**

Sometimes the term 'developmental delay' is used to describe a child's condition if they are not progressing as expected. "By itself, 'developmental delay' is not a diagnosis," says Dr Ward Platt.

Delay is not always significant. "Some children are slow to walk, so may appear to be delayed, but if one of the parents was very slow to walk, then it's likely that the delay just runs in the family."

## **Getting support**

Under the Children's Act, social services has a duty to assess a 'child in need', including children with disabilities. The aim is to identify the child's specific needs and draw up a plan of action for meeting them.

For more information on all aspects of being a carer, including practical support, financial matters and looking after your own wellbeing, see Carers Direct

[<http://www.nhs.uk/carersdirect/Pages/CarersDirectHome.aspx>]  
[from Ludlow Advertiser 18/07/2011 and NHS Choices]

## **Leaflets, programmes and newsletters**

Organisations that lack facilities or time to produce printed material such as leaflets, programmes and newsletters, can get help at the Roy Fletcher Centre in Shrewsbury. Staff at the centre can design and produce documents or work with your ideas.

Contact Jenny or Barbara on 01743 341300 for further information and costs.

[From Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership Newsletter]



# Carer network gets boost from big grant

**Successful Shrewsbury-based Charity Omega, the National Association for End of Life Care has been awarded a grant of £25,000 by the Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales.**

This investment, which builds upon previous funding successes, will enable the charity to expand the thriving Omega Network of carer support groups. Fresh activity is planned for Telford, Mid Wales, Solihull, Wolverhampton and Greater Merseyside.

Unpaid family care-givers, including those looking after someone with long-term or life-limiting conditions, keep in regular contact by attending lively Network groups in order to share skills and important information. Many carers also benefit from dynamic Caring with Confidence group support sessions run regularly by the charity.

Omega employs a national team of highly skilled facilitators who encourage groups of carers to take better care of themselves and help them create personal action plans which identify priorities and guide carers to overcome difficulties.

Omega Development Director Tom Memery, who is also a member of the Shropshire Disability Network steering group, said he was "delighted to be able to implement the next stage of the Charity's plan to expand the Omega Network.

"Omega is keen to build a long-term relationship with

even more talented carers in each of the areas we are already involved in."

Mrs Joan Turton a Shropshire-based care-giver said: "Omega has been really helpful to me since the day I attended my first Caring with Confidence group session back in 2009. I know how useful it is to keep in touch with other carers. Getting together makes life a little easier".

Omega is currently recruiting volunteers, and is about to launch a campaign to find new trustees. If you feel you have something to contribute and have the skills

## Telford among areas to benefit

needed to serve the Charity as a trustee, or provide voluntary help to deliver services, raise additional funds or provide ad-

ministrative support, please get in touch. Contact Tom Memery for an informal discussion; telephone 0845 259 3163 (local rate) or send an email with your questions to [thomas@omega.uk.net](mailto:thomas@omega.uk.net).

For more information about Omega visit [www.omega.uk.net](http://www.omega.uk.net), call Tom Memery on 0845 259 3163 (local rate), or email [thomas@omega.uk.net](mailto:thomas@omega.uk.net).

The Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales is one of the UK's leading grant-makers. It funds small and medium-size registered charities working at the heart of communities to tackle disadvantage across England and Wales. Full information, including criteria and guidelines, is available at [www.lloydsfoundations.org.uk](http://www.lloydsfoundations.org.uk).

## Recession survey

Since 2009 the Voluntary & Community Sector Assembly Board has led work to monitor the impact of the recession and undertaken an annual survey. It is really important to communicate current issues and pressures. This year the survey has moved to an online version in the hope that this will make it easier and faster to complete.

Please go to this link to complete the survey:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/im-pactoftherecession>

## Sustainable development standard for communities

A British Standard for the sustainable development of communities has been created by the BSI Group with input from universities and government. It is designed primarily to be used by communities working on grassroots initiatives, to help people focus on collective action, evaluate their progress and be more accountable for their activities. BS 8904 is now out for consultation and BSI is hoping for comments from local councils, charities, social enterprises and individuals by 31st August. [www.drafts.bsigroup.com/Home/Details/794](http://www.drafts.bsigroup.com/Home/Details/794)

## Guide for inspiring communities

The Government's Communities Department has produced a tips and advice guide "to help encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to get further involved in local life". The guide draws on experiences from the Inspiring Communities programme. Go to: [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/inspiringcommunitiesbehaviour](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/inspiringcommunitiesbehaviour)



The Government will face legal action unless it can provide evidence that it has considered the impact of cuts to Disability Living Allowance. Disability Alliance has issued a letter of claim to the Department for Work and Pensions asking it to demonstrate that the impact of its proposals to reduce expenditure on DLA by 20 per cent has been properly analysed.

The cuts are part of the welfare reform Bill. DA is concerned that disabled people of working age will be hit disproportionately hard by proposals to cut support for an estimated 652,000 people with lower support needs.

It is also concerned at the lack of clarity over how the impact of removing the mobility component of DLA for an estimated 78,000 people in residential care will be mitigated.

The charity believes that the DWP may have also failed to pay due regard to public sector equality duties or its responsibilities under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

## Legal threat from charities over DLA cuts

DA's Director of Policy, Neil Coyle, said he had a strong case for legal action. If the Government failed to provide adequate evidence that it had examined the impact of its proposals, he would seek a judicial review.

"We've been highlighting concerns for a year based on what disabled people have been telling us. But so far, not one of our concerns has been answered by Government. Five and a half thousand people responded to the Government's own DLA consultation and no change resulted. We're increasingly of the impression that policy is being delivered to meet a financial cuts target and this has nothing to do with supporting active independent disabled citizens." He had concerns

that the abolition of DLA would increase demand on local authorities for social care services and would also force some disabled people to give up work.

Richard Hawkes, Chief Executive of Scope, said that under the Government's proposals, the people in most need of support would lose it. "For the bill to make it to the House of Lords without problems such as this being addressed raises some serious questions."

[from Disability Now, July 2011]

# PAGE X

**Names and numbers that might help**

**This new feature will build up into a directory of all sorts of organisations to do with disability. Help us to make it better month-by-month by letting us know what's missing. Email the editor at [newsletter@shropshire-disability.net](mailto:newsletter@shropshire-disability.net) or write to him: Peter Staples, 8 Gorse Lane, Bayston Hill, Shrewsbury, SY3 0JJ**

Shropshire Council Disability Services  
[www.shropshire.gov.uk/disability.nsf](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/disability.nsf)

Telford & Wrekin Council Disability Forum  
[www.telford.gov.uk/info/200041/equality\\_and\\_diversity/925/disability\\_forum](http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/200041/equality_and_diversity/925/disability_forum)

Community Council of Shropshire  
[www.shropshire-rcc.org.uk/](http://www.shropshire-rcc.org.uk/)  
4 The Creative Quarter, Shrewsbury Business Park, Shrewsbury, SY2 6LG  
01743 360641 fax: 01743 342179

Disability Arts in Shropshire: 01743 272939/271676; [www.dasharts.org/](http://www.dasharts.org/)

Disability Directory – Information, aids and mobility services  
[www.ableize.com/Disabled-Groups-and-Clubs-by-County/Shropshire/](http://www.ableize.com/Disabled-Groups-and-Clubs-by-County/Shropshire/)

Scope (Cerebral Palsy) [www.scope.org.uk/services/shropshire](http://www.scope.org.uk/services/shropshire)

Disability-friendly holiday accommodation  
[www.friendly-places.com/categories/disability-friendly/disability-friendly.asp?Location=Shropshire](http://www.friendly-places.com/categories/disability-friendly/disability-friendly.asp?Location=Shropshire)

Primary Care Trust [www.shropshire.nhs.uk/Get-Involved/](http://www.shropshire.nhs.uk/Get-Involved/)

Parent Partnership Service [www.parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.org.uk/#/useful-links/4551168089](http://www.parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.org.uk/#/useful-links/4551168089)

Shropshire Peer Counselling and Advocacy Service  
[www.shropshirepcas.co.uk/default.htm](http://www.shropshirepcas.co.uk/default.htm)

Omega (National Association for End of Life Care)  
<http://www.omega.uk.net/your-voice-the-shropshire-disability-network-newsletter-n-269.htm>

Disability Football Directory 01952 407198  
<http://www.disabilityfootball.co.uk/Madeleysports.html>

Shropshire MIND [www.shropshiremind.org/](http://www.shropshiremind.org/)  
Observer House, Holywell St, Shrewsbury, SY2 6BL 01743 368647

A4U Disability Advice Centre 0845 602 5561; email [advice@a4u.org.uk](mailto:advice@a4u.org.uk)

Disabled and Wheelchair Athletics Directory  
[www.apparelyzed.com/disability-directory/adaptive-sports/disabled-athletics/](http://www.apparelyzed.com/disability-directory/adaptive-sports/disabled-athletics/)

Voluntary & Community Sector Assembly [www.shrop.net/shropvcsassembly](http://www.shrop.net/shropvcsassembly)

Voluntary Association for the Blind (linked to RNIB)

## Parent & Carer Council Shropshire

[www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups](http://www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups)  
PACC provides an index of support groups for children with disabilities in Shropshire. The following groups are listed on the PACC site. Where possible we list direct contacts, but refer to the PACC site for full details)

Allsorts (South Shropshire, for behavioural conditions) 07813043841  
[www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/71-allsorts](http://www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/71-allsorts)  
Bridgnorth Buddies (Parent-led, Special Needs) 07968 544182 or 07790 780631; email [Buddies20@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Buddies20@yahoo.co.uk)  
[www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/72-bridgnorth-buddies](http://www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/72-bridgnorth-buddies)  
Houghton School, Telford, drop-in for parents of pupils with more complex special needs) 01952 387551 or 01952 387552; [www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/83-houghton-school-drop-in](http://www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/83-houghton-school-drop-in)  
Onevision (visual impairment) 01952 385269  
[/www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/77-onevision](http://www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/77-onevision)  
STACS (Aspergers, 16+) 01952 254594 or 01939 260273; email [louise.griffiths@carerscontact.org.uk](mailto:louise.griffiths@carerscontact.org.uk)  
[www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/76-stacs](http://www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/76-stacs)  
Autistic Supporters (if you suspect your child is autistic, or has recently been diagnosed) 01743 356298  
[www.shropshireautisticsupporters.co.uk/?q=node/2](http://www.shropshireautisticsupporters.co.uk/?q=node/2)  
Deaf Children's Society 01952 770019; email: [nat4sdcs@aol.com](mailto:nat4sdcs@aol.com)  
[www.ndcs.org.uk](http://www.ndcs.org.uk)  
Down's Syndrome 01743 233802, 01948 880110 or 01588 640319  
[www.dsa-shropshire.org.uk](http://www.dsa-shropshire.org.uk)  
Dyslexia Association 01743 231205; [www.thesda.org.uk](http://www.thesda.org.uk)  
Wheelchair Users 01743 350460 or 01952 252243  
SKiD (Shropshire Kids Insulin Dependent, associated with Diabetes UK) 01743 873724 or 01743 364366; email: [home@morkot.go-plus.net](mailto:home@morkot.go-plus.net)  
SPECTRUM (Autistic Support group) email: [netgriffiths@fsmail.net](mailto:netgriffiths@fsmail.net)  
[www.spectrum.t83.net/](http://www.spectrum.t83.net/)  
Telford STAA (supports parents/carers of children with ASD, ADHD, and challenging behaviour) 01952 457439 or 01952 617758; email: [julie@parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.org.uk](mailto:julie@parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.org.uk) or [lesley@parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.org.uk](mailto:lesley@parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.org.uk)  
Steps (help for parents/carers, lower limb abnormalities) 01743 355363  
PODS (Parents Opening Doors - Telford, forum for views on services) 01952457439; email: [julie@parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.org.uk](mailto:julie@parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.org.uk)

Disability Resource Centre, Lancaster Road, Shrewsbury, SY1 3NJ  
01743 450 912; email: [robin.durham@shropshire-cc.gov.uk](mailto:robin.durham@shropshire-cc.gov.uk)  
[www.the-svab.org.uk](http://www.the-svab.org.uk). RNIB: [www.info.rnib.org.uk/exe/Agencies/Details.pl?480](http://www.info.rnib.org.uk/exe/Agencies/Details.pl?480)

Blue Eyed Soul Dance Company  
01743 210830; email: [admin@blueeyedsouldance.com](mailto:admin@blueeyedsouldance.com)  
[www.blueeyedsouldance.com/](http://www.blueeyedsouldance.com/)

Carers Direct 0808 802 0202  
[www.nhs.uk/carersdirect/Pages/CarersDirectHome.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/carersdirect/Pages/CarersDirectHome.aspx)

NHS Choices  
[www.nhs.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx)

Multiple Sclerosis Society  
7 Britten Court, Telford, TF1 1YU; 01952 250038

Headway Shropshire (brain injured and families)  
Holsworth Park, Oxon Business Park, Shrewsbury, SY3 5HJ  
01743 365271; [www.headwayshropshire.org.uk/](http://www.headwayshropshire.org.uk/)

**Watch this space ... help us to fill it with more names and addresses that are useful for people with disabilities**