

# yourvoice

December 2011

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## Right on Wight!

The High Court has sent a 'very clear message' to all councils in England and Wales over cuts to social care services by ruling that the Isle of Wight local authority was acting unlawfully in seeking to cut services to two severely disabled residents. Full story page 2.

Never mind Waterloo, there's not even a working loo at Wellington train station...or a lift...or a waiting room...or other facilities that disabled travellers need. Now a local councillor wants action. See Page 9 for the full sorry story.

# Telford Centre Rotary hears how and why SDN began

SDN press and publicity officer Ruby Hartshorn was recently invited to speak to Telford Centre Rotary Club about our work and how SDN came into being.

Ruby explained that we have two prime tools - a website providing a wealth of information and a monthly newsletter that is produced online, in print, and as audio on YouTube.

"Not everyone has a computer or is proficient or comfortable with IT, so the recently introduced print version

particularly has non-IT readers in mind," she explained.

She went on to tell the Rotarians that much work for SDN is going on in Telford and that the Network will hold its first meeting at Meeting Point House on 8 March.

Ruby took with her one of the Sony 'bloggie' camcorders bought from proceeds of the Cheese & Wine/Fashion Show held in July. This enabled her to explain why SDN needs finance for equipment as

## Christmas party with a difference...

Allcare, a company that has done so much for SDN this year, has come up with a cunning plan for Christmas from which SDN will benefit yet again. See page 12.

## Are we right for each other?

Talk to us about the jobs we are advertising on page 3. This could be just what you need!

## What a capital plan!

The Shropshire Capital and Assets Pathfinder Programme is an opportunity for all Voluntary and Community Sector organisations. Check out the details and complete the questionnaire on page 6



Ruby is seen with President Alan of Telford Centre Rotary Club.

well on for running costs such as hall hire and insurance. 'It was good to answer questions and to receive good feedback,' said Ruby.

Proceeds from the Telford Central Rotary Club Burns Night are being shared between SDN and Water Straws.

'We are really grateful to Telford Centre Rotary Club and I look forward to attending their Burns Night and meeting up with everyone again.'



# Landmark victory for disabled men in battle for justice

Two severely disabled residents from the Isle of Wight have won a legal challenge against the local council. Their lawyers say it sends a 'very clear message' to all councils in England and Wales considering cutting social care services.

The Judge, Mrs Justice Lang, said the council failed even to comply with its own internal guidance on how to assess the impact of its new policy.

The consultation document 'provided insufficient information to enable those consulted to give intelligent consideration and an intelligent response.'

The action was brought by public law experts at legal firm Irwin Mitchell on behalf of the families of the disabled residents, whom the court ruled could only be known by their initials, JM and NT. Both rely heavily on services to provide the 24-hour-care they desperately need.

Lawyer Alex Rook from the firm said: 'This landmark victory sends out a very clear message to all councils in England and Wales. If a council seeks to make cuts to its budget for adult social care, it cannot do so by only meeting certain needs designed to keep someone safe, but neglecting their overall quality of life.'

'The judgment also makes it very clear that if a thorough and full consultation process is not carried out

## High Court rules:

- ▶ **Cuts policy is unlawful**
- ▶ **Consultation inadequate**

## Lawyer says:

- ▶ **Quality of life is now a central issue**
- ▶ **Consultations must be genuine**
- ▶ **Council must restore services it cut**

**The ruling has prevented potentially devastating cuts from going ahead**

**Other councils must recognise the national implications of the ruling**

when considering proposed cuts to services to disabled adults, the courts will quash the policy.'

Suffering from severe autism and brain damage, JM struggles to communicate with anyone but his parents. He needs support with all areas of his daily life and lives with his parents who are reported by the court to 'devote their lives to his care'.

NT has atypical autism and a learning disability. He is described as 'highly vulnerable and anxious and he has communication difficulties, and so needs to be supported by people who understand his way of communicating'. NT's mother, with whom he lives at the weekend, brought this case out of concern that the council's policy would have a potentially devastating effect on NT's quality of life.

Both men, and their families, rely heavily on the council to provide the 24-hour care they need.

Handing down her full judgment at the Royal Courts of Justice, Mrs Justice Lang declared that the Isle of Wight's adult social care policy would have to be quashed for two reasons:

- That the policy designed to meet the needs of disabled adults was itself unlawful
- That the council failed to have regard to the need to promote disability equality under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 when it set the policy.

Alex Rook said: 'The council had very little information about the impact that this would have on people's lives when it took this decision.'

'The reality is that the council simply did not know what the effects would be, other than how much money would be saved.' [<http://www.irwin-mitchell.com>]



# Healthwatch England gets local!

Telford & Wrekin LINK is urging people to 'come and help us develop your local Healthwatch' at a meeting on Tuesday, 6 December at either 2.00pm or 7.00pm in Meeting Point House, Telford Town Centre.

The meeting will give people more information on the development of Telford & Wrekin Healthwatch and help to identify some people who will work with LINK 'to establish the local Healthwatch and ensure that people in the area have the best possible organisation to represent them in Health and Social care Issues.'

LINK asks that people should contact its office on 01952 614180 or contact Catherine at [c.pert@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:c.pert@staffs.ac.uk) to confirm attendance.

## What's a Healthwatch?

The Health and Social Care Bill which is currently progressing through Parliament will establish local Healthwatch organisations in every part of England on 1 October 2012. At the same time it is intended to establish a national organisation called Healthwatch England.

The Government intends that each local Healthwatch will be 'commissioned' by the local authority and that

Healthwatch England will be a statutory committee of the Care Quality Commission.

There are four proposed functions of each local Healthwatch:

- ▶ To provide information and signposting for the public on health or social care.
- ▶ To visit local hospitals, care homes and other places providing health or social care.
- ▶ To represent the views and interests of patients and the public in commissioning health and care services.
- ▶ To engage with the wider community and patient and care organisations.

Local Healthwatch organisations will have statutory powers which will include right of 'enter and view' to health and social care premises, membership of the local Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the ability to raise issues of concern with those bodies, as well as with the Care Quality Commission and NHS Commissioning Board.

Telford and Wrekin Council and Telford and Wrekin LINK are working together as one of the 'pathfinder' Healthwatch groups and in order to take this work forward locally.

## Meeting to hear of world work

The next SDN quarterly Open Meeting will be on **Thursday 8 December, at Mereside Community Centre in Shrewsbury, SY2 6LH, from 10.30-1.00.** The guest speaker will be **Matthew Gilbert of the Woodford Foundation, on 'Shropshire Helping Young Disabled People around the World.'** The Foundation works to help deaf children and young people overseas. This talk explains its work and how it links to the Foundation's roots in Shropshire.

## Shropshire event on funding

Shrewsbury Town FC's Greenhous Meadow will host the Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership's 'Sustain & Survive: New approaches to funding' event on 6 December.

Starting at 9.15am and closes at 1.45pm, the event aims to help organisations adapt to the changing funding environment and will also focus on wider strategies on how to survive in the current economic climate. It will include: an update on the Government's current funding streams and programmes; one-to-one advice session with a funding advisor; and workshops including 'Don't waste your funding' and 'Effective Sponsorship'. The number of places is limited, to book go to: [www.shropshirevcs.org.uk/Funding](http://www.shropshirevcs.org.uk/Funding).

## Advertising roles at SDN

Shropshire Disability Network is looking for a highly motivated Advertising Co-ordinator. SDN needs a capable individual willing to build relationships with businesses and organisations sympathetic to the aims of the network.

Following a successful voluntary trial period a payment based on productivity may be available (subject to agreement with the SDN Management Committee) to the successful candidate or candidates.

Please submit your CV together with a letter setting out how you might approach the task of securing a sustainable revenue stream from advertising and sponsorship and boosting the circulation of this newsletter. You will be required to demonstrate your effectiveness and your understanding of the challenges faced by Third Sector organisations.

### Advertising Assistant needed

SDN is also looking for a talented well organised volunteer to support our advertising and sponsorship activity. You will work closely with our newsletter editor and the advertising co-ordinator to develop solid relationships with sympathetic businesses and not-for-profit organisations.



# Ombudsman backs complaint against Shropshire Council

**A Shropshire man who won a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman about Shropshire Council's actions over care home fees is now seeking to alert families of other elderly or disabled care homes residents who face the same issues.**

Glyn Banks said it took 11 months to obtain final approval of full funding for his 90-year-old mother – “it was confirmed in January 2011, in the week that she died.”

Mr Banks says he applied to Shropshire Council for funding in February 2010, at which time his mother was paying £487 a week out of her savings from the sale of the family home. The money was running out.

“Although the Council carried out a financial assessment confirming that funding for her care placement would become the responsibility of the Council at the beginning of May when her resources fell below the funding threshold, a needs assessment was not carried out until June,” he said. This established that his mother should not be moved, but the Council only agreed to fund her at the minimum rate of £362 a week.

“We would have to pay a top-up fee of £125 a week or she would have to move to any available cheaper care home placement in Shropshire.”

Mr Banks said he went through the Council's complaints procedure. This dragged on, but at no point did the Council offer to take over the interim payment of the care home fees as it should have done by law.

“Eventually, I threatened to go the press and suddenly, without any ad-

## ‘Chronic under-funding’

The private medical group Bupa seems an unlikely ally for Mr Banks' cause, but its chief executive, Ray King, has called for “chronic under-funding” of the care homes system to be addressed “urgently”. Bupa has its own agenda, which has little to do with the anxieties of families, but its concerns resonate with those of Mr Banks.

Ray King warned that the number of care home places in the UK will fall unless operators get ‘fairer fees’. About 70% of Bupa's 18,000 care residents, in its more than 300

homes, are paid for by local authorities.

Councils pay for well over half of England's 390,000 care home residents. Mr King said operators are seeing a fall in fees as authorities' budgets come under pressure. The average council fee increase for 2010-11 was 0.7%, and is currently 0.3% for 2011-12

“There must be a real terms increase in funding,” he said. With inflation running at 4.2%, this equated to a real term reduction, especially as costs were all rising fast. [from BBC Business News, edited]

equated explanation, the Council changed its mind and agreed to fund my mother's placement in full,” he said. But the contract was not signed for two and a half months.

In March Mr Banks complained to the Local Government Ombudsman regarding the 11 month delay, stating that he considered it an attempt to blackmail him into paying £125 a week top-up fee, which he could not afford.

He also raised the possibility that other relatives could be affected in the same way.

The Ombudsman's interim report into his complaint found the Council guilty of maladministration for the 11 month delay.

“But more importantly, the Ombudsman has informed me in a separate

letter that as a result of my expression of concern regarding other relatives the Ombudsman noticed ‘a number of cases that bore similarities to my own’ and took the apparently highly unusual step of sending the Assistant Ombudsman for Adult Social Care along with a Special Investigator to investigate the Council and its practices in June this year,” Mr Banks said.

“I have been informed that specifically the Ombudsman has requested that Shropshire Council checks all existing residential care service users' cases for unlawfully imposed third party contributions. It could be that dozens of residents may be affected.”

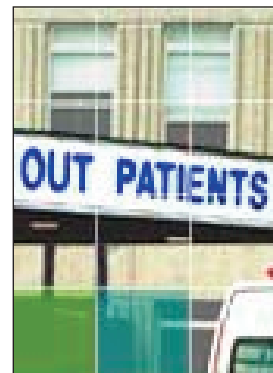
Mr Banks added that two of the county's MPs had taken up the case on behalf of himself and other worried constituents.





## Shrewsbury Hospital among those that have secretly followed 'do not revive' policy

# Let them die



**Hospitals have been making secret use of 'do not resuscitate' orders, an investigation has found – and Royal Shrewsbury Hospital has been one of them.**

The findings emerged in spot checks of 100 hospitals undertaken by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), an official watchdog.

The orders record a decision, made in advance, that a patient's life should not be saved if their heart stops. On one ward, one-third of 'DNR' orders were issued without consultation with the patient or their family, according to the NHS's own records. At another hospital, junior doctors freely admitted that the forms were filled out by medical teams without the involvement of patients or relatives.

Under medical guidelines, the orders should only be issued after senior staff have discussed the matter with the patient's family. A form, signed by two doctors, is then placed in the patient's notes to record what decision was taken.

A charity for the elderly, Action on Elder Abuse, said the disclosures were evidence of 'euthanasia by the back-door.'

At least five hospitals were found by the CQC to be in breach of medical guidance regarding consultation with families. Documented cases include:

□ At Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, run by Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust, a patient was labelled as DNR

based on old medical notes from a previous admission – despite the fact their health had improved.

□ Inspectors who visited Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham found no evidence that any of the patients whose files were marked DNR had been informed about the decision, nor their relatives told.

Hospitals are not supposed to put the documents in any patients' files until they have been filled in, in case a blank or half-completed form is mistaken for an order not to resuscitate, as a patient enters cardiac arrest. In 2009, heart attack victim Peter Clarke was left to die at Derby Hospitals Trust after clerical staff inserted a DNR form into his notes. An hour too late staff realised the DNR order was blank.

The CQC said one in five NHS trusts it inspected were failing patients so badly that they were breaking the law, and expressed concern about standards at more than half of trusts.

Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust said it had noted the CQC's findings and made improvements. Katherine Murphy, chief executive of the Patients Association, said grieving relatives often only found out about the existence of the DNR notice after their loved one had died. [from the Telegraph 18 October, edited]

□ The Guardian reported in October that the Care Quality Commission's findings were exactly the same as those of a report commissioned by the Health Secretary in 1998. Thirteen years later, nothing has changed.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Diabetes screening

GPs should go through their records and identify all patients over 25 who are at high risk of Type 2 diabetes – in particular those of South Asian descent – says the National Institute for Clinical Excellence. Its guideline mark a massive expansion in diabetes screening, with NICE recommending GPs invite all patients identified as high risk for a blood test. People aged 75 and over and those aged 25-39 from a South Asian background in particular should also be encouraged to have a risk assessment.

[From Salix Newsflash, 11.11.11]

### Health workers join Nursing College

The Royal College of Nursing has voted overwhelmingly

at its AGM in favour of allowing full membership for healthcare support workers. They will also have two seats on the RCN council. [From Salix Newsflash 04.11.11]

### GPs beat hospitals on drugs

Hospital doctors are failing to match GPs' efforts to contain prescribing costs, with drug spends in hospitals rising almost three times faster than in primary care, official figures reveal.

In 2009-10, hospital prescribing costs rose by 8%, while the cost of prescribing in primary care rose by just 3%.

This is despite hospitals increasingly pushing outpatient and discharge prescribing to GPs. [From Salix Newsflash 04.11.11]



# Opportunity for Voluntary and Community Sector

Shropshire Capital and Assets Pathfinder Programme is an opportunity for all Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations. If you are interested when you have read this, just complete the questionnaire and email it back.

If you have declared an interest in this way you will be kept up to date with developments and represented at all SCAPP meetings by a VCS board member and volunteer.

This is a fantastic opportunity for any VCS organisation. All public service (including Fire, Police, Council) assets will be mapped and the VCS will have the chance to identify new opportunities and longer term benefits for their organisations.

David Fairclough, VCS Officer and Development Officer at Shropshire Council,

**Shropshire Capital and Assets Pathfinder Programme can enable VCS organisations to access new opportunities - such as sharing accommodation, benefiting from public sector accommodation, and finding ways of saving money on accommodation costs or use of other assets, such as land.**

writes: 'It has shown that, by adopting a strategic pan-public sector approach to customer demand, assets, and capital management at the local level ('one public sector'), money can be saved and services improved...close collaboration at the local level can deliver better service outcomes and reduce the cost of delivery. 'The original Pathfinders identified reductions in both operating space and running costs of up to 20% and now the wave 2 programme has come to Shropshire.' Shropshire Council is one of 14 authorities in Wave 2. The programme is closely linked with the Government's Decentralisation and Community Budgets programme. It fo-

cuses upon the more efficient use of public sector assets and will strongly influence future capital allocations and spending in the locality.

The programme is designed to demonstrate how frontline services can be improved, money saved, carbon footprint reduced and property shared.

If you are interested in looking at better ways of managing your asset(s), If you are potentially interested in property mergers, partnership working, relocating to cheaper premises or in what other assets are out there than please complete the questionnaire.

## Shropshire Capital and Assets Pathfinder Questionnaire (Please mark an X in the boxes which are relevant to your organisation)

1. How many assets are in your organisation?

2. What are these assets? E.g. buildings, land, halls et

2. What is your organisation's legal structure? eg Charity, CIC, Ltd by Guarantee etc

3. Do you own your assets? Yes No  
If yes how much are your assets valued at  
Land £ ..... Property £ .....

4. Do you lease your asset(s)? Yes No  
If yes how much is your property costing you?  
£..... per month

5. If you lease, who do you lease from? And are you allowed to sublet the property?

6. Is your property fit for purpose? Yes No  
If not, tell us why: .....

7. Do you share your asset(s) with anyone? Yes No  
If yes, who? .....

8. Asset(s) Address: (Including postcode)

9. Who uses your asset(s)? Staff, Customers, Public, Other

10. Is your asset(s) energy efficient?  
Very Quite Unsure Not really No

11. What facilities does your asset(s) currently have? eg, meeting rooms, kitchen etc

12. What additional facilities would you like to have if you had a 'wish list'?

13. Would you consider moving property in the future? Yes No

14. Does your asset(s) fit the requirements of your organisation?  
Yes No  
If not, tell us why

Any additional information relating to your asset(s):

Once this questionnaire has been completed please send it back to David Fairclough at david.fairclough@shropshire.gov.uk or post it to David Fairclough, Strategic Planning, VCS Assembly, Shropshire Council, Shirehall, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND



**Tests determining whether people are fit to work are to be reformed to offer more support and to take greater account of mental health conditions. An independent review of the Work Capability Assessment, introduced in 2008, has proposed substantial changes to make it "fairer and more effective".**

Campaigners say it is flawed and many decisions are overturned on appeal. Employment Minister Chris Grayling said the test should be "fair and just" while helping people back to work.

The Government wants to cut the number of benefit claimants, as part of its efforts to drive down the welfare bill, by ensuring all those able to work are looking for employment. In November 2009, there were 2.6 million people of working age on incapacity benefits, costing the state £13.4bn, and ministers want to reassess everyone on such benefits by March 2014.

The Work Capability Assessment, introduced by Labour, is currently being used to assess new claimants and will be used to test everyone from early next year. It involves a "functional health assessment", denoting an individual's ability to work, rather than the previous "diagnostic medical assessment" by a GP or specialist, focusing on particular conditions.

Mental health campaigners say the test is flawed as it focuses on people's physical capacity to work while the number of test verdicts overturned on appeal shows the system is not working.

An independent review, led by Professor Malcolm Harrington, has called for substantial changes to the existing system of assessment. 'What we have inherited in this process is something which... does not deal enough with individual challenges and circumstances.

Mental health experts should be present in all assess-

# Fitness for work tests to be reformed

ment centres, it recommends, to ensure there is a full understanding of the "complexities" of individual conditions.

It also calls for more support for those being assessed, better communication of what the test entails and for tests to be filmed on a pilot basis.

Said Prof Harrington: "This is not about ripping up the current system and starting all over again. I am proposing a substantial series of recommendations to improve the fairness and effectiveness of the assessment."

Mr Grayling said the Government accepted all the review's recom-

mendations, stressing it was in everybody's interest that the tests were as fair as possible.

"What we have inherited in this process is something which is too mechanised, too automated, and does not deal enough with individual challenges and circumstances."

Final decisions would not be solely based on the outcome of the test, Medical histories and other factors would be taken into account.

While those unable to work would continue to receive 'unconditional support', those deemed fit to work would be 'challenged to do so.

The report also found there was no evidence that the assessment process was being driven by financial targets - a claim long denied by ministers.

Mental health charity Mind welcomed the review, saying it had grave concerns about the current test. But it was vital that the proposed alterations were implemented in full.

'It is clear from this independent review that the assessment in its current form is flawed and that it is not a fair or effective tool to determine whether or not someone is capable of working,' said Mind's chief executive, Paul Farmer.

## Modern communication – using social media

A breakfast briefing exploring the main social media tools available and how they can work for campaigning, fund-raising and more within the voluntary sector will be held in the Darwin Room at the Lord Hill in Shrewsbury on 1 December. To book, call Steve: 01743 237877. Looking further ahead, on 9 January

there will be a Social Media Surgery in Shrewsbury at HCS Computers' Log Inn Internet Café, 55 Castle Foregate, SY1 2EJ. The training is described as ideal for those who work for a voluntary or community organisation or in social enterprise. It will provide information on where to start with using blogs, Facebook,

Twitter and other free social media sites, how to promote activities and share information and how to use free websites and services to promote, raise funds and collect feedback. For info or to book: <http://shropshirevcs.org.uk/our-services/training/shropshiresocialmediasurgery>



# 40 years of working for disabled drivers

By SARAH STARKEY

SDN editorial team

The Disabled Motorists Federation (DMF) was established over 40 years ago with the intention of providing advice to disabled people and their carers on issues related to motoring and transport.

Since then, it has been called upon on several occasions to provide free advice to both central and local government organisations and the Vice-President, Peter Lyne, has participated in discussion forums held at the Palace of Westminster on improving transport and social inclusion for disabled people.

Despite being a registered charity, and the contributions it has made, the federation has never received any grants and remains entirely staffed by volunteers.

With an estimated 12 million people affected by disability in the UK, and around six million carers, the DMF is working to create a more inclusive, equal and safer society for such a significant proportion of the population.

The federation says that membership provides many benefits, including car purchase schemes, accommodation discount facilities with hotel groups, and access to legal and insurance services. It is currently developing an accident management service.

To expand the size of the organisation, the DMF is keen to increase its networking. As an example, Mr Lyne said the federation had strengthened relations with Merseyside Police and this had resulted in a community project award back in October 2008.

The DMF wants to increase the number of relationships with organisations such as NHS Trusts and PCTs, as well as establishing relationships with the industrial and commercial sectors.

Its key aim is to ensure a more equal, inclusive and safer society and to extend its work to more people with physical and 'invisible' disabilities.

For further information visit: [www.dmfed.org.uk](http://www.dmfed.org.uk)

## Local MP meets with ME group

Shropshire ME Group members met with MP Philip Dunne in October at Church Stretton. The group provided an overview of ME and information on SMEG itself, from the background to the challenges that are faced.

A main focus of the meeting was the problems that arise with diagnosis and treatment, and the NHS neglect that has occurred in specific cases.

After the meeting, Mr Dunne wrote to the Minister responsible for welfare reform, to find out what progress is being made in terms of recognising various symptoms of ME when sufferers attend assessments for benefits. He has also written to the Medical Research Council to ask what progress is being made in allocating funding for six research priorities for ME announced earlier this year. Mr Dunne told the ME Group he will be in touch once he has had responses to his queries.

## Bring on the clowns!

Maybe it's a failing sense of humour (along with eyesight) on the part of the YourVoice editor, but some of the websites he's visited recently make him think that the world isn't taking disability seriously. In fact, a lot of people seem to find disability either a source of great humour or irritation. It is divorced from 'normal' human life.

So here's a little project, let's start building up some evidence. Whenever you come across a website, a radio or TV station, or a newspaper that behaves badly about disability, make a note and email the details to [newsletter@shropshire-disability.net](mailto:newsletter@shropshire-disability.net). Let's see what we gather!

## Tis the season to be jolly...

The Volunteering Carol Service is back at several venues around the county. The celebratory services, which include coffee and mince pies, all run from 7.00pm-8.00pm as follows: 7 December, Shrewsbury Abbey; 8 December, Bridgnorth Baptist Church; 12 December 2011 – St John's Church Ludlow; 13 December, St Oswald's Church, Oswestry.





# Wellington station's facilities for disabled come under attack

**Shocking conditions faced by all travellers, but particularly those with disabilities, at Wellington train station have been brought into the limelight by a Borough Councillor.**

Cllr Mike Ion is the member whose ward includes the station and he says he has been 'inundated with complaints from local residents and rail users about the lack of facilities at the station'. These include

- Lack of full disabled access to both platforms (no lift)
- toilets only on one platform - and currently closed
- no waiting room on either platform
- ticket office only open up to 1pm
- huge pressure on the free car park as a consequence of commuters 'migrating' from other stations that charge for parking

Cllr Ion has contacted both London Midland and Network Rail demanding urgent talks on improvements to the station, including improved disabled facilities, more car park spaces and the provision of CCTV cameras to improve safety.

Meanwhile, he is urging people to make a noise on their own behalf by contacting the Head of Franchise at London Midland - Nicola.Moss@londonmidland.com - and by writing to the letters page of the Shropshire Star - starmail@shropshirestar.co.uk Cllr Ion's email address is mike.ion@telford.gov.uk, or Twitter: @Mikelon

"I am aware the council has a proposal to provide a bridge between Wellington bus station and the railway station, including lifts to the

station platforms to improve accessibility," he says in a press release.

"Unfortunately, this scheme is estimated to cost in excess of £1.5m and in the current funding climate identifying funding to deliver the scheme will be extremely difficult.

"I will be urgently seeking a meeting with residents, Network Rail, the train operator London Midland and the council to discuss the issues that passengers face and how they can be best addressed - particularly if there is a willingness from local residents and train users to get involved in improving a key local asset for the community."

Cllr Ion also says the council will be implementing restrictions on the car park next to the station early in 2012.

## Letters urged in fight for mobility support

Lord Low's review into the funding of personal mobility for people in residential care has recommended that the Government should keep the mobility component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), which is set to replace the Disability Living Allowance for those in state-funded residential care.

The report also found no evidence to support the Government's argument that local authorities are already meeting mobility needs. Nor did it find that paying DLA mobility to people living in residential care was duplication of funding. The mobility component enables

thousands of disabled people to go to the shops, visit family or socialise with their friends. But the Welfare Reform Bill gives the Government the power to stop paying the mobility component to people living in state-funded residential care.

As one of the many people who commented on this in a blog put it: 'If a Conservative Government sees that they can save billions by cutting back on certain state benefits we stand in danger of one broom being used to sweep away the needling and the undeserving in one fell swoop without the appropriate information being accurately gathered

before a decision can be formed for or against any one case.'

People with disabilities, their carers and families are being urged to write to their local MP urging him or her (in Shropshire it's all 'hims') to send a letter to the Prime Minister to find out why the Government still plans to remove the mobility component. If you would like to do so but don't know who your MP is or how to get in touch, just follow this link to find out:

<http://www.writetothem.com/?keyword=find%20my%20MP&creativeid=520518339&gclid=CMDov9u3p6wCFYEZ4QodPWUoAA>



# Doctors get new help on support for carers

A new guide to help GPs and their teams provide improved support to carers has been launched by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) and the Princess Royal Trust for Carers.

Some startling statistics back up the need for the new guide, and the RCGP has not pulled any punches in urging GPs to support their local carers. About 10% of patients who visits GP are carers – defined as a person of any age, adult or child, who provides unpaid support to a partner, child, relative or friend who couldn't manage to live independently or whose health or well-being would deteriorate without this help.

The country's debt to carers is incredible. According to the GP College, some 1.2 million carers each spend over 50 hours a week caring for others, which equates to a full-time workforce larger than the entire NHS.

Carers are estimated to save the UK economy £87 billion a year, which is equivalent to £15,260 per year for every carer in the UK. The country really is in debt to this selfless army of people. It has to be hoped that someone in Whitehall is listening.

But being a carer comes at a physical and psychological cost:

- Up to 40% of carers experience psychological distress or depression
- Carers have an increased rate of physical health problems – for example, providing high levels of care is associated with a 23% higher risk of stroke
- Older carers who report 'strain' have a 63% higher likelihood of death in any given year than non-carers
- More than half of carers fall into debt as a result of caring

The revised edition of the "Supporting Carers" action guide, offering an overview of how GP practices can support carers, along with up-to-date policy and good practice, also includes an updated and streamlined Self Assessment Checklist for practices to audit their own practice and a guide to develop a plan for their support for carers. For further information visit: [http://www.rcgp.org.uk/professional\\_development/continuing\\_professional\\_dev/carers.aspx](http://www.rcgp.org.uk/professional_development/continuing_professional_dev/carers.aspx)

## Don't just vote - get elected!

Disabled people are under-represented in all aspects of public and political life both locally and nationally. Now a campaigning group called Disability Politics UK is raising an e-petition calling for an increase in the number of disabled MPs, to raise awareness of the issues involved.

One way forward would be to enable MPs to job share, the group says. The Government has published its response to the 'Access to elected office for disabled people' public consultation, which sought views on how to provide extra support for disabled people who are seeking elected office.

It says it will take forward five of the six proposals consulted on:

- Setting up an access to elected office fund
- Providing training and development
- Raising awareness of the challenges faced by disabled people
- Cascading good practice on disability access policies
- Promoting legal obligations

To sign the e-petition visit: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/17076>

## Dementia support

End-of-life charity Omega is determined to offer support to more carers looking after a family member suffering from dementia. It wants to help carers plan ahead and identify when they need to call for assistance, and know where to go to find it. If you are in contact with a carer looking after someone facing dementia, please contact Omega to discuss how it might be able to help. Phone 0845 259 3163 (local rate) or email: [carers@omega.uk.net](mailto:carers@omega.uk.net)

Dementia is very much on the increase. There are now well over 700,000 sufferers across the UK and two-thirds of people with dementia are cared for in the community. There are some 11,500 younger sufferers, but dementia typically affects older people. Caring for someone with dementia is never easy. As older people tend to live with another older person it is upon them that the onerous role of caring falls.



# Neglect on wards 'is up by a third'

**Complaints of neglect on some hospital wards have increased by more than a third over the past year, according to a new report. The Patients Association is highlighting harrowing cases of patients being left starving or in severe pain because nurses are 'too busy' to help.**

The head of the charity says a new report, which 'shames everyone involved', shows that despite government promises of action following a series of other damning reports, standards of care continue to get worse.

The Patients Association is so alarmed by the 'huge increase' in reports of neglect that it is launching a campaign demanding basic standards of dignity and care in hospital wards.

Cases highlighted in the Patient Stories report include:

- Nurses taking 15 minutes to respond to a patient who pressed his emergency button as he was left "gasping for life".
- A woman who spilt hot soup over her legs, scalding herself, after a nurse said she was too busy to help her with it.
- A man who had forcibly to refuse an injection to relieve 'internal bleeding', with which he was not suffering, because of a mix-up over his medical notes.
- A man who was left without blankets or a pillow and told to eat ice cream with his fingers because there were no spoons.

The Patients Association normally

**By coincidence, this story made headlines at the same time ...**

The NHS is one of the most cost-effective health systems in the developed world, according to a study published in the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine. The findings show the NHS saving more lives for

- 'This report shames everyone involved'
- Government promises remain unfulfilled
- 'With £20bn savings demanded ... problems will only get worse'

**'In one of the most developed countries and health systems in the world, patients should not be left starving or thirsty, they shouldn't be left in pain and they shouldn't be forced to urinate or defecate in their bed because the nurse says it's easier to change the sheets than to help them to the toilet'**

receives 5,000 calls a year from patients and relations asking for help and reporting concerns. It says the

each pound spent as a proportion of national wealth than any other country, apart from Ireland, over 25 years. Among the 17 countries considered, the US healthcare system was among the least effective. Researchers said

figure for 2011 is 37% up on the same period in 2010.

Surveys of patients who are treated in NHS hospitals suggest the true number of patients who suffer neglect is more than 200,000 per year.

Katherine Murphy, the chief executive of the Patients Association, said: "The accounts of care contained in this report shame everyone involved. In the 21st century, now. Yet this is what is happening around the country every day."

With £20 billion in NHS efficiency savings demanded by the Government, there are fears that the problem will only get worse if hospitals allow numbers of front line staff to decrease.

The Patients Association has joined forces with Nursing Standard magazine for the Care Campaign, which demands that hospitals deliver satisfactory standards of care in four key areas.

It calls on hospital workers to care with compassion; assist with toileting, ensuring dignity; relieve pain effectively and encourage adequate nutrition. [Telegraph 091111, edited]

this contradicted assertions by the Health Secretary that the NHS needed competition to become more efficient. 'The results question why we need a big set of health reform proposals ... The system works well,' they said.



# Festive bash will be boost for SDN funds

Allcare Shropshire Ltd has done so much for SDN this year – and the year is ending just as it has gone on. This big-hearted company is enabling SDN to get one last boost in 2011 for our coffers by selling tickets for its Christmas party.

In the past Allcare has joined forces with a few other small businesses for a staff Christmas 'do'. But this year it has had a cunning plan (as the saying goes). Allcare will provide and pay for the staff party but has also invited contacts such as SDN to sell tickets for their own table (or tables) at the grand Christmas party. This means that everyone who bought an SDN ticket would be on the SDN table, so everyone will be with people they know yet all taking part in a much bigger Allcare event.

All proceeds from the evening will go to SDN.

One person from each organisation will be in charge of tickets for themselves, and in the case of SDN that is Ruby Hartshorn.

'This is a really creative way to fund-raise and have fun, and get to meet loads of people all at the same time,' said Ruby. 'Allcare has been wonderful to SDN and we can't thank them enough. The £700 raised from their main event for us enabled us to launch new work which otherwise would have been impossible.'

'The company always chooses one main charity for the year and also helps some others as well. For 2012 the main charity will be Hope House, which is a great choice. The main charity is always one that is close to their hearts, ie something that has affected staff or service users on a personal level.'

The Grand Christmas Party will be on Saturday 17 December at The Brooklands Hotel, Mill Street, Meole Brace, Shrewsbury, SY3 9JT, from 7.00pm till late. The three-course meal, disco and live band (The Ronaldos) are all yours for just £20 per ticket. Call Ruby on 01743 340832 to book tickets.

## **Wine & salsa on carers' seasonal menu**

Shrewsbury-based charity Omega, which does a lot to look after those who look after others - carers - is making sure the seasonal swing doesn't end too soon.

First of all, tutored tasting with renowned local connoisseur Jonathan Hislop will be held on 10 December. Tickets are £15 and include tastings and Christmas nibbles. The start time is 7.30pm and the venue is the Trinity Centre, Meole Brace, SY3 9HF. Booking essential. All proceeds will go to the Omega MND iPad Appeal.

Then on January 20 a Salsa Evening will be held at The Lion Hotel, Shrewsbury SY1 1UY. Tickets are £6 and the start time is 7:30pm (1.00am finish) For those wishing to stay overnight, a concessionary room rate will be available. Call The Lion on 01743 353 107 and quote 'Omega Salsa Evening'.

The Omega number is 0845 2593163 (local rate) and the email is [carers@omega.uk.net](mailto:carers@omega.uk.net)

## **Pilot projects on county localism**

The introduction of the Localism Bill and public sector reform have generated new challenges for the voluntary and community sector, town and parish councils and Shropshire Council's elected members. New ways of delivering services and allocating funding mean that greater power is being placed in the hands of local people and community leaders.

Joint work between the Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly, Shropshire Council's elected members and the Association of Local Councils has recently been initiated and they are now inviting others to join in developing this further. A few communities could be chosen to trial new approaches. The number of pilots will depend on the interest shown and the ability to match volunteers within a community.

The questions organisations need to ask themselves include: Would you like to develop new partnership arrangements in your community? Are there particular issues you feel a joint approach would help to resolve? Are there particular services you would like to develop but cannot progress alone? What benefits can you foresee or do you have concerns?

Comments and expressions of interest in a pilot project can be sent to Sarah Dodds, VCS Assembly Co-ordinator, at Shirehall, by 2 December.





# Millions of malnourished simply 'go unnoticed'

In the UK today there are more than three million people either malnourished or at risk of malnutrition. What is alarming is that 93% of these patients are not in hospital but are living in the community. It is our most vulnerable members of society who are most at risk.

This includes the housebound and those with limited mobility who do not have a social support network to assist with tasks such as shopping and cooking.

Patients are discharged from hospital and can be left isolated. They 'fall through the gaps' and miss out on key support services, such as home help and meals on wheels.

People suffering from malnutrition are more vulnerable to infection, take longer for wounds to heal or to recover from illness, have weaker muscles and may get depressed.

The malnourished also visit their GP twice as often and are three times more likely to be admitted to hospital. For malnourished patients, their length of stay in hospital is increased by three days.

**Because of this use of healthcare resources, malnutrition costs more than £13bn a year**

Katheine Murphy,  
Chief executive  
of the  
Patients  
Association,  
explains how  
people  
fall through the  
gaps and miss out  
on support

With the NHS asked to save £20bn by 2014, tackling malnutrition would not only benefit individual patients but would go a long way to helping the NHS achieve these savings. But a year after the Government announced its plans to reform the NHS, we are no clearer as to how these reforms will tackle malnutrition.

## Weight checks

Our recent survey of over 5,000 adults painted a depressing picture. Not enough is being done to screen for malnutrition in the community.

Unintentional weight loss is one of the key physical signs of malnutrition. Monitoring weight is an easy, inexpensive way for patients and carers to keep a record to check if they are at risk of malnutrition.

By promoting the simple message that weight monitoring helps identify those at risk of malnutrition, local authorities - who will take on local responsibility for health and public health - could help the public identify those at risk.

Community centres, day centres and lunch clubs, as well as support groups could all play a role in helping to monitor the weight of those who use them.

Patients rely on their GP for information and support, but very few had managed to obtain information on local services and were unsure of the help available for those suffering from malnutrition.

**Half of carers wanted to know who to go to for help if they had concerns, with a third interested in community support services.**

Despite this, less than a third of patients with concerns about malnutrition will have had contact with a dietician. Action is needed on this important issue.

[from BBC website: News, Health, edited]

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Motor Neurone sufferer who helps us all

Just occasionally, a little reassurance that we are not alone does us all good. The link below takes you to the blog of an MND sufferer who really did feel she was on her own until she discovered a hospice and the MND Association <http://sarahezekiel.blogspot.com/2011/09/marie-curie-hospice-hampstead.html>

### New police number - 101

The new police 101 number was launched recently. It is for general inquiries or to report less urgent crime and

disorder, such as car theft or drug use. 999 remains the emergency number but 101 (textphone 18001) provides an easily accessible general service. It is available 24/7, calls are handled by a police operator and cost 15p from landlines and mobiles.

### Visual Impairment Forum

The VCSA's Visual Impairment Forum will hold its next meeting on 14 December, 4.30-6.30, in the Ludlow Room at Shirehall. Email [robindurham@talktalk.net](mailto:robindurham@talktalk.net) for further details.



# MS research reveals possible drug hope

**Medical researchers at the University of Alberta have discovered a new drug target that could prevent the crippling physical effects of Multiple Sclerosis from setting in.**

It is the kind of news that MS patients have been waiting years to hear. Doctors at the university say they are on the road to developing a new drug treatment that could completely change the lives of MS sufferers.

During the first phase of MS, patients have a lot of inflammation in their brain cells which results in a continuous cycle of inflammation attacks followed by recovery periods.

During the second phase, the inflammation is less severe but physical disability begins to set in because of the effects of brain cells being killed during the first phase.

Immune cells that become active due to

inflammation can pass the blood brain barrier and enter the central nervous system. These activated cells secrete a molecule, Granzyme B, that can get inside neurons and cause brain cell death.

In lab experiments, researchers found that if they prevent this molecule from entering the neurons they can also prevent the killing of neurons in the early stages of the disease.

The discovery could mean that MS patients would be free of the permanent physical effects of MS, which eventually set in as the disease progresses. The discovery is just a method at present and doctors at the university say a drug will need to be developed that would stop the enzyme's destructive journey. could be years away but for those afflicted with MS it offers new hope. [from CTV.ca © 2011 Bell Media 271011]



## MS help days at Hamar Centre

On the first Thursday of each month people with MS can get support, information and beneficial exercise with a physiotherapist at the Hamar Centre, Royal Shrewsbury Hospital. Exercises start at 10.00am, followed by lunch and then a guest speaker at 1.00pm. A Care Assistant is available all day to help with personal needs. For details ring 01743 364484 [from MS Newsletter]

## Respite centres close

Negotiations to transfer two MS respite centres to another organisation have failed and they are now set to close in the next few weeks. No 'viable options' could be found that might have saved the centres, in Warwickshire and Surrey, the MS Society said.

# £16,000m in benefits unclaimed

The Department for Work and Pensions has published research showing that millions of people are failing to claim benefits and tax credits every year – to the tune of up to £16,000 million.

Up to about £10.5 million in means tested benefits was left unclaimed in 2007-08, the latest figures available. For tax credits the figure was £6,000 million in the same period. Reasons for not claiming include difficulty in filling out forms or meeting evidence requirements, poor accessibility due to lack of English or disability, stigma, and the complexity of the system - not knowing what, how and when to claim [from Social Welfare Training, [www.socialwelfaretraining.co.uk](http://www.socialwelfaretraining.co.uk)]

# Help turn up the heat on fuel poverty

**Turn2us, a campaigning charity that helps people access benefits and grants, has launched an online campaign to highlight fuel poverty and promote financial support available to people this winter.**

It is urging people to visit [www.fuelpovertymap.org.uk](http://www.fuelpovertymap.org.uk) and get involved. The page includes a calculator which you can use to work out the percentage of your household income spent on energy bills. The results can then be plotted onto a live UK map and will help build up a national picture.

Turn2us says that submitting details for the map is easy but will make a big difference to its campaign. It is also urging people to spread the word about the campaign by telling their friends and neighbours, and with Twitter and Facebook.

Around 5.5 million households are living in fuel poverty, which is defined as spending 10% or more of total monthly household income on energy. Many have to resort to drastic measures - such as cutting back on food - to pay energy bills.

Updates on the latest Turn2us news are available on the charity's Facebook and Twitter profiles.



# Finding regular givers

## How small charities can make the most of themselves

How to maximise regular donations for small charities

Things you'll need

- A good website
- Campaign or purpose for fundraising
- Charity Checkout / Virgin Money Giving account
- Twitter account
- Facebook page
- E-newsletter

If you work for a small charity, you will know that trying to gain committed donors can be hard. It's all very well getting one-off donations but the larger charities will tell you that regular gifts are vital.

Most small charities do not have a simple facility on their website to accept monthly or other regular donations from the public. Some may use sites like JustGiving, but this can be expensive. Here we'll look at some solutions.

### 1 Invest in a good website

These days a good website can be achieved on a very small budget. Online giving is only going to grow, so it is worth the investment. Once you have done this, you can link it up to your Facebook and Twitter accounts (if you have them) and start telling the world about what you do.

### 2 Think about regular donations

A monthly donation is likely to continue for a while and is far more manageable for your donor. For example while a one-off donation of £500 seems daunting to most people, £20 per month seems reasonable and if it lasts for an average 2.5 years that's £600.

It's really important that you give your supporters a specific reason to give to you on a regular basis. Come up with a 'shopping list' of different amounts and give an indication of what this will pay for. This will help people decide how much they will be prepared to give.

### 3 Decide on a payment provider

The next job is to decide on a payment provider. Choose one that has regular giving options. 37% of donations made online are regular

ii. Can you build branded pages? A study conducted by Network for Good showed that people give on average 38% more via branded donation pages

iii. Do you have to pay fees up-front? If you are a small charity, it is wise to avoid these.

Two options

Two of the best options are Charity Checkout and Virgin Money Giving. Virgin Money Giving is £100 + VAT to set-up and charges 2% plus transaction fees. Charity Checkout is free, but charges 4% plus transaction fees. But it also offers branded pages, which is important.

There are some other differences too, largely in the fact that Virgin Money Giving was designed as a peer-to-peer fundraising platform, whilst Charity Checkout was set-up as a payment provider. This means that their pages are more customisable and do not have links off to other areas of their website.

### 4 Think about your ask

One of the most important things when trying to gain regular supporters is to work on your ask.

- Why should someone give to you?
- What will you do with the money?
- What is your USP?

Look at how other organisations ask online and think about what works well.

### 5 Communication

Think about how you'll communicate with your new regular supporters. Communication is key. Firstly, how will you say thank you? Then you'll need to think about Data Protection - how will you store their details. Have they opted to receive additional correspondence from your organisation? If so, how frequently will you contact them? They may be interested in supporting other areas of your work.

But don't bombard them, they might get annoyed and stop supporting you. It is important to regularly thank them and remind them of the difference their gift is making.

## New dates for BSL courses

Remark! Midlands, a deaf-led company, has announced new training dates for next year.

BSL Level One: 20 weeks, Thursdays, 2-5.00pm for 20 weeks, begins 12 January; Wednesday, 6-9.00pm ) for 20 weeks, begins 11 January.

Intensive July Course: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday for 4 weeks (10.00am-4.00pm) begins 3 July.

The cost is £300 for individuals and £375 for organisations, including assessment fees.

BSL Level Two: 30 weeks, Wednesdays 2-5.00pm, starts 11 January. 30 weeks; Thursdays, starts 12 January, 6-9.00pm.

The cost is: Individuals £450 and organisations £510 (+VAT), including assessment fees.

All courses are at The Custard Factory, Zellig 101/102, Gibb Street, Digbeth, Birmingham, B9 4AA. Tel: 0121 2301718; SMS: 07921 004355; to book a BSL Interpreter call: 0121 2301718.





This feature is about one disability. It could be about many others. What is the total cost to the nation of ignoring people with disabilities who, with a little help, could contribute so much?

The economic cost of ME (or CFS as it is often now called) has been calculated for the first time. ME causes severe debilitating fatigue and affects up to 2.6% of adults in Britain. Recent research into the impact of the illness on employment and productivity has estimated lost earnings of over £102 million a year to the UK economy.

## Research reveals long-term cost to the UK's economy

The study investigated factors associated with discontinuation of employment in patients with ME, or quantified its impact on productivity.

It examined data from 2,170 patients attending five specialist ME/CFS services to estimate earnings lost as a consequence of ME/CFS and the overall productivity costs to the economy.

The productivity costs among the 2,170 patients, estimated using average annual earnings data by sex and age group obtained from the Office for National Statistics, were equivalent to £44,515 (in men) per patient and £16,130 (in women) per patient.

By extrapolating these estimates to the UK population, the researchers

estimated that each year 4,424 working age adults with ME/CFS might be referred for specialist assessment, and that this group would have already incurred productivity costs of £102.2 million due to their illness by the time of the assessment.

Many ME/CFS sufferers continue to work despite the primary (fatigue and pain) and secondary effects (depression and anxiety) of the condition. Loss of physical capacity is the main reason for discontinuation of employment.

Dr Esther Crawley said: 'Our findings are important because they show the long-term cost to society, which must be accounted for in estimates of the

cost-effectiveness of ME/CFS interventions and service provision.

'In addition to this indirect cost to the UK economy, health resource use and welfare payments impose direct costs, and families of patients must bear the costs of informal care, often reducing their own working hours.'

Sir Peter Spencer, CEO of Action for ME, commented: "The key message for the Government and for the Department of Health is that the financial costs of failing to address this illness properly are much greater than the money required to set up proper NHS specialist services in all areas and to fund much needed scientific research." [from SMEG newsletter October 2011]

### Learning Disability Awareness Training

Back by popular request, Joint Training is offering a further opportunity to attend Learning Disability Awareness training. This is a half-day session aimed at providing an introductory awareness of learning disabilities, and enabling staff to make communication choices to support individuals who have a learning disability. It is suitable for all staff who work with, or who have contact with, adults with learning disabilities - either in a direct care setting or in front line community services. The date is Friday 9 December, from 1-4.40pm, at The Lantern in Shrewsbury. The cost is £25 per delegate (or free to staff employed within Assessment and Eligibility) For further information:

<http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/schtraining.nsf/open/DBDF577A74AAE0EF8025710E00387A7E> [from VCS Assembly newsletter 07.11.11]

### Nations' diet risks highlighted

Eating like the English could save 4,000 lives a year in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. People in England eat more fruit and vegetables and less salt and fat, reducing heart disease and some cancers, say Oxford University experts. A 'hamburger tax' on fatty and salty foods and subsidies on fruit and veg could help close the diet divide. Death rates for heart disease and cancer are higher in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are higher than in England - and diet is an important factor. [BBC News: Health]





## Advice for councils on supporting voluntary sector in tough times

The Best Practice Guide for Local Authorities and the VCS has been published this year by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. It makes a series of recommendations for local authorities on the ways they can support the sector and alleviate strain by helping organisations adapt to any changes in funding. The guide also includes a number of good practice case studies from local councils that have been creative in the way that they have supported the sector at such an uncertain time. For a free copy of the report go to <http://www.compactvoice.org.uk/resources/briefings-and-responses/best-practice-guide-local-authorities-and-vcs>

[from VCS Assembly newsletter 07.11.11]

## Finance workshops

Turn2us is a charity that helps people in financial need, and those who support them, to access the money available to them through welfare benefits, charitable grants and other financial help, through a free accessible website ([www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)). Free workshops are held for managers, staff and volunteers within CAB and other organisations such as housing agencies, welfare rights groups, or those providing debt advice as well as other agencies who may benefit. Turn2us have free workshops in Birmingham on 11/12 January. Contact Heather Aldridge, Training Coordinator ([training@turn2us.org.uk](mailto:training@turn2us.org.uk))

## Charity news service is back

Community Newswire, the service that helps charities get their stories in national and local media, has officially restarted after receiving funding for the next three years from the Big Lottery Fund. Run by the Media Trust, journalists select stories from press releases and photos that have been submitted, edit them and circulate to newsrooms across the UK. Relevant websites are <http://www.mediatrust.org/newswire> and <http://www.thirdsector.co.uk/News/MostRead/1090958/> [from VCSA Newsletter October 2011]

## Dementia drugs crackdown

GPs could have to seek permission from PCTs and local authorities to prescribe antipsychotic drugs for dementia patients, and could even face jail if they prescribe without permission. This is part of a Government crackdown on drugs being used as a 'chemical cosh'.

Health Minister Paul Burstow says he will outlaw the 'silent scandal' of inappropriate prescribing of antipsychotics, and punish doctors if a target of reducing the number of elderly care home residents and dementia patients prescribed antipsychotics from 180,000 to 60,000 is not met. [From Salix Newsflash 04.11.11]

# Deaf Smart photo competition marks first year in county

As part of Deaf Smart's first year supporting the D/deaf community in Shropshire, it is launching a photographer of the year competition. Prizes will be awarded at the Deaf Smart Charity Ball in 2012.

The theme is 'Deaf Culture, One community.' It is up to you to interpret the theme as you see fit - it might be a photo of you volunteering with the D/deaf community. D/deaf at work or play. A photo of Equipment for the Deaf or just a photo of an ear.

Please get permission before entering your photograph.

Entries must be received by February 1st 2012 Please send entries with entry fee of £5 to: 1 Drayton road Shawbury, Shrewsbury SY4 4NZ Or Email entries to [Info@deafsmart.co.uk](mailto:Info@deafsmart.co.uk) for further information contact Deaf Smart: 01939 251555

## West Mercia asks for comments

West Mercia Police want views on priorities and budgets. Its partners' views are important to the Police, particular when setting the priorities for policing across West Mercia. As part of the development of its final budget and Joint Policing Plan, partners have the opportunity to find out about and influence proposals for 2012-2015. To take part contact: [police.authority@westmercia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:police.authority@westmercia.pnn.police.uk) or visit [www.westmerciapoliceauthority.gov.uk](http://www.westmerciapoliceauthority.gov.uk) for more information. [from VCS Assembly newsletter 07.11.11]

## New social network

A new social network and social movement site for people affected by medical adversity or disability has been launched. Called [www.enerfly.org](http://www.enerfly.org) it will enable people to publicise campaigns, express themselves and have their voice heard, participate in discussions, write articles, stories/poetry, and upload photos or videos. [from <http://www.scope.org.uk/forums/campaigns/new-social-network-social-movement-site-people-affected-disability>]



# 'Assessors' could decide on sick leave

People should be signed off for long-term sick leave by an independent assessor rather than their GP, a government review will recommend about now. The independent review is also expected to call for businesses to be given tax breaks for hiring patients with continuing and unpredictable conditions.

The welfare minister, Lord Freud, said the reforms could lead to "fewer wasted lives".

He said the Government wanted to intervene earlier to stop patients drifting into unnecessary ongoing state support.

A job-finding service to match people with long-term illnesses to suitable work is expected to be another recommendation of the Government-commissioned review.

People who are signed off sick would also be put on to jobseeker's allowance, rather than employment support allowance, for a period of three months. They would receive less money and have to prove they were looking for work.

Freud said GPs would still have a

## GPs set to lose role over long-term absence from work

role in writing sick notes for up to around four weeks leave but after that point an independent assessment of the patient's needs should be carried out.

The Independent Review of Sickness Absence, led by Professor Dame Carol Black, national director for health and work, and the former head of the British Chambers of

commerce David Frost, is looking at ways of cutting the estimated £60bn cost of working-age ill health.

But the deputy chair of the British Medical Association's GPs committee, Dr Richard Vautrey, has warned that if the reforms turn out to be "a punitive process just to try and save money without the best interests of the patient at the heart of the process then it will fail".

The proposed reforms come as the Government is embarking on a major and controversial overhaul of the welfare state. The first independent attempt to quantify the impact of more stringent medical tests and the greater use of means testing warned that the tough welfare reforms will force over half a million people off incapacity benefit and cause widespread poverty in some of Britain's most disadvantaged communities.

Around 600,000 people would disappear from the benefits system altogether under changes to be introduced by 2014 and would often have to rely on family members for financial support, warned researchers from Sheffield Hallam University.  
[from The Guardian [19.11.11]

## Please help us to contact more carers!

This article is reproduced from *Omega Network Bulletin*

Most family care-givers are preoccupied with very demanding caring roles. Some are in poor health themselves. Many are frail and elderly; others are socially isolated, or balancing their caring responsibilities with a hectic day job.

Carers are everywhere, but they don't always see themselves as carers – they just get on with it. The extended Omega Team sets out to find carers hidden in the communities we serve. We always appreciate your help.

We do not provide a one-stop solution and firmly believe that no organisation can or should claim to be able to meet every need. We treat carers as individuals. The Omega approach is to offer carers useful coping skills

and help them find important information and make informed decisions.

We are keen to work with more GP practices and community service providers who recognise the importance of avoiding carer breakdown by encouraging self-help and peer-support.

Please contact us if you think you can help us reach more carers. If you have benefitted already from an Omega facilitated support session, why not tell your GP about your experience and ask them to contact Omega. We also want to hear from you if you are a member of an existing group and think you need something extra.

**Thomas Memery**

Omega Development Director

November 2011 [www.omega.uk.net](http://www.omega.uk.net)



# A man divorced from his mouth?

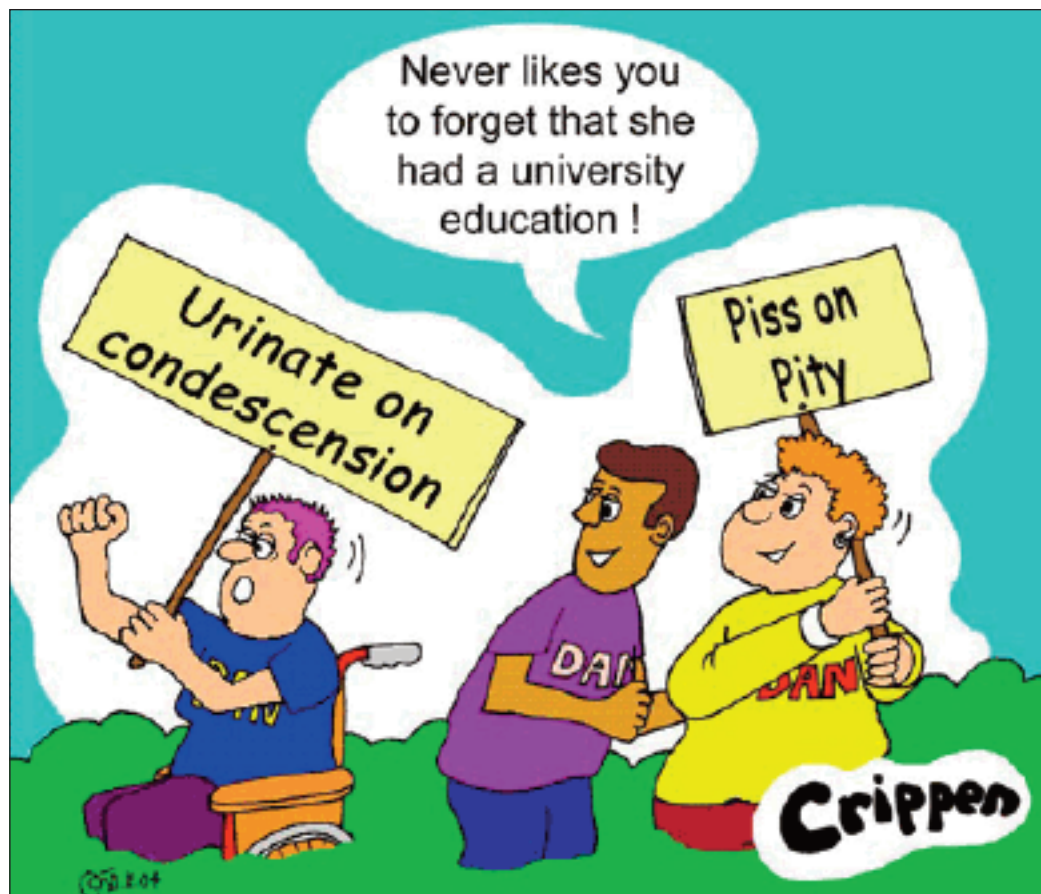
Considering the distress and uncertainty the coalition Government is causing to people with disabilities, it is interesting to look back at just a couple of the comments David Cameron has made on the subject:

'The very painful thing about disability – whether your own or your loved one's – is the feeling that the situation is out of your control. When the system that surrounds you is very top-down, very bureaucratic, very inhuman, that can only increase your feelings of helplessness. So a really big difference we can make is to put more power and control right into the hands of parents, carers or those with disabilities.' [The Independent, 16 July 2009]

'There are many in our country who can't work, who are incapacitated and as a compassionate country we should help them.' [BBC website]

'For too long in this country we have left people on welfare for year after year when those people, with help and with assistance, could work, and so we're producing a much better system where we really put people through their paces and say that if you can work, you should work.' [Guardian 28 July]

And for good measure here's one from Employment Minister Chris Grayling: '...it is right to reassess incapacity benefit claimants and to launch the work programme to give those who can work the specialist help they need to do so.'



## Crossroads Care 'is still alive and kicking'

Margarete Davies is the new Locality Manager for Crossroads Care in Shropshire, based at the Community Council of Shropshire office in Shrewsbury.

Since her appointment, Margarete has been visiting organisations across the county dispelling the belief that Crossroads had closed. 'We are still alive and kicking, visiting carers and service users, recruiting more staff and taking new referrals,' she says.

Shropshire comes under the umbrella of Crossroads Cheshire West & Wirral and it is hoped that as time goes on to bring services in line with those on offer in these localities. It will include CAMEO (Come and Meet Each Other) clubs, bathing services, and dementia palliative and crisis services.

For further information please call Margarete on 01743 237875 or email [Margarete.Davies@crossroadscar-ing.com](mailto:Margarete.Davies@crossroadscar-ing.com)

## Carers Group takes up Partnership roles

Shrewsbury Carers Group, which meets at The Inn on the Green in Radbrook, had the pleasure of a visit from Jackie Taylor, Partnership Board Facilitator from the Service Development, Assessment and Eligibility Team. She updated us and invited us to accept vacancies for carers on two of the partnership boards. It is really encouraging to realise that the feedback the group gave to Jackie when we first

met three months ago is being considered and addressed. Enquiries about the group should be made to Carers Support Services on 01743 341995 and not 01743 342173. We wish Michelle Evans well in her new post with Crossroads Care.

☐ **Wednesday 21 December from 11-1 will be a Christmas get together, with sherry and mince pies and other festive goodies. - Ruby Hartshorn**



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

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)

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/)

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

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)

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)

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

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/)

Landau Limited - Supported employment services for people with disabilities,  
5 Landau Court, Tan Bank, Wellington. TF1 1HE 01952 245 015, [admin@landau.co.uk](mailto:admin@landau.co.uk)

Listen Not Label - User Led Organisation for disabled people and carers in  
Telford and Wrekin (Tina Jones, Manager)  
Liz Yates Centre, The Poplars, Lightmoor, Telford, TF4 3QN  
01952 458021

Marches Community Enterprise 01584 878402 or 07891094901

ME Connect  
Helpline - 0844 576 5326 - between 10.00-noon, 2.00-4.00 and 7.00-9.00;  
email [meconnect@meassociation.org.uk](mailto:meconnect@meassociation.org.uk)

Motor Neurone Disease Association - MND Connect 08457 62 62 62  
[mndconnect@mndassociation.org](mailto:mndconnect@mndassociation.org)

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

## 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)  
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)

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

Omega (National Association for End of Life Care) - [www.omega.uk.net/](http://www.omega.uk.net/)

Parent Partnership Service - [www.parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.org.uk/#/useful-links/4551168089](http://www.parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.org.uk/#/useful-links/4551168089)  
Primary Care Trust [www.shropshire.nhs.uk/Get-Involved/](http://www.shropshire.nhs.uk/Get-Involved/)

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

Shrewsbury Dial-a-Ride - Sundorne Trade Park, Featherbed Lane, SY1 4NS. Enquiries 01743 440350; Direct Line 01743 440744; Mobile 07891094901, [linda@shrewsburydialaride.org.uk](mailto:linda@shrewsburydialaride.org.uk)

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

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

Shropshire Volunteering Team -Promote your volunteering opportunities.  
<http://shropshirevcs.org.uk/site/volunteering/>

Shropshire and Staffordshire Heart and Stroke Network  
Lambda House, Hadley Park East, Telford, TF1 6QJ  
Email: [yuen-ting.cheung@shropshirepct.nhs.uk](mailto:yuen-ting.cheung@shropshirepct.nhs.uk) 01952 228490

Telford & Wrekin LINK - Suite 1, Conwy House, St Georges Court, St Georges Road, Donnington, Telford, TF2 7BF 01952 614180

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

Voluntary Association for the Blind (linked to RNIB)

**Send in your details and we'll find space for you on Page X.**