

October 2012

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Mynd milestone!

As they say in the song...
I believe I can fly!



Will Martin, who was carried by the Bridgnorth Aluminium team, gets airborne crossing a small bridge at the start of the challenge.

One of Geoff Forgie's great ambitions was fulfilled in September with the running of SDN's first Disability Challenge on the Long Mynd. Geoff and others had been working towards the idea before his death, and it was only fitting that the event was named in his memory.

His widow Sue was on hand to start each team off and to present certificates afterwards. Daughter Jess led one of the six teams that took part, fittingly called by her father's initials as Team GDF.

Their challenge was to carry a wheelchair passenger - who SDN decided to call pioneers - up Cardingmill Valley, over the Long Mynd to its highest point at Pole Bank, and then return to Church Stretton via The Burway.

The Disability Challenge was created both as a fund-raiser and an awareness raiser. It succeeded brilliantly at both, with the amount raised being £1500. There was a lot of advance publicity in the media explaining what it was all about and many members of the

Tough chair carry fulfils a dream

public on the day had it explained to them as well. Church Stretton's town website even asked for some photos to publish.

"Geoff wanted to give adventurous, spirited people with limited mobility the opportunity to get to places they would not otherwise be able to enjoy, and that is how the idea of the Challenge came about," said Dave Hewetson, an SDN management committee member and the main organiser of the event. **continued page 4**

Games art legacy

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust and Royal National Institute of Blind People are working together on a new project funded by Arts Council England. The project aims to make art more accessible for blind and partially sighted visitors, as part of a legacy project from the London 2012 Games.

Charities review chairman to visit Shropshire

The chair of a five-year review of the Charities Act, Lord Hodgson, is coming to Shropshire on 9 November to talk about his findings and recommendations. Anyone interested in attending his talk, organised by Shropshire RCC, should email info@shropshirevcs.org.uk for more details. [From Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership Newsletter Issue 24]

Some of our top stories inside

SDN's Annual Meeting - 2
Blue Badge - what changes are coming? - 3
Benefits cap just months away - 3
Disability Challenge in pictures - 4 to 7
Paralympic stars speak out for DLA - 8
Stats prove benefits tests are deeply flawed - 9
National newspapers 'fuel hate crime' - 10
Care homes confusion - 11
Top lawyer to address county carers - 12
Mobility tips for disabled - 13
Diary dates and our new services directory - 15



This year's annual meeting began with chair Sonia Roberts paying tribute to our membership secretary Trevor Dickinson, who died recently. She described him as 'passionate in his support for people with disabilities' and a tenacious hard-working person who would be missed both by SDN and by the other organisations for which he worked so tirelessly.

Looking back over a very busy year Sonia said she felt we had moved further towards the objectives of SDN.

'Our membership is increasing - we now have over 700 members. We are getting large amounts of press publicity and are now seen not just by the statutory agencies as the Voice for people with disabilities in Shropshire, but also by the media. Last week alone we had four radio interviews,' she said.

'We have an increasing number of followers on Twitter. On average we get 100 tweets a week and have 160 primary followers.

'In October last year we held the Hardest Hit Debate, which was attended by 72 people and proved a great success. SDN has received some very positive feedback from all quarters.

'Chaired by Jim Hawkins from BBC Radio Shropshire the event covered topics requested by the members and delegates, namely ATOS Assessments, Blue Badge parking in Shropshire, and outcomes from the consultation on the Live Life Your Way Personalisation programme.

'The full report on the debate can still be accessed through our website.'

Sonia praised the publicity work done by Ruby Hartshorn, who was unable to be present because of a family bereavement. 'Despite her grief and sadness she diligently continued to ensure papers for today were printed and YV was sent out

Annual meeting told of a busy and fruitful year for SDN

and all the fantastic other stuff that she does,' she said.

She also praised outgoing secretary Dave Hewetson for all his work in organising SDN's first Disability Challenge 'as well as for organising all our meeting throughout the year.'

SDN is run totally by volunteers, Sonia continued, adding 'This can often be overlooked when you see the amount of work we do, the level of commitment that is given and the quality of service that is provided.

'In particular I would like to mention and give thanks to Val Lewis and Paul Nash who continue to support the SDN website, Marina Hall who produces plain text and Utube versions of YourVoice, Grace Hough (the amazing Grace) who attended the Paralympics and gave us a real

insight into what was going on through her regular blogs posted on our website, Sarah Starkey who writes articles for the newsletter, and Margaret Barnes who supports the funding sub-group and sells raffle tickets at our events.'

Sonia said three new members had joined the Management Group in the past year: 'June Jones has a long history in working as a volunteer with numerous worthwhile causes; Liz Percival has joined us as treasurer-elect, a vitally important role for which her background is perfect; and Paul Siroky, who works for Visual Interpreting Service Shropshire.

'The skills and expertise that each of these individuals brings to the table will help strengthen and enrich the management committee and we thank them for giving of their time to support SDN members.'

This year SDN has also become a registered charity. 'This has meant changes to our constitution, allowing us to review and revise it, a move which this meeting will be asked to ratify.'

The meeting also ratified new office holders: Treasurer – Liz Percival; Secretary – John Simcox; Vice-Chair – James Moraghen

Guest Speakers at the AGM were Rachel Woods – 'our own ready steady cook!' who spoke about and demonstrated cooking for the disabled - and Rob Price, of the Benefit Options Team at Shropshire Council, who discussed the implementation of PIP.

SDN'S NEXT GENERAL MEETING will be on 13 December at Meeting Point House in Telford.

Dave bows out to warm applause

Outgoing secretary Dave Hewetson was given a warm and prolonged round of applause to end his term in office. 'I have enjoyed my time as secretary, from the time I started with Geoff in the early days of SDN,' said Dave. John Simcox said that if he could do half as good a job as Dave, he would be happy, and Peter Ruberry proposed a vote of thanks for all the work Dave has done over the years.



It seems we're not supposed to know, but...

The fate of the Blue Badge is now up for discussion

At present people with the higher rate of the Mobility Component can apply for the Blue Badge to access a range of parking concessions. When Personal Independence Payments (PIP) is introduced next year, how people get a blue badge is up for discussion. The Department for Transport is asking for your views.

That all sounds innocent enough, but bear in mind that the department has not really bothered to publicise the fact that the consultation is taking place.

It began in July – and in England it ends on 2 October. If you're over the

border in Wales you get until 30 October. If you've never heard of it, you're in the majority.

Also, if the Blue Badge is linked to PIP it may fall into the grasping claws of ATOS or similar. We say 'or similar' because ATOS has lost the contract for central England (see below). But let the rejoicing be limited until we see how the new operator compares.

The Department for Transport has put forward three ideas of its own: 1 – No link of Blue Badge with Personal Independence Payment; 2 – Automatic right to a Blue Badge for people getting the enhanced mobility

component; 3 – Automatic right to a Blue Badge for people who score 8 or more for the 'moving around' question (cognitive functions).

If you're in England and reading this before 2 October you can hurry to examine all relevant documents and express a view at the Department of Transport website (there is a link on the SDN website). Welsh readers can take a bit longer.

Whatever happens, delay will be inevitable. Blue Badges are issued by local authorities and if they have to deal with yet another large organisation and follow a process to issue your badge, this could result in delays.

New name to run medical tests in Midlands - but will it be old attitude?

Atos HealthCare has been awarded most of the contracts to carry out the medical tests for the forthcoming Personal Independence Payment (PIP) – but not in the Midlands. 'Lot 2', as Wales and Central England were called in the assessment competition to select preferred bidders, was won by Capita Business Services Ltd. Will Capita show the same enthusiasm as Atos for humiliating and harassing people with disabilities?

PAGE 9: New government figures show that one in five decisions to find someone 'fit for work' made by ATOS is wrong

Benefits cap: spelling out the details

The Benefit Cap, which applies to new and existing claimants of working age, is due to be introduced from next April as part of the wide-ranging Welfare Reform Act.

It will affect those with benefits of at least £350 a week for single people or £500 a week for lone parents or couples.

They will lose any benefit above these levels. It has been calculated that the average benefit reduction is likely to be £83 a week per household.

Council Tax Benefit is not included in calculating the total.

It is a politically popular means of restricting the total benefits that a household can receive to estimated average earnings of either a single household or a couple.

Some 67,000 households will be affected by the Benefit Cap in 2013/14 and 75,000 in 2014/15.

The cap won't apply where someone in a household gets one of the following:

- Working Tax Credit

- Disability Living Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment
- Attendance Allowance
- Industrial Injuries Benefits
- Employment Support Allowance, if paid with the support component
- War Widow's or War Widower's pension

People who have been in employment for 52 weeks or more when they claim benefit, or who lost their job through no fault of their own, may be exempt from the cap for up to nine months.

[From Social Welfare Training, September 2012]



Mynd challenge

continued from p1

"The teams and the pioneers were fantastic. The five-mile route demanded a lot from them and each of them rose to the challenge. They well earned the soup and roll that were waiting for them when they got back.

"We had expected the teams to take three to three and a half hours to finish the course, but they were back in far less time than that. It wasn't a race, but people just wanted to give it their best.

"We can't thank them enough, but equally the challenge could not have happened without the amazing support of some 40 volunteers behind the scenes. Many helped prepare for the event as well as being on duty throughout the day.

"And we are also grateful to the generous sponsorship of Campbell Keay, Julie Stealey, Carphone Warehouse, Walford College and Lloyds Animal Feeds."

The Disability Challenge even had two links with the Paralympics. One of the pioneers, Debbie Brennan, was a gold medal winner at Sydney 2000 and another, Daisy Nash, was a torch bearer at London 2012.

Debbie, who raced in the 100 and 200 metres events, brought along her medals and her racing wheelchair, which attracted a lot of attention. As well as the Sydney gold, she won silver and bronze at Athens in 2004.

The teams

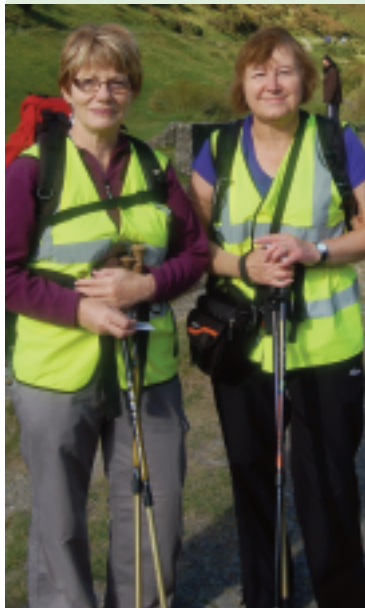
Shropshire Fire & Friends, led by Mark Donnelly, with Daisy Nash in the chair;
The West Mercia Wheezers, leader Paul Moxley, Ruth Fairclough in chair;
West Mercia Ladies, leader Amanda Blakeman, Debbie Brennan in chair;
Team GDF, leader Jess Forgie, Hilary Fisher in chair;
Bridgnorth Aluminium, leader John Littley, Will Martin in chair;
White Watch Shrewsbury, leader Neil Grady, Alan Townsend in chair.



The pictures on this and the following two pages mostly speak for themselves, but the bottom one on this page needs a word of explanation ... it is the traffic jam that formed on The Burway behind two of our teams as they descended into Church Stretton!



Middle left: Debbie Brennan with Sue Forgie, Dave Hewetson and Sonia Roberts; centre, Daisy Nash with her flame and also setting off; above, Debbie and Team 4 set off; top left, Ruth Fairclough gets across the stream with a little help from her friends, top right she celebrates a safe landing, and bottom left preparations for take-off.





Left: The West Mercia Wheezers, with Ruth Fairclough in the chair, prepare to start - and below, return with wide grins as the first team home. The finish line was at the car park entrance, so after that point chairs could be carried or towed.

Below: White Watch Shrewsbury team make a triumphal entry with Alan Townsend shoulder high.

Below: Amazing Grace' Hough who kept a brilliant Paralympics blog on the SDN website joins the kitchen team



Right: Sue Forgie presents certificates of appreciation to the six pioneers.

The rest of our pictures just give a flavour of what was an extraordinary day.

Don't miss next year's Challenge!





Paralympic stars speak out for DLA

Three members of Britain's Paralympic squad have spoken out in support of the disability living allowance (DLA).

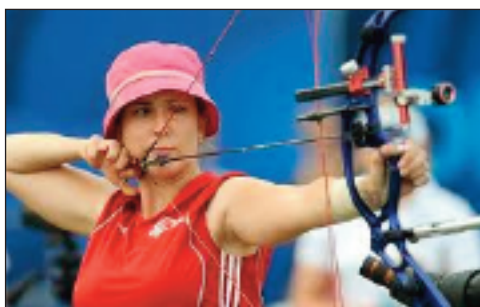
Gold-medal-winner Danielle Brown was the first to speak out about the importance of the benefit and other support received by our elite disabled athletes. Brown, who won an archery gold in the individual compound event to add to the gold she won in Beijing four years ago, is believed to be the first disabled athlete to represent England in a non-disabled Commonwealth Games team, after qualifying for Delhi in 2010 and winning a team gold.

Her comments will deliver a boost to disabled campaigners who fear the Government will use the success of Britain's Paralympians as an excuse for cutting vital support to disabled people.

She said: 'Without the support, I personally couldn't manage. If it was to be cut I know I would struggle. I can see how that would make other people be affected in a similar way.'

Without her DLA, and without her car, she would be forced to take public transport. 'If I catch a train it is very difficult. What do I do when I get to the other end, especially if I have very heavy equipment with me?'

Like many other Paralympians, she also spoke of her belief that London 2012 was changing people's perceptions about disability. 'I do think the Paralympics have changed people's perception of disability and hopefully that will remove some of the barriers disabled people face.' Partly, she said, this should mean



Danielle Brown (picture Daily Telegraph)



David Smith (picture Daily Telegraph)



David Clarke (picture BBC)

more media coverage of disability and Paralympic sport, and more opportunities for disabled athletes. She paid tribute to Channel 4 for its coverage of the Paralympics, both before and during the games.

Another athlete who has spoken up for the DLA is David Smith. Speaking after losing the BC1 boccia final he said: 'It is very important that we have an opportunity to be the best we can be, to enable us to participate in society. We can then contribute. We don't want everything to be made easy. We just want to be able to have equal footing.'

Smith is studying aerospace engineering at Swansea University and hopes to work as an engineer. Asked if he was concerned about the 20% cuts to DLA spending, he said: 'There obviously can be improvements in terms of efficiencies, in terms of people who do not necessarily need the money. If they do it well and they analyse it properly and they are fair to everybody, then it should be OK.'

The captain of Britain's blind football team, David Clarke, said every one of Britain's Paralympic squad faced extra living costs because of their impairment. Withdrawing DLA 'would jeopardise the independence of disabled people.'

The Government's plans to replace DLA with a new personal independence payment (PIP) and cut spending by a fifth will see an estimated 500,000 working-age disabled people lose their DLA by 2015-16.

Clarke thought most Paralympians claimed DLA. 'The clue is in the title of DLA: it is "living". This is not about luxuries, it is about covering additional costs which do exist.'

He had no problem with there being a 'robust' assessment to ensure claimants do face extra costs, but a 'proved case' must be made if support was to be withdrawn. He hoped the London Paralympics would promote tolerance, but also stressed that disabled people were not the only ones living in poverty and facing social exclusion. 'There is some incredible poverty in this country that is unacceptable in a western economy.'

[edited from Disability News Service articles]



Virtual network connects health alliance members

A virtual network has been established to support the Health and Wellbeing Stakeholder Alliance. You can join by emailing rachel.morris@shropshire.gov.uk.

The Alliance is a mechanism to connect groups and organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors to the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board

and to each other. This is a chance to feed into the Board and to shape the development of the strategy.

The virtual network allows groups to access and share information and make comments at times that suit them, reducing the need for meetings. It also allows groups with similar interests to talk to each other more easily and work together to

influence and challenge decisions made by the board. Information from discussions on the network will regularly be reported back to the board, and vice versa. A number of familiarisation events will be held to show members how the site works. If you are interested in attending, please email rachel.morris@shropshire.gov.uk for more information. [From VCSA Newsletter 14 Sept]

Deadline extended for Health and Wellbeing consultation

It's not too late to share your views on priorities which have been set out to improve the health and wellbeing of the Shropshire population.

The deadline for the Health and

Wellbeing Strategy survey has been extended by two weeks as it was appreciated that some people may have experienced difficulties accessing the survey. The deadline is now Friday 12 October. To find out

more click on <http://shrop.net/2shropnet/ATO-ZOfMini-sites/S/ShropshirePartnership/ShadowHealthWellbeingBoard/ShropshiresHealthAndWellbeingStrategy>

Stats shows huge fault line in benefits testing

New government figures show that one in five decisions to find someone 'fit for work' made by the company that carries out the controversial disability benefit test is wrong.

The statistics, released by the Department for Work and Pensions, show that 'healthcare professionals' employed by ATOS Healthcare are far more likely to make a mistake when finding someone fit for work than when finding someone unfit.

Of the claimants ATOS found fit for work between October 2008 and last November, 20% of the decisions were overturned either by DWP staff or appeal tribunals. This means that, of the 771,100 people ATOS decided were 'fit for work', 150,500 were later found to be eligible for Employment and Support Allowance.

Of those, 13,800 were placed in the support group, for those disabled

people with the highest support needs, who are not expected to carry out any work-related activity at all.

But Atos has been much more accurate with its assessments when recommending that claimants should be placed in the work-related activity group – for those disabled people eligible for ESA but expected to move gradually towards work – with 97% of its decisions found to be accurate.

The figures suggest that ATOS is straining to find as many disabled people fit for work as possible.

Dame Anne Begg, the disabled Labour MP and chair of the Commons work and pensions select committee, said: 'This is evidence that whatever is happening, whether it is the contract [between ATOS and the DWP] that is at fault or indeed the way the [assessment] is being

interpreted by ATOS staff, they are getting it wrong in a very high proportion of cases. And to find out that almost 14,000 people were found fully fit for work when they should have been in the support group... that is a lot of people.'

ATOS has faced repeated protests over its performance in carrying out the contract to perform work capability assessments, first introduced in October 2008. Campaigners and some Labour politicians have criticised ATOS for finding many people with serious health conditions 'fit for work' and so ineligible for ESA. [From Disability News Service]

Cancers diagnosed in A&E

Almost a third of cancers in the over-70s are only diagnosed when a patient is admitted to hospital as an emergency. Brain and lung cancers were among the most likely to be found this way, says the British Journal of Cancer [From Salix Newsflash]



National newspapers 'add fuel to the hate crime fire'

Disabled people increasingly believe that coverage of welfare reform and other disability issues in national newspapers is helping to fuel hate crime, according to Disability Rights UK, which is calling on the press and the Government to change the language they use to describe disabled people.

Many of the 331 people who responded to a Disability Rights UK survey – most of whom were disabled people – blamed rising hostility towards them on 'government spin and distortion' and 'rhetoric from the Government about scroungers and benefit cheats.'

And nearly all of them (97%) thought reporting of disability should have been a key topic in the Leveson inquiry into press standards.

More than 90% linked the negative portrayal of disabled people in the press to rising hostility and hate crime, and an even higher percentage believed the national press were unfair in their portrayal of welfare and other disability equality issues.

More than 40% suggested the Government was responsible for rising press negativity and hostility towards disabled people.

One disabled respondent told how – after a headline about 'free' Motabil-

ity cars for disabled people – their car was vandalised. They have not displayed their blue parking badge since, and have been 'yelled at, sworn at and insulted' and had their crutches kicked.

Following articles calling disabled benefit claimants 'scroungers', another respondent said: 'I was followed by a group of youths in the street and called "a scrounging disabled bastard".'

One said that 'daily hounding in the press' had 'made me feel suicidal', another that coverage in *The Sun* had 'made me feel like I was an out-cast', while another said reports in the *Daily Mail*, *Sun* and *Daily Mirror* 'makes me feel scared to go out'.

Yet another who replied to the survey said coverage in the *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *The Sun* 'completely devalued and totally undermine my efforts to live as fully and independently as possible'.

The report, *Press Portrayal of Disabled People: A Rise in Hostility Fuelled by Austerity?*, calls on the Government's Office for Disability Issues to play a bigger part in shaping how the Department for Work and Pensions communicates with the media and the public.

Neil Coyle, Disability Rights director

of policy and campaigns, said: 'The report shows that disabled people believe the Government agenda has driven the hostile press coverage. It is hard to disagree that that is likely to be the case.'

'It is important that the Government improves how it communicates on some of the welfare changes, how it talks about disabled people.'

He said the ODI was the right body to lead that work because of its cross-government role.

A DWP spokeswoman denied the Government was responsible for rising press negativity and hostility towards disabled people, and pointed to Challenge it, Report it, Stop it - its new hate crime action plan, which 'includes challenging the attitudes that drive hate crime'.

She said: 'We are very conscious of the language we in government use, as it's clear that the benefit system itself has trapped many people in a spiral of welfare dependency.' She said a key area of the Government's forthcoming disability strategy would be 'promoting positive attitudes and behaviours towards disabled people to enable them to participate in community life and wider society, tackling discrimination and harassment wherever they occur.' [from Disability News Service]

Have you signed Pat's Petition?

'Pat's Petition' – as it has become known – is an e-petition requesting that the Department for Work and Pensions undertakes a Cumulative Impact Assessment of all the welfare reform changes on disabled people, their families and carers. It asks that the Government 'stop and review the cuts to benefits and services which are

falling disproportionately on disabled people, their carers and families.' The Government will consider debating any petition bearing 100,000 signatures. There are more than 41,000 on Pat's Petition, which doesn't close until 1 November. So what are you waiting for? It is at: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/20968>

Mencap help line

Because of increased demand for its advice lines, Mencap has merged its two helplines into one freephone service, called Mencap Direct, to provide information on services and guidance on personal budgets and support plans. The Mencap Direct number is 0808 808 1111



Frank Dobson MP has lent his support to a call for the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman to rule that care home records count as health records under the Access to Health Records Act. The MP has backed a complaint to the Ombudsman that a private care company is withholding copies of care home records from a family following a coroner's ruling that their mother had died of natural causes.

The family has found that the law is unclear when dealing with records of someone who has died and access to the records of privately run care homes are not covered by the Freedom of Information Act. They have appealed to the Care Quality Commission (CQC), the local council as commissioners of care at the residential home, the Information Commissioners Office, and the Department of Health, only to find that the legislation is ambiguous and the situation complicated.

The CQC told the family two conflicting things: 'Copies of health records which relate to deceased persons can be obtained under the Access to Health Records Act 1990' But later:

Contradiction and confusion over access to care home records

'Your request... should normally be covered by the Data Protection Act 1998 but as she is now deceased it does not apply as the definition of personal data only applies to living individuals.' In addition, '... the care provider (as a private company) does not meet the definition of a 'public authority' under Freedom of Information Act 2000 so would not be obligated to respond under this legislation.'

Shropshire Council has carried out an Adult Protection investigation into the care at Innage Grange care home in Bridgnorth, run by Coverage Care. Despite the requirement in the guidelines to share information with

all those involved in an inquiry, the council declined to share the care home records with the family on the basis that they belonged to the care home.

The Department of Health said that provided that it is the 'personal representative' of the deceased making the application they have 'an unqualified right of access to a deceased patient's record.'

The family also contacted the National Information Governance Board (NHS Connecting

For Health) which said care home records may fall outside the scope of the Access to Health Records Act but that 'there is a provision within the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to apply for information relating to deceased people from publicly owned organisations'. But private organisations are not subject to the Act.

The family believes it would help innumerable other families if the Ombudsman were to rule clearly that care home records count as health records under the Access to Health Records Act. For further information contact: Glyn Banks, bglyn@hotmail.co.uk

Cameron culls social care ministers in reshuffle

David Cameron's recent reshuffle of ministers saw a mass clearout of social care ministers, raising questions about a loss of expertise and continuity in policy for the sector.

Both ministers with responsibility for social care and social work - Paul Burstow (adult services) and Tim Loughton (children's services) - were sent to the backbenches, and Andrew Lansley, was removed from his post as Health Secretary to become Leader of the Commons. Children's minister Sarah Teather, who had responsibility for disabled children's issues, lost her job and Disability Minister Maria Miller departed from the DWP to become Culture Secretary.

New man at the top in Health is Chris Grayling, who is well known to the disability community. As Employment Minister he was responsible for the controversial programme of reassessing incapacity benefit recipients on their fitness to work.

[From Community Care 05.09.2012]

Comparing care providers

A new 'tool' allowing users to search and compare any Care Quality Commission registered home care, residential or nursing home provider is available online at NHS Choices. Users can search for local providers and link to CQC information about them. They can also leave online comments about a provider. Visit: <http://www.nhs.uk/carersdirect/guide/practical-support/pages/carehomes.aspx>

[From Health Information News, Sept]

NHS changes explained

Will you be affected by changes in the NHS? This link takes you to a briefing produced for the National Care Forum and Voluntary Organisations Disability Group which aim to increase awareness of the changes happening right across the NHS and local government. [http://www.nationalcareforum.org.uk/content/sp/What%27s%20changing%20in%20the%20NHS\(low%20res\).pdf](http://www.nationalcareforum.org.uk/content/sp/What%27s%20changing%20in%20the%20NHS(low%20res).pdf)



Top lawyer to address county carers

Shropshire Rural Community Council (RCC) is holding a special free event for carers at the Guildhall in Frankwell, Shrewsbury, from 10.30–1.00 on 30 November to mark Carers Rights Day.

The keynote speaker will be Luke Clements, Professor at Cardiff Law School, Director of the Centre for Health and Social Care Law, and a solicitor who represents disabled and older people and their carers, as well as acting as an adviser for many of the UK's leading charities.

An RCC spokeswoman said: 'He was involved in the drafting of the Bill's that became the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995 and the Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004.'

His widely recognised writing includes: *Community Care and the Law* (jointly written with Pauline Thompson), *Disabled Children: a legal handbook* (jointly written with Stephen Broach and Janet Read) and *Carers and their Rights* (Carers UK) 'At a time when the Government is

Free event marks Carers Rights Day

introducing policy on the future of adult social care, when there are changes to the way our health services are commissioned and the way our care services are delivered and when budgets for all our public services are under such extreme pressure it is vital carers know their rights,' she said.

To book contact the RCC Support Line on 01743 341995. Places are limited and must be booked in advance. The RCC's website is <http://www.shropshire-rcc.org.uk/carers>

Self-help booklet on mental health

The Mental Health Foundation, in collaboration with Welsh charity Hafal and Bipolar UK, has launched a self-management booklet called Take Control, to help people with serious mental health problems take more control of their lives.

The guide is a product of the highly successful self-management courses which ran throughout Wales. It supports participants in setting goals for themselves and using their care and

treatment plan to achieve them. It is based on the key eight life areas: accommodation, education and training, finance and money, medical and other forms of treatment, parenting or caring relationships, personal care and physical wellbeing, social, cultural or spiritual and work and occupation. Go to <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-news/news-archive/2012/184202> [From Health Information News, Sept]

'Disaster' warning as trainee nurse numbers plunge

Nurse training places have been slashed by more than 2,500 in three years, prompting fears of a "national disaster" in care. Despite education funding actually increasing over the last three financial years, nursing has been hit hard with 12.7% fewer university places being commissioned by the NHS.

The reduction means that between 2014 and 2015 there will be several thousand fewer nurses graduating than in previous years, which will be further affected by course dropouts.

The trend is in contrast to medical training, which has seen an increase in numbers. [From Salix Newsflash 21 Sept]

Doctors warn over 'huge' osteoporosis screening task

GPs have warned that the implementation of recent guidance on carrying out risk assessments for osteoporosis is a huge task and will be impossible to implement without a properly funded programme. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) recommends millions of patients should be risk assessed for fragility fractures, including all women aged 65 years and over and all men aged 75 years and over. [From Salix Newsflash 21 Sept]

A new way to fund-raise

There is a new fund-raising website called easyfundraising. When you shop with any of the 2000 well known retailers listed on it, a percentage of your spend goes to your good cause. It's free to register your charity and retailers include Amazon, M&S, Vodafone, eBay and Tesco. More than 40,000 good causes are already raising money with this site.

[From Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership newsletter]



You are not alone

Going to our site is all it takes to meet others who understand what you are going through:

www.shropshire.gov.uk/community.nsf

Shropshire Self Help Groups
Telephone
01691 656882

Sponsored by Shropshire Council,
Telford & Wrekin Council,
and the NHS



Alzheimer's risk 'higher in country'

People raised in the countryside are more likely to develop Alzheimer's than those born and brought up in cities, according to new research

Scientists at Edinburgh University looked at 51 studies on the subject involving 12,580 medical records from people around the world. The records used were a mix from the UK, other Western nations and less developed countries.

The researchers could not explain the reason but found that for Alzheimer's in particular,

though not dementia as a whole, there was a markedly higher number of cases in rural areas than in cities.

Dr Tom Russ, who led the study, said: "We don't really know the mechanism. It could be to do with access to health care, exposure to some unknown substance, socio-economic factors, or a number of other factors. We're currently looking into this question in more detail."

He stressed that it may not necessarily be the countryside itself that is harmful, but rather the

lower risk may be due to the benefits of living in cities.

It is hoped that studies such as this will enable researchers to discover clues to Alzheimer's earlier, allowing more treatment options.

This is particularly important as experts have predicted the number of sufferers in the UK will double in the next four decades because of our aging population. Around 820,000 people in this country are currently affected.

[From Yahoo Lifestyle News 20.09.2012]

Looking after your walking stick

SDN member Martin Maley continues his series of 10 top tips on mobility for the disabled. Martin runs Mobility Homecare, which is based in Shrewsbury Market but covers the whole county.

Folding Walking Sticks

If the elastic in your folding walking stick is loose after being folded for a prolonged period, leave the stick in a warm room for half an hour so that the elastic can contract. Never use your stick unless the elastic is tight and the sections are connected securely.

As **adjustable height sticks** wear they may start to make a tapping sound. Remove the main section, undoing the round collar, then press in the spring adjustment button. Once removed, wrap a couple of turns of insulation tape above and below the spring

button. Reassemble and tighten the round collar before testing.

Ferrules

As ferrules wear they are more likely to slip, so check them weekly. If you need a replacement check the diameter required using a ruler, but in most cases:

- 19mm fits metal sticks
- 22mm fits crutches and some wooden walking sticks
- 25 mm fits walking frames and some larger wooden walking sticks

If you can, turn your ferrules 90 degrees every week or so - they will wear more evenly and last longer.

Always make sure there is a metal washer in the bottom of any ferrules purchased. This spreads the weight and also stops metal sticks punching straight through.

Better info for cancer patients

The national cancer patient experience survey for 2011/12 compares performance with the previous 2010 survey, and on most questions scores have improved, with the most significant increases on information and communication issues.

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/08/cancer-experience-survey> [From Health Information News, Sept]

End-of-life care help

The National Council for Palliative Care has launched a toolkit to empower local people to push for the right end-of-life care services following reform of the health and social care system. 'What about end of life care?' is designed to help people understand the new health and care structures and to develop the relationships required to secure high quality end of life care. <http://www.ncpc.org.uk/news/new-toolkit-influence-new-local-decision-makers> [From Health Information News, Sept]

Health check targets missed

The magazine *GP* has published research showing that 'PCTs are missing health check targets'. Millions of patients are not getting vital checks for cardiovascular disease and diabetes as PCTs fail to hit government targets, the magazine says. According to returns from 118 trusts, responding to a Freedom of Information Act request, 64% of PCTs did not provide enough NHS health checks in 2011/12. A total of 21% admitted they will fail mandatory Department of Health targets for 2012/13 despite being given three years to prepare. [From Health Information News, Sept]



Government's latest PIP presentation: Is it all that it seems to be?

The Department for Work and Pensions has published a presentation and guide about Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for support organisations and advisers. It can be accessed at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/disability/personal-independence-payment/information-for-advisers/>

YV footnote: Interestingly, the presentation is unbranded and the DWP is enthusiastic that organisations should use it in their own presentations. This has to raise the question of whether it is just Government spin hidden in the guise of publicly useful information. We'd love to know, so if any reader would like to write a review the editor will reward you with a packet of Smarties!

Groups urged to say how they would use new hubs

Shropshire's first Community Hub is currently being set up in Oswestry Library, with the next step being a hub in Shrewsbury Guildhall. Hubs are part of a wider programme called the Capital & Assets Pathfinder Programme which is currently being looked at by the Shropshire Estates Partnership, a group of public and voluntary bodies including the police, MOD, Shropshire Council, VCS Assembly, fire services and others.

They are looking at the rationalisation of public assets with the aim of providing more suitable services in locations that users prefer that will also help maximise public service efficiencies.

Hubs enable multiple agencies to be on hand in the same building. They also provide decent internet access for those who are struggling with applications and

they are being created in facilities that have good public transport links. The Roy Fletcher building in Shrewsbury is an example of a very well run hub that has been in existence for several years.

Steph Jackson, Head of Customer Care & Involvement at Shropshire Council, wants to know what role voluntary sector partners would like to have within the hub. This can be as much as a permanent presence, with potential back-office space in the Guildhall building, or as little as an hour slot once a week/month for appointments or clinics.

The onus is on interested organisations to come up with options that suit them and their clients and that will fit in with the hub principles of partnership and collaboration. Proposals should be emailed to Mary.Cobbett@shropshire.gov.uk

Numbers surge expected as welfare changes loom

Shropshire Council is expecting a lot more visitors to its customer service points throughout the county, but in particular to the Guildhall in Shrewsbury as a result of the new Welfare Reform Act which will bring about the biggest changes to

the welfare system for over 60 years.

The council is preparing for a rush from those who require help in completing applications or during the changeover period. The new welfare system will also see tenants get direct

payment; the tenants must then use this money to pay their landlords.

Shropshire Council again anticipates difficulties during the change period and recognises that tenants' will increasingly use the Guildhall.

Trust me, I'm a doctor...

GPs are the most trusted providers of public health information, according to a survey on behalf of Open Road, an independent communications consultancy. The data collected, which came from an online survey of 4,079 people, showed that the level of trust in GPs contrasted significantly with a general scepticism towards information offered by private companies and the media, both locally and nationally.

The next most trusted information source was the Department of Health website. Around half of participants said they would trust information that came from a health charity, where as less than 10% would actually use it.

Legal advice

A scheme has been created to provide free legal advice. Charities and social enterprises can access advice from more than 300 qualified legal teams around the world through TrustLaw Connect. To request support, become a TrustLaw Connect member (for free) and then submit your request online. Your organisation must be registered and have operated for at least three years. See more at <http://www.trust.org/trust-law/connect/> [From Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership Newsletter Issue 24]

Grassroots grants for county volunteer-led groups

Grants of between £250 and £5000 are available to Shropshire community groups with an average income of less than £30,000 a year through the Shropshire Grassroots Fund. It prioritises smaller, volunteer-led groups which can demonstrate the impact of their project on the community. Groups must have been in existence for at least 12 months and be able to demonstrate a community need.

Contact 01743 342171 or visit Shropshire RCC at www.shropshire-rcc.org.uk



What's going on?

Just some of the dates of interest coming up

Winter advice

An event aimed at giving people advice on energy saving, switching suppliers, and keeping warm and well during the winter months will be held twice in South Shropshire - on 24 October at Shropshire Housing Association (Ley Gardens, Lawley Close, Church Stretton) and on 13 November at Craven Arms Patients Group (at the Community Centre). Various groups represented at the event will advise on healthy living, cooking and eating, keeping warm and well, energy saving, and other important topics. The Church Stretton event will run from 10-3 and that in Craven Arms from 10-2.

Mental health role explained

Shropshire Your Way is part of Together, a national charity working alongside people with mental health issues and trying to lead fulfilling and independent lives. A reception to explain the work of Shropshire Your Way will be held on Monday 15 October from 3 – 5.30 at the Albrighton Hall Hotel, Ellesmere Road, Shrewsbury. RSVP to Tyrone Atkins at tyrone-atkins@together-uk.org. The website is www.together-uk.org

Volunteers and the law

A breakfast briefing on 'volunteers and the law' will be held twice this month, first at the Lord Hill Hotel in Shrewsbury on Monday 15 October from 8.30-10.30, and then on Tuesday 16 October at Wem Town Hall, again from 8.30-10.30. The cost is £10. It offers an overview of legal issues which will concern anyone who works with volunteers. Contact Lorraine Smart at the Community Council on 01743 237880 or at lorraine.smart@shropshire-rcc.org.uk

[From Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership Newsletter Issue 24]

Roles and responsibilities of charity trustees

A course exploring the roles and responsibilities of charity trustees - aimed at those new to the role or as a refresher for those who have served for some time - will be held at the Shropshire RCC Training Suite, Shrewsbury (SY2 6LG) on Monday 15 October from 5.50-8.30. The cost for voluntary and community organisations is £25 and for others £50.

Contact Lorraine Smart at the Community Council on 01743 237880 or at lorraine.smart@shropshire-rcc.org.uk

[From Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership Newsletter Issue 24]

Dyslexia day

Eli Wilkinson who is Telford based and works as the Dyslexic Dyslexia Consultant (DDC), holds information days periodically. The next one is on 20 October and will be at Claremont Baptist Church in central Shrewsbury from 10.00 to 3.00. As it

Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan

Much Wenlock is developing a Neighbourhood Plan, which will guide development until 2020. People with disabilities, like everyone else, will be affected by the Neighbourhood Plan and should be involved in its development. The steering group is asking for opinions, questions and concerns. It is to hold meetings in the Priory Hall on: 3 October, 6-8; 6 October 10 am-noon; 18 October 6-8; & 25 October 6-8. There will also be a meeting at the Edge Arts Centre, William Brookes School, on 27 October from 10 am-noon which



will include roundtable discussions. The steering group can be contacted c/o Much Wenlock Town Council, Corn Exchange, High Street, Much Wenlock, TF13 6AE. Or email mail@wenlockplan.org

is also Dyslexia Awareness Week at the end of October, Shropshire Dyslexia will join Eli and have an information stand.

Telford carers roundup

Telford Carers Forum has a lot going on. On 26 October there will be a Hobby Day for Carers at the Park Lane Centre, Woodside, where people with hobbies can share their interests and perhaps inspire someone who is looking for a hobby. A member said: 'We want carers to get involved and tell other carers about what they do, to give themselves a break. We will have tables available for displays and also facilities for practical sessions. So don't be shy, come and tell others about your interests. If you would like to book a table or get more details, phone Janice on 01952 262060.'

A number of pamper days are planned: On 2 and 16 October and on 6 November, 9.30-12.30 at Haybridge Hall, Hadley, booking essential, phone 01952 240209; on 16th October

There will be a carers walk starting at 10:30 from Leegomery Community Centre on 11 October; a coffee morning in Newport Library on 19 November from 10.30-noon; and an event called "Learning Together - Ways to Wellbeing" on 19 October from 10-2 at the Greenwood Centre, Coalbrookdale, phone 01743 237888 for more details

YV services directory: tell people what you have to offer

This is a 'bulletin board' of services to the disability community. Any service that is genuinely for the benefit of people with disabilities is welcome to up to 40 words free. If you have a logo or artwork we will try to include it, but can't promise. Email your text to the editor at newsletter@shropshire-disability.net or write to him: Peter Staples, 8 Gorse Lane, Bayston Hill, Shrewsbury, SY3 0JJ

Sign as you speak: 1Starfish - to become a better communicator learn how to sign as you speak. Total Communication Training Courses for private, public and voluntary sectors. Also Makaton

courses. Contact Mandy at www.1starfish.co.uk or 01743 891885 or 07939 600126

Used medical and mobility equipment: The British Red Cross sometimes has donated medical and mobility equipment for sale for a reasonable donation. At present we have two of the three-wheel rollators and one four-wheel rollator with a seat available. We also have two wheelchairs and various other small items. Call Christine Hunt on 01743 280073 for further information. The donations received help maintain the medical loan department, which is an invaluable service offered by the Red Cross.

PAGE X

Names and numbers that might help

If your organisation or cause is not listed here please let us know. Email the editor at 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

Telford & Wrekin Adult Social Care Directory - services available and how to access them
http://www.telford.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.aspx?fileID=116&categoryID=100010

A4U Disability Advice Centre 01743 251520; email advice@a4u.org.uk

Autonomy - self-help and social for Aspergers in Shropshire, Telford and Borders - autonomyshropshire@yahoo.co.uk

Carers Direct 0808 802 0202
www.nhs.uk/carersdirect/Pages/CarersDirectHome.aspx

Community Council of Shropshire www.shropshire-ccc.org.uk/
 4 The Creative Quarter, Shrewsbury Business Park, Shrewsbury, SY2 6LG
 01743 360641 fax: 01743 342179

Community Directory for Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin
<http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/community.nsf>

Disability Arts in Shropshire: 01743 272939/271676; www.dasharts.org/

Disability Directory – Information, aids and mobility services
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

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

Disabled and Wheelchair Athletics Directory
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/

Landau - Supported employment services for people with disabilities, 5 Landau Court, Tan Bank, Wellington. TF1 1HE, 01952 245 015,
admin@landau.co.uk

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

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

Motor Neurone Disease Association - MND Connect 08457 62 62 62
mndconnect@mndassociation.org

Multiple Sclerosis Society - 01952 250038; www.mssociety.org.uk/telford

NHS Choices - www.nhs.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx

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

Parent Partnership Service - www.parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.org.uk/#/useful-links/4551168089

Parent & Carer Council Shropshire

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
 Bridgnorth Buddies (Parent-led, Special Needs) 07968 544182 or 07790 780631; email Buddies20@yahoo.co.uk
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
 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
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
 Deaf Children's Society 01952 770019; email: nat4sdc@aol.com
www.ndcs.org.uk
 Down's Syndrome 01743 233802, 01948 880110 or 01588 640319
www.dsa-shropshire.org.uk
 Dyslexia Association 01743 231205; 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
 SPECTRUM (Autistic Support group) email: netgriffiths@fsmail.net
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 or 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

PODS (independent forum in Telford for families of children with a disability or additional need). Jayne Stevens 0777 534 2092 or 07824 631 297; info@podstelford.org; www.podstelford.org

Primary Care Trust www.shropshire.nhs.uk/Get-Involved/

Scope (Cerebral Palsy) - 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

Shrewsbury Hard of Hearing Club - URC Church Hall, Coleham Head, Shrewsbury, SY3 7BJ; Contact Erica Horner 01743 873540, ericahorner2@googlemail.com

Shropshire LINK - EarlyWorld House, Darwin Court, Oxon Business Park Shrewsbury, SY3 5AL; 01743 343223; www.shropshirelink.org.uk; info@shropshirelink.org.uk

Shropshire MIND - www.shropshiremind.org
 Observer House, Holywell St, Shrewsbury, SY2 6BL 01743 368647

Shropshire Peer Counselling and Advocacy Service
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 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

Voluntary Association for the Blind (linked to RNIB)

Send your details and we'll find space for them on Page XI