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**IT'S MAGIC!! SDN's BIG NIGHT
OUT - P4 FOR DETAILS**



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COUNTING DOWN TO CHANGE!

Welfare experts
spell out what the
future may hold

It is only a matter of weeks until the Government's welfare reforms start to kick in. Before long PIP, Universal Credit and much else will be more than things we just read about in the papers. They will be changing our lives, our incomes, and possibly even the way we see ourselves.

In recognition of the seriousness of the issues, SDN joined forces with the Community Legal Advice Service Partnership, the Pan Disability Forum and the VCS Assembly to bring together four experts to explain and answer questions on key aspects of the new welfare system.

'Welfare Reform: The Big Debate' took place at Shrewsbury Town Football Club on January 17, with speakers from Citizens Advice Shropshire, the Department of Work and Pensions, Job Centre Plus, and Shropshire Council.

Rather than each taking a turn to speak formally to a large room full of people, the audience was divided into four and the speakers moved from group to group. That maximised



Damian Carter of Shropshire Council (above right) and one of the audience groups, with a BBC Radio Shropshire reporter recording the lively discussion. At left, Colin Smith of the DWP makes a point about PIP. The other two speakers were Kairen Francis of Job Centre Plus and Jackie Jeffrey of Citizens Advice Shropshire.



Audience member Evelyn Suszko spoke for many when she said to one speaker: 'It needs to be simplified. People need to be able to see on a single piece of paper what they get now and what they will get in the future.'

The topics were

- Supporting People
- Personal Independent Payment (PIP)
- Universal Credit
- Relacement schemes for Housing and Council Tax benefits

opportunities for comments, questions and frank discussion. There was plenty of the latter!

Sonia Roberts, chair of SDN and of the VCSA, called the event a great success and praised the four speakers for their input. 'They all brought a great depth of knowledge in their subjects and audience members were able to tackle them on important but little understood topics,' she said. 'We hoped it would be an informative and educational event and that's how it turned out. This is the first of many dialogues we are having across Shropshire. We have a meeting on 13 March for SDN members to hear the latest update and will continue to publish information on our website and newsletter.'



ILF clients concerned over switch to councils

Councils are to gain control of the Independent Living Fund's budget in England after the abolition of the Social Care Agency in 2015 - with no guarantees that disabled clients will have their funding maintained.

The ILF provides cash payments to almost 20,000 disabled people. Its clients tend to have large weekly care packages.

A funding crisis led the ILF to close to new applications in June 2010 and later that year the Department for Work and Pensions said it would be abolished in 2015. The DWP will protect existing care packages until April 2015 but not beyond.

"We are particularly concerned that any reallocation of ILF funding to local authorities could lead to disabled people not receiving the same level of support," said Neil Coyle, director of policy at Disability Rights UK.

He also raised concerns about how the ILF budget in England would be distributed to councils, given that take-up is much higher in some areas than others.

Sue Bott, chief executive of the National Centre for Independent Living, has raised concerns about transfer of ILF cash to councils.

'It really makes a difference to local authority budgets how many people with high support needs they have in their area,' she says. 'That can skew budgets and it's not reflected in the funding that goes to local authorities.'

'People with high support needs should either continue to be funded from a national pot, or the funding that goes to local authorities should reflect the real number of people in that situation.'

'We would be very concerned if the ILF just shuts up shop and all current funding is distributed to local authorities.'

She fears a repeat of the closure of the original ILF in 1993. Two new funds were subsequently created, merging in 2007 into groups one and two.

'Money was distributed (in 1993) to compensate local authorities who were expected to make a contribution, but it wasn't ring-fenced and the vast majority did not go to disabled people,' she said.

[From Community Care, 12.2012]

Justifying the abolition of the ILF, the DWP said running a parallel social care fund to local authorities has led to duplication of functions, unnecessary bureaucracy and a lack of integration of care around the service user.

The DWP rejected ring-fencing the budget, on the basis that this would prevent councils using their resources flexibly to meet local needs. Councils strongly opposed ring-fencing in their responses to the consultation.

ent ways by the transition. More than 80%, who became eligible after 1993, already receive council funding as a condition of their ILF payments and have their needs jointly reviewed. They may be eligible for council funding for their whole care package.

However, some 3,000 ILF users (group one) became eligible between 1988 and 1992 when council funding was not a condition of support.

Almost half are not recorded as receiving a local authority contribution to their care package.

The DWP says this group will find the transition to council funding 'particularly challenging' and the transition review will be 'particularly important'.

The DWP is to produce a code of practice on how councils should support ILF clients during the transition process. Many councils want the DWP to fund the reviews

By making space available for paid advertising SDN hopes to offset the costs of the printed version of YourVoice, which is proving a great asset to readers who do not use computers.

This is a basic advertisement space - 98mm by 66mm. It costs £10 per issue, and advertisers get a free design and copywriting service. Their product or service will be seen both by our print and online readerships. It's a bargain! Interested?

ILF users have their care needs reviewed every two years. From now onwards these will be conducted as 'transfer reviews' but ILF funding will be unchanged until 2015.

Users will be affected in differ-



This is an extract from an article by Annalisa D'Innella. It was 20 years ago when she last hit a tennis ball. She says that to do it again made her feel superhuman...

'I'm at the National Tennis Centre holding a child's short-handled tennis racket and crouching like Venus Williams. Across the court my opponent, Sid, is limbering up to serve. Panting rather too loudly in the corner, his guide dog Dotty is in danger of putting me off my game. I'm 35 and I haven't played tennis in 20 years. The reason for this is that I have retinitis pigmentosa, a degenerative eye condition that can result in extreme tunnel vision. My patch of sight (four degrees) is a tiny fraction of the 160-degree field enjoyed by most people. Sid is completely blind.

When Lord Coe made his speech at the Paralympic closing ceremony last year, he said the Games had 'lifted the cloud of limitation'. I was so taken with this that I typed three words into Google: 'Blind sports London'. I wasn't alone. During the 11 days of the Paralympics, the Parasport website (www.parasport.org.uk) received 37,500 visitors, 25 times more than over the same period the previous year.

So now here I am, across the net from a blind man who is shouting at me. It's protocol in sound ball (tennis for the visually impaired) to shout at your opponent. You have to holler 'ready?' before you serve. The ball jingles noisily as soon as he hits it, because this is not a standard tennis ball. It's bigger, softer and contains ball bearings. It can bounce three times before a totally blind person hits it or twice for someone partially sighted.

We crash about the court, launching ourselves to the ground and celebrating unnecessarily with every point. He's great fun to watch.



Annalisa D'Innella takes a master class in blind tennis from blind tennis coach Odette Battarel of Metro Blind Sports at the National Tennis Centre (Picture: Gretel Ensignia)

Playing a real blinder!

Lack of sight and
tennis really do mix

As I serve, he stands stock-still, hyper alert. Not a muscle moves until that first, tell-tale bounce. Then he is propelled into action, like Basil Fawlty trying to swat a fly.

He laughs at me too – particularly at my girly screams as I inadvertently career into walls, nets and nearby players. But we do more than just mock one another here at Soundball London, which is part of a charity called Metro Blind Sports (they also do cricket, although I have yet to discover quite how).

On the court next to us are Amanda and Odette. Odette is reigning national women's sound ball champion. She has no central vision, only peripheral. Amanda is totally blind on her left side. Odette hits all the balls to Amanda's left side. Amanda is hitting everything to Odette's centre. These ladies are fierce. Amanda and Odette have been playing this game for five years and are responsible for bringing it to London...

'Isn't it so liberating to be able to play without your eyes?' says Odette as we stop for a break. 'Isn't it great not having to apologise for yourself the whole time?' I am too out of breath to reply. I lie down on the floor, hoping she won't see me but she forces me back up. After winning our game, Sid says he lost his sight late in life from diabetes. He tells me about blind

swimming. 'It's like Wacky Races,' he says. 'Everyone crashes into each other but it's good fun. Wanna come?'

The session ends, a snoring Dotty is woken and several white canes are unfurled as players make their way out into the night.

For more information about retinitis pigmentos visit www.rpfightingblindness.org.uk or for more about sport for the disabled try <http://www.disabled-world.com/> This is not

There are some 11 million disabled people in the UK, but fewer than two in ten take part in sport. The English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) was established in 1998. It works closely with a number of key partners to improve and increase the opportunities offered, ensuring disabled people have a memorable experience of sport and

physical activity. Partners include the National Disability Sport Organisations and National Governing Bodies of Sport. It wants sport and physical activity to be a meaningful experience, whatever the individual's level of choice. The website for the English Federation of Disability Sport is <http://www.efds.co.uk/>

a recommendation for the website because some of its content is rather whacky, but it does include stories about people with disabilities who have overcome awesome challenges not just to compete but to win.



Fears grow that poverty looms for more disabled

This information is from Disability Rights UK, which is run and controlled by disabled people, and campaigns for a society where all those with lived experience of disability are treated as full citizens. A sequel next month will compare benefits with public sector salaries.

A third of disabled people live in poverty in the UK and one of the objectives of Disability Rights UK is to break the link between disability and poverty. However, it says: 'We are fearful that the Welfare Benefits Up-rating Bill will undermine this aim and impoverish thousands more disabled people.'

The Government has suggested that all disabled people are protected from the lower 1% increase in benefits. This is not the case.

'We welcome DLA being up-rated at a higher rate than the 1% standard proposal for other benefits. We also welcome that some disabled people in the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Support Group – for disabled people assessed as being unable to undertake any work related activity – will also be afforded some protection.

'However, the Support Group component of ESA payments is worth just £34.05. Most of the payment that disabled people in the Support Group receive is the Basic Allowance component of £71 which will be up-rated at 1% under Government proposals. This penalises disabled people even in the Support Group with a 1.4% up-rating overall (i.e. even the disabled people the Government suggests are protected will experience a 1% up-rating on almost 70% of their out-of-work support).'

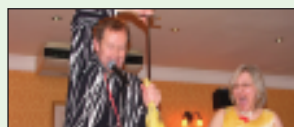
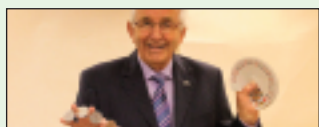
Assessments often leave disabled poorer

The Government has also acknowledged that all ESA recipients are disabled people. To access ESA requires a rigid 'Work Capability Assessment' process which often fails to identify the impact an impairment or health condition has and leaves disabled people with a lower payment and support package provided through Jobseeker's Allowance.

Most people receiving ESA are in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG). This group includes people with cancer, learning disabilities and progressive conditions for example. The Welfare Benefits Up-rating Bill proposes this large group of disabled people receive just 1% more. We hope you will not support this measure!

Some 991,000 people were receiving ESA in 2012 and all would feel the impact of the 1% up-rating. Most would lose the equivalent of a loaf of bread and a pint of milk per week (£87.65 per year). This represents a significant proportion of disposable income to an already impoverished and disadvantaged group of UK citizens.

An Evening of Magic, Music, Comedy and Impersonation with Paul & Geoff Ray



FRIDAY 15 MARCH 2013 at 7.30 pm

BAYSTON HILL MEMORIAL HALL
Lyth Hill Road
Bayston Hill
Shrewsbury

Bring your own drinks, we will provide nibbles, tea and coffee.

Why not join us for a great evening of fun & laughter!

TICKETS £7.00 each - call Ruby 01743 340832
(also from Magic Snips 58 Ennerdale Road
Shrewsbury and various outlets in Bayston Hill)

Cheques should be made payable to
Shropshire Disability Network
Registered Charity Number 1148256

All proceeds for the work of
Shropshire Disability Network



A powerful collective voice for disabled people in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, run totally by volunteers



Sale success will help fund YourVoice in print

The SDN table at a sale organised by Allcare for Hope House proved very worthwhile, and after the dust had settled and the pennies were counted we banked some £65.

So thank you very much Allcare, a great friend in the business community. Not only that, we had some nice gifts left over, including wine glasses and posh chocs, which went on sale at our quarterly meeting in December and helped offset the hire costs.

Ruby Hartshorn said: 'It was great to go to pastures new as we met a lot of people and promoted the work of SDN while raising funds for two worthy causes. There was a lot going on, such as the bran tub, sweet stalls, homemade crafts, cake stalls,

toy stalls, refreshment area, face painters, make-up stall, etc, were kept very busy with a steady flow of buyers from noon to 4 pm. They had a fantastic raffle with prizes donated by Dobbies, Marks & Spencer, and Cake Creators, to name just a few. Hope House is better off by well over £1200 as a result of this event.

'We are really pleased at raising £65 and very happy that Allcare Shropshire Ltd invited us to have a table. Some of this money will be used for the printed edition of YourVoice. We need to raise about £100 a month for this, which enables us to reach our



Left, Liz and Ruby staff the SDN stand, and above Allcare Manager Wendy Beesley with her granddaughter Faith.

members who have no IT access or who for some reason cannot use a computer. This is a very important part of SDN's outreach work.

'Mobile phone users can support this work by donating to us easily and simply. All you have to do is text SHDN12 £1 to 70070. The text is free so your £1 is fully donated. You can even Gift Aid your donation.'

Branch set to bloom!

Local MS to hold major fund-raiser at gardens

The Shrewsbury and District Multiple Sclerosis branch will be holding its biggest fundraising event of the year on Sunday 24 February – an open garden day at The Patch, Acton Pigott, near Acton Burnell, by kind permission of Mrs Margaret Owen MBE.

Called 'Snowdrops & Hellebores' the open day will include much else as well, such as winter flowering shrubs, cyclamen, and small narcissi.

It will run from 11.00 am to 3.00 pm, with hot soup lunches on sale, along with tea, coffee and cakes. Entrance is £3 per person, but the MS branch advises that the venue is not suitable for wheelchairs.

Strong support

The same MS branch has had some

strong support lately. Staff at Dechra Veterinary Products raised a very generous amount by raffling prizes donated by their suppliers – and Dechra then matched the amount raised. Shawbury Young Farmers Club raised funds by selling bagged manure locally and baking and selling cakes.



Members urged to take part in major MS survey

In November, the Multiple Sclerosis Society launched a major survey to help understand how well the UK is meeting the health and social needs of people with MS.

All those with MS who are aged

more than 18 should by now have received a questionnaire.

The results of this survey, which will be announced during the 2013 MS Week, will provide the information essential to campaign for change, and help to develop services which better meet the needs of people with MS.

This information will be analysed both nationally and locally, with a view to understanding 'postcode lottery' issues.

Shrewsbury branch says the questionnaire should only take 15-20 minutes to complete.

Anyone with questions regarding the questionnaire or the survey in general can contact the research team on 020 8438 0822 or email research@mssociety.org.uk



Find *your* audience at our meetings!

The SDN quarterly meetings always provide opportunities for businesses and charities to 'show their wares', and are an ideal marketing and information opportunity for reaching potential customers.

Previous exhibitors have found themselves with an attentive audience for at least two hours and many opportunities to speak to potential customers one-to-one during breaks in the programme.

As well as being able to speak to members personally on the day, many exhibitors have gained extra publicity through mentions and photographs in meeting reports on the SDN website and in YourVoice.

The next quarterly meeting will be held on 13 March in Shrewsbury and there is still time to book a table. The cost is just £25, with a £5 non-returnable deposit required when the booking is made. Contact Ruby on 01743 340832

SDN chairwoman Sonia Roberts with the three guest speakers at Meeting Point House. In front is Margaret Williams of Wellington Inner Wheel, who spoke about Limb India. Behind her (right) is Grania Miller of Shropshire Council who explained much about Blue Badges, and Sergeant David Braid of West Mercia Constabulary whose work is central to the police response to hate crime.



Three speakers had the audience spellbound at SDN's quarterly meeting in December, held at Meeting Point House in Telford. Here and on the next page we can only give the briefest summaries of what they said - next time come along and listen to speakers first hand and join in the discussions that follow!

The facts of hate

Police Sergeant David Braid gave a detailed analysis of hate crime as it affects Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. He spoke particularly about hate crime against people with disabilities but pointed out that there were several forms of hate crime, the most common of which was racial.

Between April and October in the year 2012-13 a total of 11 disability hate crimes were reported in Shropshire and eight in Telford & Wrekin. These were out of hate crime totals of 94 and 76 respectively. The figure for Shropshire was slightly higher than the previous year, but for T&W it was lower. The total of all reported hate crimes and incidents in the West Mercia area for that period was 623.

Sgt Braid said the key word in defining hate crime was 'differences'. It was any criminal offence motivated by prejudice or hatred of someone simply because they were different. It could take several forms, including verbal abuse, threats such as offensive letters or abusive phone calls, bullying at school or work, intimidation by

gangs, malicious complaints, and physical attacks against a person or their property. Three Acts of Parliament related to different forms of hate crime – the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Criminal Justice Act 2003, and the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2007.

He said several police forces have joined together to provide a single self-reporting and information pack that allows people to report hate crime directly and simply. The self-reporting system, True Vision, 'allows the victim, witness, parent, carer or any concerned person to report to the police,' he said. 'They can give us as little or as much personal information as they wish.' But the more information the police have, the more fully they can investigate a complaint and the better support they can offer.

People who don't want to report an incident to the police can instead report it to local agencies such as Citizens Advice or housing agencies which will report it for them and help them with advice and support. There is a freephone number for "Stop Hate UK" – 0800 138 1625

Council officer explains how the Blue Badge rules work

Controversy blew up in Shrewsbury last Remembrance Sunday when a disabled ex-serviceman was given a parking ticket for displaying his Blue Badge incorrectly on his dashboard. He was attending a memorial service at the time.



Above, the new style of Blue Badge, which members could see at the SDN meeting

Shropshire Council quickly cancelled the penalty and just as quickly got in touch with SDN to ask if Environment Forces Management Officer, Grania Miller, could come along and talk to members.

So Grania was one of our guest speakers in December, and she had some very interesting things to say about Blue Badges. For instance, although the scheme is national, local authorities can apply their own understanding of the rules. As a result, for example, disabled drivers can park in loading bays in Shropshire but not in Telford.

A good Q&A followed with many people recounting their own experiences or asking questions. A large proportion of parking tickets issued to disabled drivers are in fact cancelled by Shropshire Council, said Grania. It all depended on circumstances. If drivers felt they had been unfairly treated they should get in touch. The council wanted to make parking as simple and practical as possible for the disabled but it had to work within the rules.



SDN quarterly meeting, continued from previous page

Margaret Williams, a member of Wellington Inner Wheel Club, explained that she had "been privileged to be involved to a small degree through Rotary and Inner Wheel with a society in India that aims to help the poorest disabled members of their country. Despite India having many millionaires there are still millions of disadvantaged people."

She showed a short video by a non-governmental, voluntary, non-religious, non-sectarian, non-political society called BMVSS that helps the disabled, especially the poor disabled. Based in Jaipur it was started in 1975.

"In 1985 a local Wellington Rotarian, the late Gerry Powell, was instrumental in helping to set up the Rotary Jaipur Limb Project (RJLP)," said Margaret. "This became a registered UK Charity in 1995. In the 27 years of its existence it is estimated that well over half a million amputees, polio victims and many others have been helped in various ways. Rotary and Inner Wheel Clubs raise funds in support of the charity and many of the projects have connections with BMVSS."

In January 2010 Margaret was part of a

'I watched someone stand for the first time ... thanks to a prosthetic limb that had taken a few hours to make'

group that visited India and saw several Limb Centres. 'One highlight was time spent at the 13th annual Limb Camp organised and funded by a local Rotary Club with the support of RJLP. BMVSS technicians were there to make what-

ever was needed. During the week just under 2000 patients benefited to the tune of 433 limbs, 1096 callipers, 400 crutches and 20 wheelchairs.

'I was able to watch the creation of a prosthetic leg – cost around £30 – from start to finish. To actually watch someone stand for the first time in their lives because of a prosthetic limb that has taken a matter of a few hours to produce is a very humbling experience.

"At the Limb Camp free food and accommodation, when necessary, is provided for the beneficiaries and their attendants. In some cases the whole family arrive with the patient.

'A very basic kitchen provided 400-500 breakfasts, 1500 lunches and 1500 dinners each day using the best quality ingredients. The ladies in our group helped serve the lunch one day – quite an experience.

"Towards the end of my visit to India we visited a permanent limb centre in Dhanbad in the north east. It is a coal mining area as was Wellington many years ago. The Centre there is named after Gerry Powell.'

Disabled hit out at repeated failures of Ludlow bus service

Claims of unreliability on Ludlow bus services has brought a flood of complaints from disabled people of all ages in the town.

The chair of South Shropshire Access Group, Vivienne Parry, said the problem stems from the number of bus breakdowns without any adequate backup available.

"Replacement services are often lacking in facilities for the disabled," she said. 'In one recent incident a youth was left to wait for an hour only to find out when the bus did turn up that the ramp to get him on board was jammed, meaning that the bus had to go back to the depot.

'Elderly people with knee injuries find

it hard to get onto the buses. But it is not only people with disabilities – parents with prams are also being denied the use of a regular and reliable bus service.'

Vivienne Parry said that appropriate low-floor buses are needed to meet the needs of passengers. 'We as the Access Group want to see the standard of service improved and shorter waiting times,' she said.

ABOUT YOU: Please tell us about your experiences with buses and trains, wherever you live in Shropshire or Telford & Wrekin. These may be good experiences as well as bad! You can email to newsletter@shropshire-disability.net or write to the Editor of YourVoice, c/o 8 Gorse Lane,

Bayston Hill, Shrewsbury, SY3 0JJ.

Access Group outings

Vivienne Parry said that this year South Shropshire Access Group would like to enable all members to enjoy outings to different parts of the county, including visits to country pubs with reasonable prices and good food.

"Thanks to the Rotary bus for getting us there last year with lots of help at the other end," she said. "This idea was new last year but has given members of the group a chance to get to know one another more and also to talk about one another's disabilities. Watch this space, we have a new disabled book coming out all about Ludlow."



Huge increase in number of carers across county

Census data recently released by the Government shows that the number of carers increased from 5.2 million to 5.8 million in England and Wales between 2001 and 2011. Shropshire has seen a staggering increase of 14%, with over 34,260 people now caring.

This is not an estimate but a real figure based on the 2011 census returns. More than 33% of that total now spend over 20 hours a week caring, and over 35% dedicate over 50 hours a week to their caring role.

The greatest rise nationally has been among those providing over 20 hours of care - the point at which

caring starts to impact significantly on the health and wellbeing of the carer, and their ability to hold down paid employment alongside their caring responsibilities.

Recent research by Carers UK shows that the care provided by friends and family to ill, frail or disabled relatives saves the state £19 billion every year. The main carers' benefit, Carers Allowance, is £58.45 for a minimum of 35 hours - or £1.67 an hour. It is currently received by some 600,000 people.

Shropshire Rural Community Council (RCC) points out that if you provide unpaid help or look after a family

member or friend who is ill, disabled, frail or elderly who can't manage without your support, then you are a carer.

You can benefit from information and support for yourself to help you in your caring role, whether that might be time for yourself, or feeling stressed by your responsibilities, feeling lonely, uncertainty about your rights, or anything else.

The RCC says that wherever you live in Shropshire, if you are a carer it is there for you: 'Always remember, you are not alone.' Contact the RCC on its Carers Support Line 01743 341995 (Mon-Fri, 9 am - 4 pm)

Carers' Forum may launch in summer

In the last couple of months a few people have got together to discuss the possibility of having a Forum for Carers. There are already some carers' groups but they need a stronger and concerted voice.

It is hoped a new forum will be launched this summer with the aim of bringing carers together to create a more united voice on things which matter to them - and ensuring this is heard in the right places, such as the Family Carers Partnership Board and other key bodies.

It will be independent of statutory services and open to all carers and carers groups. Anyone interested in helping to set up the forum or who would like to register interest in joining can contact Jackie Taylor on 01743 253796 or call Ruby Hartshorn of SDN on 01743 340832.

Learning disabilities: Telford wants to hear your views on care

Telford & Wrekin Council is asking for views on 'in-house' provider services for people with learning disabilities, for example in residential homes, day services, community support and shared lives.

As a new 'co-operative' council TWC is keen to work with the people who use its services, including gaining views from family carers, to help plan towards the future.

So have your say and put forward ideas on how things can be further improved. The questions the council would like to ask are:

- What works well with the service/s you are currently involved in?
- What do you feel doesn't work so well?
- What changes would you like to see to help services become more per-

sonalised, offer choice and control, and be more cost effective?

- What would these changes mean to you as a family carer?

A number of workshops are being held to find out carers' views. Or you can contact Clare at Carers Contact Centre on 01952 262065 or email clare.eaves@carerscontact.org.uk to have your say.

Something for everyone!

Telford Carers have a wide range of events to suit all tastes, so take a look at the website or give a phone call to find out more.

Don't be a lone and lonely carer, there are plenty of people out there helping each other and talking to each other.

From Telford Carers at
www.carerscontact.org.uk



The 'bedroom tax' may mean sleepless nights

A new welfare reform will cut the amount of benefit people can get if they are deemed to have a spare bedroom in their council or housing association home. This measure, widely called the bedroom tax, will apply from this April to tenants of working age.

The changes will restrict housing benefit to allow for one bedroom for each person or couple living as part of the household. But there are exceptions:

- Children under 16 of same gender expected to share
- Children under 10 expected to share regardless of gender
- Disabled tenant or partner who needs non-resident overnight carer will be allowed an extra bedroom

All claimants who are deemed to have at least one spare bedroom will be affected. The cut will be a fixed percentage of the Housing Benefit rent - 14% for one extra bedroom and 25% for two or more extra bedrooms. The Government says those affected will lose an average of £14

a week. Housing association tenants are expected to lose an average of £16 a week.

The proposal will affect an estimated 660,000 working-age social tenants – 31% of existing working-age housing benefit claimants in the social sector.

But the regulations do not define a bedroom. The Government says it is up to landlords to specify the size of the property and this ought to match what is on any tenancy agreement and reflect the level of rent charged. The bedroom tax will not take account of whether a room is a single or a double bedroom.

There are some differences between

how the bedroom tax will operate under housing benefit and under Universal Credit when it is introduced. Any income from a lodger will be deducted pound for pound from benefit apart from the first £20. However, this reverses under Universal Credit – income from lodgers will be disregarded and will not impact on the amount of a claimant's Universal Credit award. But taking in a lodger may seriously impact on home contents insurance policies.

Households where there is a room kept for a student studying away from home will not be deemed to be under-occupying if the student is away for less than 52 weeks (under housing benefit) or six months (under Universal Credit).

Over 2000 county tenants affected

In this county some 2130 tenants will be affected by the bedroom tax, according to figures in a new Shropshire Council report. It shows 1696 'under occupying' by one bedroom and 434 by two bedrooms. Citizens Advice Shropshire is urging worried tenants to get in touch, with chief executive Jackie Jeffrey saying she is very concerned. The number to call is 08444 991100 or visit the website, www.cabshropshire.org.uk

Mobility tips: Walkers and grab rails

SDN member Martin Maley concludes 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.



Walking Aids - Handle Height

Three and four wheeled walkers (tri walkers and rollators) are sometimes set too low, causing the user to stoop and walk further away from the

product. If you are already using a walking stick try setting the height of your walker handles 2" to 3" higher than the walking stick. This will make you more upright and also closer to the product, thus making it easier to manoeuvre.

Grab rails – fixed or removable?

Grab rails can help improve personal safety for people moving around the home who need some assistance with balance and support. They are usually mounted vertically but if angled can also provide forearm support which is useful for people

with painful hands or wrists. Fixed grab rails are only as secure as the wall and fixings used – it helps to hold them in different positions with the user present before permanently fixing them to the wall. Suction grab rails can be easily moved or taken away on holidays but if the tiles are not flat or have a raised pattern on them the strength of the grip will be reduced.

Grab rails are not designed to support the full weight of the user and do not carry maximum user weight guidance.



Volunteering 'must remain' at heart of charities sector

'The voluntary principle is at the heart of the charity sector' - that was the key message from Lord Hodgson in his speech at the 50th AGM of Shropshire RCC. Lord Hodgson has recently undertaken a major review of charities on behalf of the Government. He compiled a report with 115 recommendations, which is now out for consultation.

He said many thousands of charities and voluntary groups are doing really important and valuable work throughout the country, and he wants to see that grow not shrink. Here is a summary of his address, including the seven principles the review is based on:

Judgement not process. If we are to roll back red tape and reduce box ticking, people are going to have to use their judgment and say 'this is what I want for my charity' and believe that the law will provide them with appropriate protections.

Charitable status is a privilege not a right. There is quite a lot of evidence of moribund or semi-moribund charities whose assets could usefully be re-deployed in areas more up to date in modern society.

Independence of the sector and the

Community Council hosts speech by leader of charities review

regulator. The sector needs to be free to get on with its work and not be subject to micro-management. The same is true of the regulator, the Charity Commission.

Regulation needs to be proportionate, transparent and comprehensible. We want information that is clear, transparent and understandable - and that may mean that less is more.

The regulatory structure needs to be focussed, practical, and affordable. The structure needs to be flexible, able to encompass new developments, and carry with it the opportunity to enable people to fulfil their dreams, meet their pain, do

things they think will help their society.

The voluntary principle is at the heart of the charity sector. The average person would probably say "charities rattle tins in the street. Volunteers are filling gaps that the state doesn't fill". Those may be big gaps like the RNLI or smaller gaps like the Shropshire Hospice. However, there are charities that employ only paid staff and have no volunteers at all, others who get all their money from the state and raise no money at all from private individuals, those that only use professional fund raisers, and those that sell services under the charities name such as house or car insurance. And there are charities that are, by any other name, government departments.

There is a gap between what the public thinks and what is actually happening. We need to think how the charity sector in its new guise - hugely growing, developing and innovative - can come to terms with and explain this to the public which still sees charity operating at a very local level.

A full transcript of Lord Hodgson's speech is available from Shropshire RCC, email enquiries@Shropshire-rcc.org.uk

[From SIP Newsletter, 14 December 2012]

Transport plan set up to help those on benefits

Transport Solutions was set up last April, with the aim of providing any sort of transport solution to people who are eligible to receive housing related support (ie, in receipt of benefits) and live in Shropshire.

The service can offer short term intervention to help people make their travel arrangements sustainable for themselves in the future.

For example, says organiser Ollie Wheeler, 'we can provide free cycle loans from hubs to people referred to the serv-

ice so they can get to interviews, work placements or appointments.

'We can also provide financial assistance by issuing bus or train tickets and we have the option of being able to utilise taxi services in some situations.'

The service also provides signposting and advice to individuals and services, for whatever travel problems they may have.

For more details contact Ollie Wheeler at: ollie.wheeler@bromford.co.uk



Deafblind studies diploma a big success

The Shropshire-based Woodford Foundation has helped to set up the first specialist Deafblind Studies course in the UK – with great results. A total of 113 people successfully completed the course, with 80 of them achieving the diploma. These include people on bursaries funded by Woodford.

Woodford is a registered charity working to improve the lives of deaf children and young people around the world, 'helping them to become full and active members of their families and communities' in the words of its website.

It currently supports projects in Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. 'To be a deaf child or young person in sub-Saharan Africa is to be one of the most vulnerable

and marginalised people in the world – living without communication, financial security or protection,' Woodford says.

Deaf children are eight times more likely to be victims of sexual abuse than hearing children, and so have a much higher risk of contracting diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

They will most likely be rejected by their community and sometimes even their family, because of fears and superstitions about deafness. Less than a third attend school compared to three-quarters of hearing children.

Woodford is now sharing its office with the development manager for Shropshire Christian Association with Deaf people (Scad), which

works with vulnerable deaf and hard of hearing people in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

'This is such a good opportunity for Woodford and Scad to work more closely together and learn from one another. It is also a great way to forge links between deaf people in the UK and further afield, to share ideas and concerns,' says the latest Woodford newsletter.

The Woodford Foundation can be contacted at 9 College Hill, Shrewsbury, SY1 1LZ; info@woodfordfoundation.org.uk; tel 01743 364644

Scad can be contacted on 01743 358356, 07887 361509 (voice/text) or email james@shropdeaf.org.uk. Its website is www.shropdeaf.org.uk

Small disability groups get £1m

More than £1m has been awarded as part of a programme to help bolster small grassroots disability organisations, the Minister for Disabled People, Esther McVey, has announced. The total in the programme is £3m.

Esther McVey said the idea of the fund was 'based on feedback we had received from small disability organisations that a little funding at the right time can make all the difference to the support they are able to provide to disabled people. We still have millions of pounds left, so if you are already part of a Disabled Peoples User Led Organisations, then this is an opportunity to raise

its profile and build on the successes you have already achieved.' The DPULO programme is making a significant difference to grassroots organisations and their local communities, she said.

One of the DPULOs received an award after developing a smart phone navigation app for blind people. It has since won the Google prize 'Outstanding Use of Technology in the Field of Diversity'.

Any organisations wishing to bid for money for specific projects can do so by visiting www.odi.gov.uk/dpuloprogramme or www.facebook.com/dpulos

Dementia signs up for a national tour!

A conference about dementia is now doing a national tour! How often does that happen? Usually it's pop stars and the like who are in demand across the nation ... but dementia!

When you think about it, that's hardly surprising - there are some 800,000 people living with dementia, a condition that costs society more than £23 billion a year. The prediction is that there will be more than a million dementia sufferers by 2021.

Having sold-out in Manchester, the conference organisers - Public Service Events - moved it on to Birmingham and it is now scheduled for Harrogate on 24 April, after which dates are set for Bristol, London, and then Scotland in May, June and July respectively.

Partners sought community interest company

Shropshire Council is asking for interested parties to come forward regarding participating in the potential establishment of a Community Interest Company under the Government's Right to Provide policy for the provision of a range of its adult social care services. The aim of the CIC will be to provide Shropshire with a flexible, responsive and innovative range of services for adults with learning disabilities, older people and people with dementia, working in partnership with service users, carers/families and the local community [From VCSA Newsletter 04.12.12]

DON'T MISS MARCH! SDN'S MEETING ON 13TH AND BIG NIGHT OUT ON 15TH. ALL DETAILS IN THIS ISSUE.



Charity shock as donations drop

UK Giving 2012 is Britain's biggest yearly survey of charitable giving. The annual report reveals that donations to charity fell by 20% in real terms during 2011-12. This means that charities' income was reduced by £1.7 billion in cash terms. Adjusted for inflation, this represents a fall of £2.3 billion.

Also, between 2010-11 and 2011-12, the total amount donated has decreased by 15% on the unadjusted totals and by 20% in real terms.

The proportion of people donating to charitable causes in a typical month has decreased over the last year from 58% to 55%.

The typical amount given per donor per month in 2011-12 was £10 (the median value). This is down from £11 in 2010/11 and £12 in 2009-10.

The estimated total amount donated to charity by adults in 2010-11 was £9.3 billion.

For the first time since the survey began, the proportion of donors using Gift Aid has dropped.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Charities Aid Foundation have launched a "Back Britain's Charities" campaign, asking government, individual donors and companies alike to prioritise their charitable giving at this time of public spending cuts, rising costs and increasing demand for services.

Individuals can show their support for the campaign by signing up on the website <http://backbritainscharities.org.uk/what-do-we-want/>, using #backingcharity on twitter, or contacting their MP.

For the full report go to:

http://www.ncvovol.org.uk/sites/default/files/uk_giving_2012_full_report_1211.pdf [From SIP Newsletter 03.12.12]

Pat tries again with petition

'Pat's Petition' just failed to get enough signatures to require a debate in the Commons on cuts in benefit for the disabled – so she's trying again.

Pat's second petition urges the Government to 'Stop and review the cuts to benefits and services which are falling disproportionately on disabled people, their carers and families. We the undersigned would like the Government to review the Welfare Reform Act and amend its contents in a fairer and more socially acceptable format.'

It can't be put much more plainly than that. So please, whether you are disabled, a carer, a sympathiser, or just a general reader who has stumbled across this article, sign the petition!!

The link is: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/41122>. Just copy and paste this into your browser and it will take you to the petition.

Why businesses should look to the disabled

The Office for Disability Issues, which is part of the Department for Work and Pensions, is trying to make business people more aware of what people with disabilities have to offer.

In a website article called 'Growing your customer base to include disabled people' it points out that disabled people contribute more than £80 billion a year to the national economy and account for some 20% of the customer base.

Despite these compelling figures, the needs of disabled people are poorly addressed, says the ODI.

'By ensuring disabled people have the same opportunities to use your business or service as everybody else you will gain new customers, increase customer loyalty and enhance your reputation.'

It has produced a guide for businesses, available from

<http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/involving-disabled-people/business.php>



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



Social care costs limit 'will just help wealthy'

The Government 'signalled' that it will limit individuals' liability for long-term care costs in its recent mid-term review. However, charities have slammed the lack of detail provided and other critics have warned that it is a 'mansion tax in reverse' with the wealthy being safeguarded but not those on more modest incomes.

Promised are 'two big reforms to provide dignity in old age: an improved state pension that rewards saving and more help with the costs of long-term care.'

Detail are promised 'in due course', but this is likely to involve a cap on individual contributions to long-term care costs to give people some protection against huge care costs.

This was proposed by the Dilnot commission, which suggested a cap between £25,000-£50,000. But the

Government is believed to support a limit of about £75,000. The Dilnot commission, which was appointed by government, said a cap outside the £25-£50,000 range would 'not meet our criteria of fairness or sustainability'.

The Treasury is believed to have concluded that Dilnot's proposals would be unaffordable and a higher cap would be needed.

But critics warn that a £75,000 cap would not give adequate protection for people with moderate levels of wealth. Shadow health secretary Andy Burnham wrote on Twitter: 'A care cap of £75,000 sounds like a reverse of the mansion tax. Those with modest homes will still lose them, but large properties protected.'

Age UK's director general, Michelle Mitchell, said: 'We were hoping for clarity and certainty about the Gov-

ernment's plans and are deeply disappointed that we got neither. Meanwhile the social care system is careering towards breaking point, starved of funds, with investment failing to keep pace with the growing needs of an ageing population.'

Andrew Chidgey, director of external affairs at the Alzheimer's Society, said: 'We have yet again been left without any detail of how this will be done. People with dementia and other conditions are being hit with huge bills for inadequate care or care that arrives too late. They deserve to know an end to this injustice is in sight.'

Dilnot also proposed raising the means-test threshold for residential care from £23,250 to £100,000. It is not clear if the Government will back this measure. Currently, people with assets of more than £23,250 receive no state funding for residential care. [From Community Care 07.01.13]

Benefit cap *will* hit families

Despite repeated government denials that disabled people will be included in the £500-a-week benefit cap that is due to come into force in April, it has been confirmed that the cap will apply to those looking after their disabled offspring.

If a parent is still looking after a disabled child when he or she reaches adulthood, even if the child's mental age is as low as eight, the parent and the child will be treated separately, and the parent will be subject to the benefits cap.

According to work and pensions minister Esther McVey: 'In practice most carers will be exempt [from the cap] because their partner or child is in receipt of disability living allowance.' Labour MP Andrew Gwynne challenged

her to look at the rules again, saying: 'A household comprising parents and a disabled adult dependant receiving disability living allowance will not be exempt from the cap, despite the minister's promises that they would be.'

McVey then admitted: 'Should there be another adult in the house, that is then a separate household, so both have to be assessed separately.'

The change in the rules is already starting to bite with letters being sent to carers with offspring aged over 20. One mother has been told she is to lose about £80 a week even though she looks after her 20-year-old son, who is in need of 24-hour care and has a mental age of eight. [The Guardian]

Wheelchairs to get cool look

Boyzone star and professional motorsport driver Shane Lynch has announced an innovative partnership between his company, Prestige Wrap & Customs, and national charity Caudwell Children to customise children's wheelchairs. 'Dream Wheelz' promises to add some personality to children's wheelchairs by providing individual paintwork and customised seating. 'A kid's wheelchair is so important to them it is essential that it looks and feels cool,' said Shane.



Disabled should work for less than minimum wage - MP

A Tory MP's suggestion that the disabled should work for less brought a quick reaction from disability charities and red faces at No 10. Philip Davies, MP for Shipley, claimed the disabled or those with mental health problems were at a disadvantage because they could not offer to work for less money.

Relaxing the law would help some to compete more effectively for jobs in 'the real world' in which they are 'by definition' less productive than those without disabilities.

The remarks stunned MPs on all sides and forced Downing Street to distance the Prime Minister from Mr Davies. Charities and equality campaigners condemned the suggestion.

During a Parliamentary debate, Mr Davies said the minimum wage of £5.93 per hour meant disabled people who wanted to work found the door being 'closed in their face.'

'The people who are most disadvantaged by the national minimum wage are the most vulnerable in society.'

Dame Anne Begg, the Labour MP who heads the Commons work and pensions committee and who uses a wheelchair, said Mr Davies's remarks were "outrageous and unacceptable".

A Downing Street spokesman said the Government rejected the suggestion.

The MP was warned that he would be questioned over the remarks by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. [From The Telegraph]

Stats give a snapshot of disability across country

A new statistical summary gives a 'snapshot' of disability in the UK. It covers important areas such as employment, housing, transportation, education, and much else.

- There are some 11 million disabled adults (20% of the population) in the UK, including includes limiting, long-standing illnesses
- Some 770,000 children aged under 16 (6% of the child population) have a disability
- Only 17% of disabled people were born with disabilities
- Acquired Brain Injury is the largest cause of disability amongst the working age population
- Most impairments are not visible
- Less than 8% of disabled people use wheelchairs; there are some 1.2 million wheelchair users in England, 72% of whom are over 60.
- Disability strongly relates to age – 2.1% of 16-19 year olds have a dis-

This subject is so vast that we can't begin to do it justice in one issue of YV, but the information is a priceless tool for campaigning. So this month we are kicking off with some general stats and will follow up with more.

- ability; 31% of 50-59 years; and 78% aged 85 or over
- There are about 1.5 million (nearly 3%) who have a learning disability
- Only about 33% of people with a learning disability take part in some form of education or training
- 15% of young disabled people are not in any form of education, employment or training as opposed to

7% of their non-disabled peers. The gap increases between the ages of 16-19 to two thirds

- 21% of disabled people aged 16-24 have no qualifications, compared to 9% of their non-disabled peers
- About 200 babies are born every week with a learning disability
- People are more likely to become disabled if they have a low income, are out of work or have low educational qualifications
- The incidence and experience of disability differs by socio-economic status, gender, age, religion and ethnicity
- Disability also shows marked regional variations. While only 17% of households in the South East have one or more disabled adults under the pension age, in the North East this rises to 27%

[From www.papworth.org.uk Disability in the United Kingdom, January 2010]

Hot Chocolate Fund with lolly for small projects

The Galaxy Hot Chocolate Fund is not just about chocolate. The fund is looking to help small, local community based projects and community minded people, and has 60 £300 awards to help with community programmes. The fund closes on 31 March so act now if interested. Go to: <http://www.hotgalaxywarmheart.com> to apply. [SIP Newsletter]

VCSA's new website

The VCS Assembly published the final edition of its newsletter in December as part of its ICT modernisation programme, so for future contact the place to go is the new website - www.vcsvoice.org



NHS funding transfer to local authorities

The Department of Health has written to the NHS Commissioning Board with provisional information on the transfer of £859m from the NHS to local authorities in 2013/14 to support adult social care services.

The letter describes the conditions of the transfer and allocation to each local authority.

The NHS contribution to social care is seen as a real opportunity for integrated working between health and social care.

In previous years, the transfer has supported services such as reablement and the interface between hospitals and care services.

[From Welfare News Service]

'Slow down' call on speed of changes

The Commons Work and Pensions Committee recently concluded that the Government has designed a welfare system which should help ease the transition from benefits to work, but it warns that significant concerns remain about the potential impact of the changes on some of the most vulnerable benefit claimants.

It urges the Government to slow down. Chair of the committee, Dame Anne Begg, says that although the Universal Credit system is likely to be accessible to most claimants,

'we have serious concerns about how more vulnerable people will cope with the changes, especially the online claims system and the proposed single monthly payment.

'Some claimants will not be able to make an online claim and others may struggle to adapt to monthly payments,' she says.

'The measures the Government plans to put in place to help these claimants may be difficult to access and too slow in identifying who these people are, with the risk

that they will fall into debt and hardship before extra support can be provided.

'We believe the Government should reflect on the possible consequences of these major benefit changes for some of the most vulnerable people in society and that it should consider modifying its implementation timescale if those consequences cannot be adequately addressed before national roll-out begins.' Universal Credit pilots (called Pathfinders) begin in the north-west of England in April with full national roll-out due to start in October.

Headway launches new support group for carers

Donna, the outreach worker at Headway Shropshire (pictured) will be running a Carers Support Group, starting on 14 February.



Headway says it realises that carers are often forgotten about and that there is very little opportunity for people to get together and talk over any issues they may have, especially where Acquired Brain Injury is concerned.

Donna is also able to provide an information service and signposting when practical advice is needed.

The meeting will take place in the

meeting room at Headway House in Shrewsbury and will be held monthly from 6-7pm. Anyone who would like to attend can Donna on 01743 365565 or email her at:

outreach@headwayshropshire.org.uk

There are several Headway Shropshire publications available, including 'Effects of Brain Injury', 'Coping with Memory Loss'.

The national organisation, Headway UK, also has a vast selection of information and factsheets covering the many symptoms and practical issues associated with Acquired Brain Injury.

Changes in Gift Aid system

HM Revenue and Customs is changing the way that Gift Aid repayments are made. From April, a new online claims system will be introduced, replacing the existing form and the online system will also be used for the Small Donations Scheme.

Find more information via <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/charities/online/> [SIP Newsletter]

Cheap and simple websites offered

An organisation called Stardotstar with funding from the Nominet Trust gives support to VCOs to set up simple, one page websites and will host them for just £1 a month. It's called Madewithjam. If you are looking for your project/organisation to have a web presence but don't need an elaborate site then this may be for you. See <http://www.madewithjam.org/> [SIP Newsletter]



Society 'can disable someone more easily than a condition'

Disability and employment statistics
The Shaw Trust is a national charity which supports disabled and disadvantaged people to prepare for work, find jobs and live more independently. On its website it says: "We believe everyone has the right to work and we have campaigned for 30 years to turn our vision into a reality."

"Every year we work with over 75,000 clients who face barriers due to disability, ill health or social circumstance. Thousands of employers and public sector organisations also benefit from our range of services for business."

"We are the UK's largest third sector provider and one of the Govern-

ment's lead partners in the delivery of employment programmes for disabled and disadvantaged people.

"Society can disable people more than their health condition or disability, with attitudes and assumptions preventing people from reaching their work-related goals. Employment statistics show the imbalance between disabled and non-disabled people in employment."

"Everyone should have the right to work."

- There are currently 1.3 million disabled people in the UK who are available for and want to work
- Only half of disabled people of working age are in work, compared

with 80% of non-disabled people

- Employment rates vary greatly according to the type of impairment a person has; only 20% of people with mental health problems are in employment
- 23% of disabled people have no qualifications compared to 9% of non-disabled people
- Nearly seven million (or 18.6%) in Britain have a disability
- The average gross hourly pay for disabled employees is £11.08 compared to £12.30 for non-disabled employees."

(Source: Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey, Jan - March 2009)

From Shaw Trust website
<http://www.shaw-trust.org.uk>

Just what is a poor child, asks Duncan Smith

Ian Duncan Smith has launched a consultation on how child poverty should be defined. The thinking is that we may need to take into account additional factors beyond the current system of relative poverty measured by those below 60% of the median household income level.

A number of potential dimensions are proposed, including: income and material deprivation, worklessness, unmanageable debt, poor housing, parental skill level, access to quality education, parental health and family stability.

The (official) spirit of Christmas

Like Dickens's *Ghost of Christmas Past*, the doings around 25 December 2012 might be dead and gone but there are still stories worth telling ... like the one about the traffic warden in Nottingham who ticketed two ambulances collecting disabled children from a carol concert. The nice part is that several appalled passers-by begged him not to, but Jobsworth persisted and stuck £70 penalty notices on each vehicle. A red-faced city council later apologised and rescinded the tickets.

CRB survey feedback

Volunteering England has been surveying organisations about their experiences and thoughts on the changes to the disclosure and barring system, included changes to Criminal Records Bureau checks (now called DBS checks). Feedback is being used to help establish how well the new system is understood. [SIP Newsletter]



Wheelie impressive

Transport for London (TfL) has more than 8,500 buses, virtually all of which are low floor, wheelchair accessible and fitted with wheelchair ramps that are checked every day before buses enter service. The number of accessible bus stops in the capital has more than doubled since 2008 with more than 65% of bus stops now fully accessible (up from 29% in 2008). TfL is working with the Mayor to develop a range of improvements to make the transport network even more accessible and is currently running a campaign to remind other passengers that wheelchair users have rights on buses.



Changes to Hearing Aid Services

Any Qualified Provider is part of the Government's Health Reforms. It means that any healthcare provider including NHS, independent, voluntary and third sector organisations can deliver NHS services, providing they meet NHS quality requirements, prices and contracts.

HOW DOES THIS AFFECT ME?

If you need a reassessment of your hearing because your hearing has changed you will be able to attend your GP who will offer you a choice of provider.

If you have mild to moderate hearing loss and you are over 55 years old you will have a choice of who provides the hearing test and subsequent aids.

If you have complex hearing loss or moderate to profound hearing loss and you are between 16 and 55 years old, you will remain under the care of NHS Shropshire Audiology Services. Your GP would refer you into the Audiology system.

HOW DO I MAKE AN INFORMED CHOICE?

You will be contacted by a Referral Assessment Service (RAS in Shropshire and TRAQS in Telford) and be given a choice of who you would like to receive your care with. You will remain with your provider of choice until you require a reassessment of your hearing or your aid needs replacement and is out of warranty.

WILL THE AIDS BE DIFFERENT BETWEEN DIFFERENT PROVIDERS?

All Providers will provide digital hearing aids, but the choice range may differ between different services.

The regulations state that:

- Providers must not promote their own private treatment service, or an organisation in which they have a commercial interest;
- Providers must not encourage patients to "trade-up" (ie to privately purchase more expensive hearing devices than is necessary)

WHAT HAPPENS IF I LOSE MY HEARING AID?

There is a set price of £50 for lost aids to be paid for by the patient unless there is a diagnosed sight loss (blind/partially sighted), learning disability or dementia.

Further information on Any Qualified Provider can be obtained at: www.supply2health.nhs.uk

Cameron finds a bright side to massive rise in food handouts

David Cameron was branded 'out of touch' after hailing the huge increase in reliance on food banks as an example of the Big Society he wants to build.

The Trussell Trust, which organises food handouts across the country, estimates it fed 230,000 people last year, up from 26,000 the year before. That's doesn't seem so much a big society as a failing society.

David Cameron tried to make a virtue of this huge increase in the Commons, saying he shared concerns 'about people who are struggling to pay the bills, who are struggling to deal with their budgets.'

He claimed to be helping hard-up families by bringing down inflation, generating jobs and freezing council tax - without mentioning cuts to tax credits and other benefits.

MP begs for reassessment of policy after disabled man's suicide

In the same debate Mr Cameron was faced with a question about a 51-year-old man who killed himself after being forced off disability benefits. Labour MP Ian Lavery was heard in complete silence about the suicide note left by his constituent who had been reassessed and told he no longer qualified for Employment Support Allowance.

'Across the UK there are over 1,000 people who have died only months after being told to find work. We are supposed to be a civilised society. We should be looking after the disabled citizens here in the UK,' said an emotional Mr Lavery.

He pleaded with the PM to 'finally, finally, please order an assessment of all the changes hitting disabled people in this country.'

Although promising to look at the 'tragic case' Cameron said: 'The actual money we are putting in to disability benefits is going up and not down. But everybody knows and everyone accepts we need to have a review of disability benefits.'



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 - Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury SY3 8HQ; 01743 256218; advice@a4u.org.uk

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

Care Farming West Midlands - www.carefarmingwm.org.uk; stewart.scull@carefarmingwm.org.uk or Mobile: 07957 839634

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

Community Council of Shropshire - www.shropshire-rcc.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; 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/

Enable - supported employment services for people with disabilities in Shropshire and Telford. 01743 276900; ss-enable@shropshire.gov.uk; www.shropshire.gov.uk/enable

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 and carers in Telford and Wrekin (Tina Jones, manager), 01952 211421
Meeting Point House, Southwater Square, Telford, TF3 4HS

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
Haughton 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-haughton-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: nat4sdcs@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

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; 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 and Carer Council (PACC) Shropshire - making parents and carers aware of developments that affect their children and giving them a voice - www.paccshropshire.org.uk; PO Box 4774, Shrewsbury, SY1 9EX; 0845 661 2205; enquiries@paccshropshire.org.uk

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

PODS - independent forum in Telford for families of children with 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, erica-



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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

VCSA - Voluntary & Community Sector Assembly
www.shrop.net/shropvcsassembly

Voluntary Association for the Blind (linked to RNIB)

YV services directory

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.

Shropshire Handyperson Service: Small jobs at £15+ VAT per hour, no call-out fee, 01743 458 347 mhishropshire.enquiries@mearsgroup.co.uk

Mental Health first aid course

Shropshire Independence Advocacy Scheme is running a mental health first aid course on 12 and 17 April at The Redwoods Centre, in Somerby Drive, Bicton Heath, Shrewsbury. Sixteen places are available per course, for which the cost is £190. Sessions run from 9 am-4.30 pm. Parking is available as are lunch facilities in the on-site cafe/canteen.

The course aims are to preserve life where a person may be a danger to themselves or others; to help prevent a mental health problem from developing into something more serious; to raise awareness of mental health and reduce stigma and discrimination; to promote recovery of mental health; and to provide comfort. Contact organizer Carys Baskeyfield at carys.baskeyfield@siasonline.org for more details.

Pontesbury Potter back to boost hospice funds

Severn Hospice is looking for runners and ramblers to take part in its popular countryside challenge event to be held on Saturday 9 March. The 13 mile run or ramble around Pontesbury attracts hundreds of people from across the region each year who raise funds through sponsorship they collect.

Route Designer Alan Morris said: 'The Pontesbury Potter is a wonderful event that people really enjoy. We have a number of participants who take part every year. I think one of the draws of the Potter is you never know where you're going to end up as we do not reveal the route until the morning of the event.'

Registration is £10 for adults and £5 for children. You can register online at www.severnhospice.org.uk or call the Appeals Team on 01743 354450.

Events for carers over the coming weeks

Wyldwoods charity, which is supported by Telford & Wrekin Council and Community Health Services, runs many events for carers. Wyldwoods is based at Dean Corner Farmhouse, Broseley, just off the B4376 Broseley to Much Wenlock road.

Are you a registered carer? Would you like to be registered with Telford and Wrekin PCT/Council and gain information and support? Wyldwoods can direct you to the people you need to speak to and also tell you about other free activities available in the county. Below are current event themes and dates, but for full details call 01952 884224 or email artyaml@hotmail.co.uk or steph@wyldwoods.co.uk

Carers' Days, running from 11am-3pm, offer free artist-led workshops for carers every week. Refreshments and light lunches are usually available to buy on site. If you have transport problems, Wyldwoods may be able to help.

Tuesday 5 Feb - Paint like the post impressionists - with particular reference to Vincent Van Gogh.

Wednesday 13 Feb - Early springtime floristry -bringing early colour into your home.

Tuesday 19 Feb -Still life painting - 'Spring'

Thursday 21 Feb - Young Carers - Make bath bombs. Learn how to create vampire bites, gashes and plague pustules with special effects make up.

Tuesday 26 Feb: Springtime 'Smellies' - to include potpourri, scented exfoliates and hand cream.

Thursday 28 Feb - Male Carers - Walk and Sketch

Wednesday 6 March: Springtime Ploughman's - herby scones, potted cheese, springtime relish

Tuesday 12 March - Carers & Cared For - Easter Traditions

Wednesday 13 March - Sketching

Tuesday 19 March - 'Spiritual spring cleaning'

Thursday 21 March - Male Carers - Green-wood working

Tuesday 26 March - Make an Easter wreath

Thursday 4 April - Young Carers - Creative art activities Thursday- 11 April 2013 - Carers and Cared for - Relax and Unwind - a chance to meditate and have some peaceful time

Double honour for Ben after saving girl from drowning

A young Shrewsbury man with learning difficulties has won a bravery award after he saved a toddler from drowning. Ben Williams was on holiday in North Wales when he saved the little girl from being taken under water by the rapids at the resort swimming pool.

Ben, aged 21, was at the side of the pool when he saw the toddler, in a rubber ring, being taken by the strong current of the rapids. Her

mum could only watch on helplessly as she was holding her other young child.

He was able to grab hold of her and pull her to safety before lifeguards could reach the scene.

Ben has since received a bravery award from Hafon-y-Mor in Pwllheli and a further trophy from Adelphi Care Services at its annual Celebration of Success awards which which



celebrates the achievements of adults in its care. The award was presented to Ben by the mayor of Shrewsbury.

Ben lives at Merrington House in Bomere Heath, which is run by Adelphi Care Services and provides residential care for adults with autism, aspergers and learning difficulties.

Alan Roberts from Adelphi Care said: 'Ben, who suffers with learning difficulties, did not think twice about helping the little girl despite the strong current and the whirlpool. Since this event we have seen Ben's confidence bloom and he enjoys telling people the story. Being recognised for this has further boosted his morale and the award and trophy from Adelphi Care Services was thoroughly deserved.'

New 111 emergency medical hotline ready to launch soon

Workshops on the new 111 emergency telephone service are being held in Shropshire, with the last in the series planned for Grays Hotel in Telford on 7 February, starting at 12.30. Many people have questions regarding the new service, which is expected to start in the West Midlands next month and will be running nationally within the next few months.

111 will be available to patients needing urgent NHS support and advice. It will be a freephone number for those who feel their condition does not warrants dialling 999 for an emergency ambulance. 111 will be available for patients registered with an English GP practice.

Health advisers, supported by experienced clinicians, will use a clinical assessment system to assess callers' needs and determine the most appropriate course of action. This could include dispatching an ambulance, referring someone to an NHS service, or giving advice on self care.

111 aims to Improve public access to

urgent healthcare- by directing people to the local service able to meet their needs, taking into account their location, the time of their call and the capacity of services.

It aims to help people use the right service first time, including self care.

111 will not only provide a clinical assessment at the first point of contact and direct people to the correct service, it will also provide commissioners with management information regarding the usage of services.

The service will gather comprehensive information on people's needs and the services available, showing where there are gaps in service.

Although 111 will be a service across England, it is being managed by individual regions.

For the West Midlands region, NHS Direct will manage the service.

[From the VCSA website]

Older People's 'Atlas' updated

The West Midlands Public Health Observatory has updated the Older People's Heath and Wellbeing Atlas. The updated Atlas can be used to identify deficits in the health and care of older people and to highlight large variations between local authorities across England. [From Health Information News]

Health Info 'too complicated'

Research at London South Bank University shows that health information is too complex, with 43% of people aged 16-65 unable effectively to understand and use everyday health information. This means that 15-21 million people may not be able to understand and use the information they need. [From Health Information News]