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## Bringing carers together to build a strong collective voice

A new forum representing all carers and their collective needs in Shropshire will be launched on Thursday 6 June at an event running from 10.30-12.30pm at Shropshire Home Services, Unit 3, Hartley Business Centre, Monkmoor Road, Shrewsbury.

This forum is independent of current carers' organisations and has an independent chairperson, enabling the collective 'voice' being representative of all carers. By bringing carers together the forum can build a strong voice for carers in shaping and developing services that support them and the people they care for. The morning includes an introductory workshop on how carers can influence others, and 'Talking Tables' where you will have time to talk about your issues on respite care, transport, transition, carer isolation, benefit changes and the provision of care in Shropshire.

Anyone caring for a relative or friend living in Shropshire is welcome. Refreshments will be provided. The venue has car parking, and is a three-minute walk from Conway Drive bus stop. Please telephone 01743 341995 to book a place. The forum is using this number, which is the Rural Community Council, because the RCC has kindly agreed to collate numbers and other details for the initial launch.

# Lottery's big boost for SDN!

**Awards For All', which is part of the Big Lottery Fund, has announced in its latest round of funding that SDN's bid for £8450 was successful.**

This is wonderful news and we thank Awards For All as it means we have secured essential funding, enabling us to move forward. In particular, we can secure and improve our prime tool, which is our website, and reach more people with information that is easy to access.

This is very important because of the huge number of changes people are facing as a result of welfare reform.

As we explained in our application, our project is 'promoting SDN, by reaching those who have not heard about us, so enabling people with a disability to access information and be informed of welfare



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

changes.' Both our email addresses - [info@disability.net](mailto:info@disability.net) and [enquiry@disability.net](mailto:enquiry@disability.net) - are becoming increasingly busy with people needing help on benefit changes as well as guidance on where to find information.

We intend to use some of the Awards for All money on training new volunteers, which will involve costs as we need professional expertise to do this.

As SDN grows in membership so we need a better database that can be used in a number of ways, for example to identify specific

areas of need and target certain areas of interest or concern.

Good administration is vital and we have been aware for some time that there is a need for improvement in order to be better placed for future expansion. Some money will be used as 'seedcorn', promoting SDN.

This funding means we can do more, but fund-raising must go on as always. We have ongoing expenses, such as meeting costs, printing, postage and stationery, insurance, ongoing website costs and more.

We will continue to produce our increasingly popular newsletter in print for those who can't access it online, and to make more use of social media. However our bid means we are securing the work of the website and without the website SDN would be unable to function.

# Autism team joins multi-agency group in Shrewsbury

The Autism West Midlands Shropshire team has moved to the Shrewsbury Multi Agency Team at Richmond House, Rutland, Harlescott, Shrewsbury, SY1 3QG. The team is commissioned by Shropshire Council and Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group to provide a service to families of children (0-18) with autism spectrum conditions and to professionals working with families.

The service has been funded for the past six years and has been working out of the Woodlands Outreach Centre, near Wem.

The recent renewal of the contract for a further two years, until March 2015, has provided the opportunity for a change of location.

The team will be joining other services working with families, both voluntary

sector and council run, in the Multi Agency Team and contributing to the new council Early Help Offer. For more information contact the team on 01743 210940 or email any of these three members: Hilary McGlynn at [hilarym@autismwestmidlands.org.uk](mailto:hilarym@autismwestmidlands.org.uk); Emma Hegenbarth at [emmah@autismwestmidlands.org.uk](mailto:emmah@autismwestmidlands.org.uk); Simon Fraser at [simonf@autismwestmidlands.org.uk](mailto:simonf@autismwestmidlands.org.uk)

## A baroness with plenty of bounce!

Disabled Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, who has done much heroic work in the Lords and elsewhere on behalf of the disability community, tweeted recently about an accessibility failure, which inspired disabled cartoonist Hannah Ensor to create this image. Here's the story

On arriving home late one evening and discovering the lift in her London building was broken, the Baroness had to crawl up ten flights of stairs to her flat, dragging her chair up too. The retired Paralympian tweeted during the ordeal that she would be removing her tights beforehand, so as not to ladder them.

Tanni was so impressed with Hannah's image of her on the stairs, that she asked permission to link to it from her own website. Hannah hopes that this, and her other cartoons which all have insights into disabled life, will encourage everyone to view disability as normal. Her cartoons are always drawn as stick figures, 'and I use them to say what's in my head'.

Hannah's first series of stickman creations helped her communicate at a time when she was too ill to speak. They reflect her life with the painful condition which makes her joints dislocate easily and often. Her other disability, POTS, causes her



heart rate to rise too high when she stands up. In 2010, she stopped working as an environmental health officer when an independent advisor confirmed she was unlikely to be fit for work again before retirement age. Since then, she's been devoted to drawing when she is well.

The cartoons started life on disability forums and on Hannah's blog. She sells disability awareness stickers and communication cards and has also published seven stickman books, including two for small children. Money raised from these goes to her favourite charities, the Hypermobility Syndrome Association and Whiz-Kidz.

SDN's next quarterly meeting will be our first in Oswestry - and will be on Wednesday 12 June at Oswestry Cricket Club in Morda Road. Refreshments will be available at 10.30am for a prompt start at 11.00. The meeting will end by 1pm. We have two great guest speakers - Colin Smith MBE, who is Partner Support Manager with the Department of Work and Pensions, will be giving us the latest updates on changes from Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independence Payments.

Colin spoke at the Welfare Reform Debate in January hosted by the

## Oswestry to host next SDN quarterly meeting

VCSA, Shropshire Clasp, the Pan Disability Forum and ourselves. Afterwards he said he would like to talk to our members. Now it is going to happen - he has his opportunity and

you have yours. So please grasp the moment and be there with your questions and comments.

Our other speaker will be Ann Johnston, the Support Service Manager based at Oswestry for Shropshire Housing Alliance. Ann will speak about issues around changes to Housing Benefits, including the impact on benefits if you take in a lodger and are in receipt of Housing Benefit.

To give us an idea of numbers please book your place by contacting our interim secretary James Moraghen by email: [home.base@virgin.net](mailto:home.base@virgin.net)

# Criminal justice system in dock over hate crime

The criminal justice system is currently failing victims of disability hate crime. That's according to a recent inspection carried out by the police, probation and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), the results of which have just been published in a new report.

The report, *Living in a different world: Joint review of disability hate crime* suggests that there is currently confusion among all three law enforcement agencies as to how disability hate crimes should be detected and recorded, and that more needs to be done to ensure that victims have the confidence to report such crimes.

At one point, the report notes that officers and police staff are often reluctant to ask victims and witnesses directly if they are disabled, for fear that doing so might cause offence. Among focus groups of disabled people, however, the inspectors found that most would rather that officers and staff feel free to ask – and that many

held the view that the police service had in fact become too sensitive about causing offence. Elsewhere, the report concedes that staff require more training and greater awareness of the issues relating to disability hate crime, and that local disabled persons' groups may have a role to play in providing this.

One of the report's key recommendations is that the police, CPS and probation trusts jointly establish a 'single, clear and uncomplicated' definition of disability hate crime and ensure that this is brought to the attention of staff and the general public within three months.

The report also advises that all CPS data relating to disability hate crimes be regularly checked for accuracy, and such crimes be given higher priority within the work of probation trusts. The full report can be downloaded from the website of HM Inspectorate of Constabulary. [From Access magazine 21.03.13]

## Vic puts on his running shoes for SDN

SDN member Vic Davies is putting on his running shoes to raise funds for us. After an appeal on Twitter asking if someone was willing to run the Lake Vrynwy Half Marathon on 15 September, one of our own members responded.

Vic, from Church Stretton, not only offered to run in September for us but also to run the Shrewsbury Marathon on 23 June. Vic, who has visual impairment, joined SDN last year and since January this year, has been involved behind the scenes in some admin work for SDN.

Now we would like everyone to get behind Vic and support his efforts. You can do this by coming to Shrewsbury on Sunday 23 June to cheer Vic on. He will be wearing a tee-shirt bearing the SDN logo, which is great publicity for us. We also want to help Vic get sponsorship, so anyone



who has a mobile phone can do this easily by sending the following text: SHDN12 £1 and then send to 70070

You can donate up to £10 in one text message, you pay the donation but the text message is free. If you are a UK taxpayer you will also get the opportunity to Gift Aid your donation at no extra charge to you. If you would like to sponsor Vic by more traditional means then please send a cheque made payable to Shropshire Disability Network and post to SDN -Fund-Raising Lead, c/o 26 Aldwick Drive, Radbrook Green, Shrewsbury, SY3 6BN.

It would help if you could identify which run you are sponsoring by writing Vic 1 on the back of the cheque for the Shrewsbury Marathon or Vic 2 for the Lake Vyrnwy Half Marathon. - RH

## New MS strategy

The MS Society has launched a new research strategy which aims to lead to a much more targeted approach to funding research, ensuring that only the best and most relevant research is funded. The priority areas are: Identifying and testing treatments that slow or stop progression of MS; developing ways to predict the course of MS; increasing understanding of myelin repair. You can find out more by visiting [www.mssociety.org.uk/research](http://www.mssociety.org.uk/research) or emailing [research@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:research@mssociety.org.uk) [From MS Newsletter]

## NHS mental health warning

Staff shortages are mounting in NHS mental health and learning disability services, the Care Quality Commission has warned. Of services inspected between April and December last year, 80% were assessed as having adequate staffing levels - down from 91% the preceding year. The CQC raised the issue as an 'early warning' in its latest Care Update, summarising the performance of regulated health and social care services in England.

Access online Magazine has published this article from Turn2us, a charity that provides help and advice on claiming welfare payments and which is very active in Shropshire.

Having a disability can be very expensive. Whether it's paying for a stair-lift or a hydraulic bath, the cost of taxis in lieu of being unable to use an inaccessible public transport system, or obtaining the services of sign language interpreters, such expenses are a necessary, day-to-day part of life, but can really eat into your budget.

It is estimated that even for a person with low to medium disability needs, the weekly budget required for a fair lifestyle is £389.

The amount for someone with higher needs can be as much as £1,513 per week. Benefits can't cover these extra costs completely, but they can make a big difference. As the system currently stands, a disabled person receiving the maximum benefits available to them can expect to have 28% to 50% of their extra costs met, depending on the level of support they need.

However, the welfare system is so complex and difficult to understand, many people can go for years without realising they're entitled to benefits. There are also some misconceptions that prevent people from claiming.

Many people fall into this trap and miss out on vital income – in some cases thousands of pounds a year, which could really have helped them and their families. It is no wonder that as much as £19.7 billion of welfare benefits goes unclaimed every year, despite there being some 13 million people living below the poverty line in the UK. So how should you avoid those pitfalls and ensure that you're claiming all you're entitled to?

1. Whatever your experiences thus far, our advice would be to do a full benefits check to work out what you're entitled to. You can use the Benefits Calculator on the Turn2us website to do this.
2. Get into the habit of checking your benefit entitlement every time there is a change to your personal circumstances. Some changes will mean that you need added support, which certain benefits will recognise. These might include a change in your disability or illness, employment status, retirement age, marital status or living arrangements – including separation or death of a spouse, fostering, adoption or a birth.

# Complex system can cost you dearly

3. There are some very big changes to the welfare system being implemented now. If you are currently claiming benefits or may be in the near future, try to learn about how these changes may affect you and prepare for the changes as much as possible. The Benefits News and Changes section of the Turn2us website is a place where you can find out more.

## Key stats

Lack of awareness about benefits: Of the 13.5 million people living below the poverty line in the UK, only 5.4 million are claiming state support, and more than £19 billion in welfare benefits goes unclaimed each year, according to the Department for Work and Pensions' own figures.

Extra costs incurred from having a disability: Based on research conducted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the weekly budget standards required for disabled people are:

- £1,513 for a person with high–medium mobility and personal support needs;
- £448 for a person with intermittent or fluctuating needs (ie from relatively negligible needs to higher needs);
- £389 for a person with low–medium needs;
- £1,336 for a person with needs arising from hearing impairment;
- £632 for a person with needs arising from visual impairment

To speak to a Turn2us advisor about benefit entitlements call the free and confidential helpline on 0808 802 2000 (8.00 am to 8.00 pm Mon-Fri)

Turn2us launched a new website to coincide with its Benefits Awareness Month campaign in April, aimed at helping people prepare for the incoming changes in a straightforward, step-by-step way. For more details about Turn2us, visit [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk).  
[From Access Magazine, 20.03.13]

Deaf have last word at first quiz

On 26 March SDN had its first fund-raising pub quiz, at The Crown in Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury – and big thanks to the landlord and landlady for their generosity and support in hosting and supplying prizes! The weather reduced numbers so the team from Shrewsbury Deaf Club divided in two to create a Deaf pub quiz (another first for Shrewsbury?) with hearing team members joining one of these. Kathy Jones, chair of Shrewsbury Deaf Club, said 'it was great, and nice to get out and do something different in the week.' SDN would like to run another quiz in the near future and hopefully we can get a few more teams to take on the 'Deaf champions' and raise funds. -PS

# Disability for beginners

As is so often the case with unexpected disability, the change is rapid and the learning curve is steep. I have primary progressive multiple sclerosis. I first knew something was wrong when I was dropped from the early morning food and rural affairs radio programme I presented, Farming Today. I was doing too many retakes during the recording. To be fair, neither the management nor I realised that I was showing the early signs of a degenerative illness, where the body's immune system attacks its own nervous system.

Confirmation came in an MRI scan, showing the telltale signs of white scarring, scars which give the name to the sclerosis part of the condition. I was embarking on a journey, an unwanted, and unexpected journey, where my body and speech would start behaving badly.

My life was changing and I had to learn to adapt. Ahead were a variety of delights, a kind of pick-and-mix. Select from double incontinence (fortunately yet to appear), eyesight disturbance (also yet to strike) and mobility problems ... appearing fast.

Combine that with the impact on my speech, which effectively ended my radio career, and I am having to adjust to change.

It's a learning process, and as a lifelong broadcaster, journalist and writer, the most obvious thing was to write about what is happening in a blog. I knew I was in effect training for a new life. I called the blog The Trainee Cripple. The sound of tutting was pretty

Just over a year ago, broadcaster and journalist Mark Holdstock was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Until then, he'd been living his dream as a presenter on BBC Radio 4. Now he faces an all too certain future with apprehension, but also a degree of conviction. This is his story, for which we are grateful to the Disability Now website.

swift. Some people objected ... the word does upset some people as being derogatory. I take a straightforward view. I would never call somebody else a cripple, unless they asked specifically to be described as such, but I absolutely reserve the right to describe myself as I wish, and the naming of this blog, which is about me, and the impact of MS on my life, is my decision.

Of course, I wouldn't be the first to upset others by reclaiming a term which has previously been used as a term of abuse. The gay community reappropriated the word queer in the 1990s as a strident reaction to the attitudes of politicians towards homosexuals during the years of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government.

It's become a tool of empowerment, and at a time when disabled people are under attack from those in power, the use of the word cripple

by myself, about me, perhaps reduces the power of the weapons that they are using against us. Maybe it makes those who are being abusive face reality.

What I don't know yet, and I haven't made my mind up about, is the degree to which I want to become part of a community, and with it an activist. I have always been politically aware, it comes with the territory of the work which I did. One of the differences now is that no longer being a BBC name, I can shout about it, and use what skills I picked up as a broadcaster and journalist to make those views heard.

The question is whether I have the energy to, that is part of my training as a cripple - become an active part of the community that I'm reluctantly joining. In a way, writing about it is as much for me as for others, pointing out some of the things like seats in shops or in concert hall bars. Things which have never occurred to me in the past.

Am I joining a community, am I going to be participating? Perhaps, one of the consequences of MS is fatigue and that will be a factor. Writing is something I can do within the envelope of that fatigue. I am beginning to learn where there are limits, I'm beginning to learn where there might be discrimination, sometimes unintended. The use of the word cripple about myself is, I admit, provocative ... but it's meant to be .[From Disability Now website]

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## Three cities ride for MS funds

Cyclist Paul Tanner is doing a 350 mile 'three cities' ride in aid of the MS Society. The Shrewsbury branch says he has raised £1300 so far. The ride starts on 29 May in London and finishes on 1 June in Brussels. To sponsor Paul visit his donation page - [virginmoneygiving.com/3cities4ms](http://virginmoneygiving.com/3cities4ms) - or call 01939 251687, or text "city71" followed by the amount in pounds that you would like to donate (1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 10) to 70070.

**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? Contact [info@shropshire-disability.net](mailto:info@shropshire-disability.net).**

# Hearing loss ignored in most council assessments

**People with hearing loss could be missing out on vital life-changing support. New research has uncovered the disturbing reality that two thirds of councils don't include hearing loss when assessing social care needs.**

Action on Hearing Loss is now urging local authorities across England to meet the needs of people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

In a report entitled 'Life Support: the provision of social care for people with hearing loss' AHL used data from the responses of 60 heads of adult sensory services to reveal that people with hearing loss could be missing out on vital life-changing

support because their individual needs are not taken into account in local authorities' Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs).

Only one third of responding councils include hearing loss when assessing the need for social care services, and only a quarter have a strategy dedicated to hearing loss.

AHL wants local authorities to capture information about local requirements, which could include lip-reading classes and BSL training, specialist rehabilitation services, family and peer support, as well as advice about equipment, housing benefit and independent living, which can make a huge impact in improving communication

and confidence, and reducing social isolation experienced by people with hearing loss.

Chief Executive of Action on Hearing Loss, Paul Breckell, says: 'People with hearing loss have the right to expect the best local services. JSNAs are intended to produce a comprehensive picture of the health and wellbeing needs of local communities. But a local need can only be met if it is identified. As many are failing to capture local information about people with hearing loss it's no surprise to find that only a quarter of councils have a strategy dedicated to improving the health, wellbeing and everyday lives of people who are deaf or hard of hearing.'

## BSL celebrates 10 years as an official language

The deaf community is celebrating the tenth anniversary of British Sign Language being recognised as a UK minority language. Now the British Deaf Association is working to get BSL back onto politicians' radar screens.

David Buxton, Chief Executive of the BDA, said: 'Ten years on from recognition, we need the Government to re-engage with the many thousands of people who use British Sign Language, whether as their first language or alongside English. There are still too many barriers that prevent Deaf people from participating in, and contributing equally to, society.

'We must keep campaigning for a BSL Act to improve

Deaf people's lives in the long term. In the short term, we must also campaign to get some specific improvements to Deaf people's lives. There are lots of changes that local authorities and health services could make - we will need a campaign on the ground as well as at Westminster.

'In this anniversary year, we want to work with the Deaf people across the country who are crying out for change. We want to give them the training and the campaigning tools to win improvements to services where they live.'

BDA England can be contacted at Rycote Centre, Parker Street, Derby, DE1 3HF; SMS 07814 387251; email: [robina@bda.org.uk](mailto:robina@bda.org.uk); [www.bda.org.uk](http://www.bda.org.uk)

## Generation strains

Labour leader Ed Miliband commented in a recent interview that 'redistribution is important but it's not the only route to social justice'. That opinion could be more important than even he realises.

New research shows not just that there has been an overall decline in support for redistribution of wealth through

the tax and benefits system, but that we may be witnessing a generational shift in attitudes.

Younger generations are apparently less supportive of redistribution of wealth than their parents.

The overall decline in support for redistribution is relatively well understood. The

## The generational divide isn't just in how much we get, but also how much we want to give

percentage of the population agreeing with the statement, 'the Government should spend more money on welfare benefits for the poor, even if it leads to higher taxes,' peaked in 1989 and has been on a broad, downward trajectory ever since. More people disagreed than agreed with the statement for the first time in 2007. [edited, from the New Statesman]

# Free safeguarding briefings from Shropshire Council

Shropshire Council is offering to hold free safeguarding briefings for community groups, to provide an overview of safeguarding for adults at risk, children and young people.

Questions to be looked at will include: What is abuse? Would you recognise it? What can you

do? Where you can get information and support if you have a concern?

The briefings are said to be relevant to 'any community group that comes into contact with people.'

The sessions require a minimum of 45 minutes to a maximum of

90 minutes for delivery plus questions. The council's team will attend a regular group meeting, or any other time to suit groups.

Contact Simon Rodden or Nicola Jessop on 01743 254734, fax 01743 254738 or email [nicola.jessop@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:nicola.jessop@shropshire.gov.uk)

# Jobcentre staff pressed to hit sanctions targets

**While ministers continue to deny it, there is incontrovertible proof that Jobcentre Plus staff are being told they must sanction 5% of Job Seekers Allowance claimants or face disciplinary action.**

One office allegedly even offered Easter egg prizes to the team which sanctions the most claimants (See <http://tinyurl.com/btnfkfm>)

In Walthamstow, Jobcentre staff were warned they would be disciplined if they failed to move their Jobcentre up the sanctions league table by sanctioning 5% of

JSA claimants. They were even given handy hints on how to catch claimants out and how to get 'an easy win'.

The head of Jobcentre Plus has since said he believes that the Walthamstow letter was an isolated one, despite evidence that this is not the case – including a Jobcentre Plus newsletter from Malvern also threatening disciplinary action against staff who don't meet 5% sanctions targets

You have to wonder at such inhumanity when stopping benefits has such a devastating effect on claimants' lives and

potentially on the wellbeing of small children and disabled dependents as well. For some people, unfair benefits decisions are the last straw that moves them to suicide.

As one commentator put it, 'turning sanctions into a game with chocolate for prizes or threatening staff with disciplinary action if they don't meet targets, is as if they were selling double glazing rather than destroying lives.

'It is astonishingly cruel and has nothing to do with helping people find work.' [From Shropshire ME Group Newsletter, April 2013]

## Disability and the arts in Shropshire

DASH – Disability Art in Shropshire - has been running arts projects since 1996 and in 2001 became both a company and a registered charity.

Dash works in partnership with arts organisations, galleries, community groups, day centres and many others.

Its core work is with individual artists through training, mentoring and development.

For further information about Dash simply telephone 01743 272939 or email [paula@dasharts.org](mailto:paula@dasharts.org)



# See and Hear is this month - don't miss it!

See and Hear 2013 will be held at Sundorne Sports Village, in Sundorne Road, Shrewsbury, on Wednesday 15 May from 10.00-4.00.

The popular annual event will showcase products and services relating to sight and hearing loss, with special presentations including the Bionic Ear and Sensory Tunnel.

The Bionic Ear Show, which

was a big hit last year and is set to be a major centre of attention again, is an interactive presentation on how the ear works, by Tobin May of Deaf Research UK. You can get a sneak preview at [www.bionicearshow.org](http://www.bionicearshow.org)

Visitors to the Sensory Tunnel will walk through a pitch black tunnel and experience a variety of touch and smells sensations -a real taste of a life without sight.

See and Hear also includes complimentary eye screening by the Shropshire Local Optical Committee.

SDN will have a stand at the show, so call in and say hello. BSL & deafblind Interpreters will be available all day, and a free shuttle bus service will run every half hour from Shrewsbury train station, with the first bus at 9.30. For further details visit: <http://bit.ly/AhQEuv>

# Bedroom tax starts claiming its victims

**Since last month social housing tenants have had to pay for rooms which are deemed spare by the Government. But the rules have been strongly criticised as unfair and the Government is being urged to exempt from them people with access and impairment-related needs.**

Access needs and the lack of alternative accessible housing mean that disabled tenants are trapped in a situation where they will have to pay more rent, unless they can prove they require ongoing overnight care.

Gill Payne, director of campaigns and neighbourhoods at the National Housing Federation, says that 660,000 people will be hit by the bedroom tax, two-thirds of whom are disabled.

'For decades, housing associations have been

encouraged to build bigger family homes so that families settle in one home for life, creating happy and stable communities.

'Now the housing policy has changed and those same people are being penalised. It is desperately unfair,' she said. Just one example of a disabled person who has fallen victim to the bedroom tax is a wheelchair user who has children aged 11 and three and who lives in a three-bedroom bungalow that has been adapted to meet her access needs.

She has been told she is under-occupying her property on the basis that her children could share a room. 'I will need to pay an extra £23 a week to stay but I have no income apart from my benefits,' she said.

Deborah Stephenson, Director of Operations at Habinteg Housing

Association, which provides accessible housing, said that disabled people in social housing were taking a disproportionate and unfair hit because of the under-occupation rules.

She said: 'Among our housing stock we have identified over 500 tenants who will be affected: 45% live in wheelchair accessible properties and as many as 75% are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance. These tenants, who were allocated properties based on their household's needs, are now going to be hit hard by the bedroom tax or face a difficult search for smaller properties that will not meet their needs so well.

'But for most, down-sizing is simply unfeasible due to the chronic shortage of wheelchair accessible properties, so they are faced with an inevitable rise in housing costs.' [From Disability Now]

Getting help on beating the tax

• If you are subject to the bedroom tax, then visit <http://speye.wordpress.com/>, run by Joe Halewood, of Housing Support Management (<http://www.hsmonline.co.uk>), who says they have advised more than 200 supported housing providers. He has written a great deal on his blog about the bedroom tax and how to challenge it. [From Shropshire ME Group Newsletter, April 2013]



# Paralympics give adaptive rowing a timely boost

Among Paralympiadaptive csGB's bevy of Gold medal winners at London 2012 was the mixed coxed four, boosting the profile to a Paralympic sport that hasn't been around all that long. Adaptive rowing events were held at the Games for the first time in 2008, but the growth of adaptive rowing as a sport in Britain goes back further, to late 1990s.

As Madeleine Millichap, Adaptive Co-ordinator at the national governing body for rowing, British Rowing, explains: "There were only a few clubs in the UK that had members with a visual impairment, or who were hearing impaired. Now, including everyone under and over 16, it's well into the hundreds – probably about 500, maybe more than that."

Adaptive rowing is evidently growing fast – but what is the best way of getting involved? What does the sport entail, and what can people get out of it?

For those new to the sport, the first step is to try the rowing machine at their local club. 'There's loads of adaptations to help people access an indoor rowing machine, even for people who can't physically get out of a wheelchair,' Millichap says.



'You'd do that for a few sessions and then go out in a boat. We're also seeing interest from a lot of people who have the use of their legs but need a seat with support, so we're seeing if we can bring out an adapted sliding seat.'

Once out on the water, the rest is then up to the individual.

Last September British Rowing put on a National Adaptive Rowing Camp at London Regatta Centre for those wanting to commit to the sport, and there are plans to do something similar again this year.

Details of UK rowing clubs with adaptive rowing facilities are available from the British Rowing website; to find out more about getting started, contact [madeleine.millichap@britishrowing.org](mailto:madeleine.millichap@britishrowing.org)

For those wanting to race competitively, the first step involves being assessed and placed into one of three classifications, depending on your disability.

Hilary Birkinshaw is 43 and was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis nine years ago. She competed in her first adaptive rowing race at the 2011 Henley Women's Regatta and took part in an Adapted Rowing Camp held to coincide with the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

She says the beauty of adaptive rowing is that it is adaptable to any individual. 'I try to go out on the water once a week. I also train on the rowing machine once a week.

People can put as much or as little into it as they want. If they just want to turn up in the morning and spend a gentle half hour on the river, they can if that's what works for them.

'I find the more I do, the better I feel – it keeps me going. I can occasionally push at my limits and get tired, but it's different for each individual, depending on their disability or condition.'  
[Adapted from Access magazine, <http://www.accessmagazine.co.uk>

## George Orwell and the bedroom tax

In his novel 1984 George Orwell invented Newspeak, the language of 'The Party'. Newspeak meant it was possible to challenge, change, even negate the existential status of concepts, ideas and ideologies which ran counter to The Party. Language becomes the ultimate tool of power.

Orwell also developed the concept of Doublethink - the ability to believe that two entirely

contradictory propositions can be true. While much of Orwell's thinking was taken from his view of Stalinism, much of it has proved useful to successive political regimes in this country.

So, when it comes to politics, disability and the implementation of policy, we find a Government claiming that welfare reform is not about reducing spending while, at the same time, proclaiming that the

welfare bill has to be reduced. How can the 'bedroom tax' be described by the Government as a subsidy - the spare room subsidy - and a penalty - the under-occupancy penalty?

This embodies many elements of Orwell's oppressive and repressive society, including the one where, if the ruling party says that two plus two is five, we are all required to believe it. [edited, from Disability Now]

# Charities fail to tell donors what they want to know

**Nearly half of UK voluntary organisations receive most of their funding from individuals; last year donors gave £9.3bn. Thinking about who is donating, why, and what would make them donate more, is important for the future of the charity sector, and those it helps.**

In March NPC published a major new study into charitable giving called Money for Good UK. Based on an Ipsos MORI survey of 3000 adults, it explores the habits, attitudes and motivations of UK donors.

Money for Good UK highlights the lack of a culture of giving in this country, and shows that donors find it hard to understand where their money goes, and whether the charities they support really make a difference.

Here are just some of the salient details. The full report is available at [www.thinknpc.org/publications/money-for-good-uk/](http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/money-for-good-uk/)

- Donors care about impact. Three in five pay close or extremely close attention to how their donation will be used. Donors pay little attention to being thanked for their donation.
- 38% of donors do research before making a significant donation. Most use it to help them to decide whether to donate, but almost a fifth (18%) of those who research look for information to help them decide between multiple charities.
- Giving culture in the UK is weak. Less than half of donors think people should donate to charity if they have

the means. This figure is based on a sample of those who gave over £50 in the last year, which is only around four in ten people in the total population. The sense of duty to donate may be even lower in those who donate at a lower level or not at all.

- Donors most often give in an ad hoc way, but prefer committed giving via direct debit. High-income donors (those earning more than £150k a year) show a greater preference for ad-hoc giving—one-off donations, sponsoring someone or fundraising events.
- Donors are loyal in their key charity relationships. 70% of mainstream donors have given for the last three years to the organisation where they made their largest donation, and 90% intend to give to the same organisation next year.

Charities currently under-perform in the areas donors care most about: explaining how donations are used and providing evidence of impact.

If charities met their needs better, 37% of mainstream and 54% of high-income donors say they would change their giving behaviour.

Mainstream donors would give an average £155 more, and high-income £603 more per year. This equates to an additional £665m per year—an increase in total giving of about 11%. On top of that, donors giving over £1.7bn might be willing to switch their donations to charities that did a better job in the areas they care about. [From VCSA]

Census data reveals that the number of carers in England and Wales increased from 5.2 million to 5.8 million between 2001 and 2011. The greatest rise has been among those providing over 20 hours care - the point at which caring starts to impact significantly on the health and well-being of the carer, and their ability to hold down paid employment alongside their caring responsibilities.

Shropshire has seen a sharp increase of 14% of people caring for loved ones, with over 34,260 people now caring (2011 census). Over 33% of that figure are now spending over 20 hours a week caring, and over 35% now dedicate over 50 hours a week to their caring role.

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 a year. The main carers' benefit, Carers Allowance, is £58.45 for a minimum of 35 hours - equivalent to £1.67 an hour -and is currently received by 600,000 people.

Carer numbers take a big jump upwards

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*.

That is the point Shropshire Rural Community Council (RCC) is trying to ram home when it says 'You can benefit from information and support for yourself to help you in your caring role'.

It says on its website: 'Are you feeling isolated and lonely? We are here to listen to you and offer support. Do you feel out of loop? Our free newsletter will help you keep up to date with carers issues'

The RCC can advise about your rights and help you to get the support you need, both financial and otherwise, through contact with other agencies.

It offers a 'Learning Together' programmes to help you cope with stress and provide you with practical information. It also offers a range of events and activities throughout the year, and we can also help to organize respite care. To find out more contact the Carers Support Line on 01743 341995 (Mon-Fri, 9am- 4pm)

# PIP is here, but fight for fairness shows no signs of slackening

When the BBC logged its online news story about the first stage of the new-look disability benefits scheme going live it attracted almost 850 comments. This huge response demonstrates both the controversy that surrounds the new system and the likelihood that opposition to it in the disability community is not going to go away or lie down quietly. Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith said the old 'ridiculous' system where people were given benefit with no further checks had to end.

But cerebral palsy charity Scope says the changes have been designed just to save money. That charge has been denied by the Government, which says spending will not be reduced, but more help will be given to those who need it most

There are currently 3.3m people claiming DLA, compared to 1.1m when it was introduced in 1992.

Scope says 600,000 people will eventually lose their financial support because they will not be eligible for PIP.

The disability benefits changes are the latest in a round of welfare reforms introduced at the start of April. Figures from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) show that more than 70% of claimants get DLA for

life. But ministers say the circumstances of some individuals can improve over time, so there is a case for more regular assessment.

Mr Duncan Smith told the Daily Mail: 'Seventy per cent of people on it have lifetime awards which means no-one sees you ever again. It doesn't matter if you get better or your condition worsens - it's quite ridiculous.

'Taxpayers pay out £50bn in sickness and disability benefits - we're ahead of pretty much every other major country in the G20. So this is not exactly what you would call harsh - this is quite reasonable to get it back under control and stop the unnecessary growth levels.'

Minister for Disabled People Esther McVey said PIP would give more targeted support than DLA which was 'an outdated benefit... and needs reform to better reflect today's understanding of disability.'

One of the new assessment criteria that has been heavily criticised is the rule to judge how far a person can walk. Claimants who are unable to walk more than 20m will qualify for the benefit, rather than the previous distance of 50m.

It will be two years before most existing claimants begin moving

to PIP. But even before the majority of face-to-face re-assessments have taken place, the Government claims the introduction of PIP will reduce spending by a total of £2.2bn between now and May 2016 compared to spending projected under an unchanged system.

How can ministers know that?

BBC reporter Emma Tracey said the 55-page DLA application form will not be missed, but that many disabled people have concerns that PIP assessors will not be able to fully grasp the extent of their needs.

Disability groups have argued that DLA is one of the most effectively targeted benefits, with an estimated fraud rate of just 0.5%.

Scope says DLA does need to be reformed but the new changes mean a 'financial lifeline is being cut'.

The charity's chief executive, Richard Hawkes, said: 'The assessment itself has been designed to achieve a budget target of the reductions that the government talked about in the Comprehensive Spending Review. They said there was going to be a 20% reduction, then developed an assessment that will deliver that.'

[Edited, from BBC News online]

## Churches speak out over 'manipulation'

A new churches' report shows how evidence and statistics have been misused, misrepresented and manipulated to create untruths that stigmatise poor people, welfare recipients and those in receipt of benefits. It has been published by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, through their Joint Public Issues Team [From Shropshire ME Group Newsletter, April 2013]

## Women's test magazine

A Masters student at Sheffield University is seeking to launch a test magazine for disabled women aged 16-25. Hadley, the student, wants it to accurately reflect the needs and tastes of the audience, and has designed a survey which is at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/HJZG2> MT [From Scope website]

# Disability and cinema: signs of change ahead?

*In an essay originally broadcast on BBC Radio 4's arts programme Front Row, disabled film critic Scott Jordan Harris looks at the recent bumper crop of disability related films. He asks if a watershed has been reached in cinema's approach to physical and sensory impairment. We are grateful to the blog at BBC Ouch! website for this transcript.*



A moment from Rust and Bone

Rust and Bone, The Sessions, Amour and Untouchable are all fine films. They are accurate and unflinching in the way they address a range of topics - most notably sex and independence - that affect disabled people in ways they do not affect the able-bodied. But I doubt these films do quite enough that we would regard them, a decade from now, as major milestones in the development of cinema's approach to disability.

It is telling that the two of these four films not based on true stories - Amour and Rust and Bone - feature characters becoming disabled. In fiction films at least, disability is often only something that suddenly afflicts an energetic able-bodied person: a soldier who loses his legs in battle, say, or - as in Rust and Bone - a trainer at a sea life centre who loses hers in a spectacular accident involving a killer whale.

It sometimes seems like film-makers believe audiences will only be interested in the business

of becoming disabled, and the short-term psychological effects thereof, when I'm certain the reverse is true. How we became disabled is often the least interesting thing about us. It is how we spend our lives afterwards that is usually most worth documenting, as evidenced by The Sessions and Untouchable. They tell the true stories of paralysed men who did extraordinary things. Or rather, who refused to be prevented from doing ordinary things.

But to me, the key characteristic of these films is that they feature disabled characters but not disabled actors. We are now amused to recollect that, in Elizabethan theatre, all the female roles were played by boys and we cringe to recall that white actors once routinely blacked up. After the true watershed for depictions of disability in film, we will, I hope, question why any disabled character is ever played by an able-bodied actor.

There are, of course, greatly

acclaimed disabled actors and there have been for many years. As long ago as 1946, Harold Russell, who lost both his hands in World War II, won two Oscars for his portrayal, in The Best Years of Our Lives, of a serviceman who had suffered the same fate.

And the deaf actress Marlee Matlin remains the youngest person, able-bodied or disabled, male or female, to win an Oscar for best performance in a leading role.

She received the academy award in 1987 for her portrayal of Sarah Norman, in Children of a Lesser God, aged just 21.

But Russell and Matlin, and a few other notable examples, are glorious exceptions to cinema's overriding rule that disabled people exist to be imitated as a test of an able-bodied actor's range and skill but not to be recruited by casting agents.

Any film about disabled people, however, deserves applause for existing at all. I hope we soon see many more like the four I've focussed on here, because the greater number of characters with disabilities there are to play, the more chances that disabled actors will get to play them.

I hope, too, that we soon see many more films that do not focus primarily on disability but in which disabled characters are simply sewn into the fabric of the story, just as we are sewn into the fabric of life.

## Art and carers

Artist-led workshops for carers are held every week at Wyldwoods, Broseley, TF12 5JH, from 11.00–3.00. For more information phone 01952 884224 or email artyaml@hotmail.co.uk or steph@wyldwoods.co.uk

## Pamper days for carers

Pamper days for carers are held on the first and third Tuesday of each month at Haybridge Hall, Hadley. Carers can relax and treat themselves to some pampering, choosing from back, head, foot or hand massage. Treatments are free to registered carers.

There is a period of relaxation and meditation at the end of the session. Booking is essential as places are limited and fill quickly – telephone 01952 240209.

# Spartacus 1, Coalition 0

Coalition ministers are being ridiculed for refusing to speak to the unfunded but highly effective disability rights campaigning group, Spartacus.

Ministers claim they will not meet with the campaigners because – essentially – wearespartacus has been mean about the policies of the Department of Work and

Pensions. Ministers seem to have taken particular exception to the following quote from the foreword of a Spartacus report in which the work capability assessment was compared to 'the medical tribunals that returned shell-shocked and badly wounded soldiers to duty in the First World War or the German 'KV-machine', the medical

commission the Nazis used in the Second World War to play down the severity of wounds so that soldiers could be reclassified as fit for service on the Eastern front.'

For the wearespartacus reaction visit <http://tinyurl.com/6qhj3hk>.

[From Shropshire ME Group Newsletter, April 2013]

**An influential Commons committee could be set to investigate the use of misleading statistics on disability benefits by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) ministers.**

Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith and Esther McVey, the minister for disabled people, have been criticised in the last month for using misleading statistics on disability living allowance (DLA) to try to justify their welfare reforms. They were the latest in a long list of DWP ministers criticised for misusing figures.

Now a Labour member of the work and pensions select committee, Sheila Gilmore, says the practice has to stop. 'This is just the latest example of Tory ministers knowingly misusing figures on benefits ... This is part of a campaign to undermine public trust in the UK's welfare system, which has afforded the Government cover. In its attempts to reduce the deficit, cutting benefits is seen as more of a priority than taxing the richest.

'So we have to fight back. As a member of the work and pensions select committee, I will now push for an inquiry into the misuse of statistics by ministers. This would send a message that this practice has to stop.'

The committee – which is chaired by the disabled Labour MP Dame Anne Begg – is due to decide in the next few weeks which new inquiries it plans to tackle.

## MPs set to probe misleading use of benefits stats by ministers

Tracey Lazard, chief executive of Inclusion London, said her organisation would welcome a decision to investigate the issue.

'It is ongoing and we think it is contributing to the whole hostile climate against disabled people, as well as misleading the public. We would welcome some scrutiny'

A written submission to the Leveson inquiry on press standards by disabled people's organisations including the UK Disabled People's Council and the Disability Hate Crime Network, pointed to strong evidence that disabled people were facing an increase in targeted hostility as a result of newspaper stories based on the misuse of benefits figures by DWP ministers.

McVey and Duncan Smith have both been caught this month quoting increases in the overall number of DLA claimants – including older people and children – to try to explain why

they need to cut the number of people claiming working-age DLA, at a time when the number of working-age claimants has actually been falling.

Duncan Smith claimed disabled people were scrambling to 'get ahead' of the tougher regime that will be introduced alongside the new personal independence payment (PIP), which will replace working-age DLA.

But he used numbers showing the total number of DLA claims, which rose by 49,000 over the year, rather than working-age claimants, which fell by 5,650.

DWP ministers have also been accused of making misleading use of employment and support allowance statistics, in an attempt to justify cuts and reforms to incapacity benefit.

Dame Anne said: 'This is not the first time the DWP has misrepresented the numbers of people claiming DLA.'  
[From The Fed website, 18 April]

In the past two years, almost £2bn has been cut from adult social care in real terms, according to surveys by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services - and there are no more easy options for reducing services. Authorities face tough trade-offs - for example, between sustaining investment in preventive services and meeting the growing costs of supporting people with the most complex needs.

Against this backdrop, Community Care online magazine examined savings proposals from 18 local authorities to identify how authorities are cutting back.

### **Residential care cuts**

One source of savings was found in almost all of the 18 councils - a reduction in spending on residential care services through investment in less expensive alternatives such as supported living, reablement, telecare provision, or short-term crisis support.

Sarah Pickup, president of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, says this trend is good for people and council budgets. 'It is good practice to support people in the community rather than in care homes,' she says. 'Not only is this better for them, but the evidence is that this is normally less expensive.'

### **Personal budgets savings**

Another area where councils believe there are savings to be made is personal budgets: 12 out of the 18 have identified some savings from self-directed support for the coming year. Croydon expects making better use of personal budgets to yield savings of £50,000 in 2013-14 and £150,000 in 2014-15. Meanwhile, Rochdale believes personal budgets mean its assessment and support planning teams can function with fewer social work qualified staff. It aims to move to an average ratio of 40% professionally qualified to 60% non-professionally qualified.

### **Cutting bureaucracy**

Martin Routledge, head of

# Personalisation, volunteers and outsourcing - the options for councils

As councils enter their third consecutive year of budget cuts, three factors are emerging as key sources of savings - personal budgets, shifting care out of residential settings and outsourcing. Community Care online magazine looked at the proposals for adult social care savings made by a range of councils across the country, including Shropshire. This report is taken from its findings.

operations at In Control, the social care charity that pioneered self-directed support, says there is potential for councils to save money and improve outcomes by removing unnecessary bureaucracy from the personal budgets process. 'A real problem is that in too many places, unnecessary processes and rules are adding costs,' says Routledge. 'If these were removed, councils would save money.'

But, he says, there is a danger in treating personalisation as a way to reduce budgets, which risks turning it 'into something that people feel they have to resist rather than embrace - it is really unhelpful.'

### **Outsourcing**

A third area where a few of the councils examined have earmarked savings is in the transfer of their remaining in-house care services to new providers.

Rochdale believes it can save £500,000 in 2013-14 by setting up a social enterprise to run remaining in-house services, mostly community-based support services for people with learning disabilities.

The council says in-house services are currently more expensive than those provided by external providers and would not be sustainable without reduced costs. Setting up a social enterprise would enable this, it

believes. Meanwhile, Newcastle council is proposing to set up a care co-operative to run its remaining in-house services, which currently cost £13.6m a year. It believes this would secure the future of these services by 'enabling them to trade in the open market'. Expected savings would total £524,000 in the second year of the co-operative and £994,000 in the third.

### **Increased flexibility**

Craig Dearden-Phillips, the chief executive of social enterprise consultancy Stepping Out, says social enterprises can potentially save councils money by being more flexible in service delivery and employment, including the use of volunteers.

'You have to be very careful about that and very organised but you can do that and there is a very valid role for volunteers in social care. Remember most social care is provided by people who are not being paid and so it's really about acknowledging that and supporting it properly.'

He wants all councils to follow Rochdale and Newcastle's approach: 'In my view there is no reason why councils should still be in the business of providing services. What they should be doing is commissioning services properly and safeguarding people properly. Sometimes councils are so tied up with the business of providing that they are not doing the other stuff around commissioning and safeguarding very well.'

[From Community Care 13.03.13]

# County ME group plans campaign for awareness week

National ME Awareness Week runs from 12-18 May this year and the Shropshire group is planning a campaign – 'Do Something For ME' - to raise awareness and also to fund-raise. Traditionally, the group has held its annual conference to support the National ME Awareness Week but this year's conference is to be held in October.

Ideas for the May campaign include:  
Explaining ME to family/friends/carers, or even just

passing on a leaflet or a website address; asking at your doctor's if they have the ME 'Purple Booklet' and if not, suggesting they get it; having a few friends in for tea and cake or persuading friends or neighbours to have a coffee morning; a tabletop sale or bring and buy; persuading someone to organise a wine and cheese party; and (YV editor's personal favourite) holding a garden sleep-in - snooze on the lawn and charge for tea and biscuits. [From Shropshire ME Group Newsletter, April 2013]

## Moving the goalposts on eligibility for PIP

**Having spent time and money acting responsibly to minimise the physical impact of her impairment, Emma Bowler fears that she may have shot herself in the foot. This is her story.**



When I was 17, I was awarded the higher rate mobility component of DLA for life. I got it on the basis that walking would cause a serious deterioration in my health because I have a rare disability called Kniest Syndrome, which means I am short-statured and all of my joints are deformed and prone to wear and tear.

In many ways, giving me DLA was an insurance against this deterioration which would otherwise have resulted in considerable costs to the NHS. I used my DLA to get a Motability car, which enabled me to work and pay taxes [to subsidise a public transport system for non-disabled people...]

I believe that having a car, and a lifetime of carefully managing my mobility, has resulted in me still being mobile 26 years down the line.

But as I edge into my mid-40s, I feel that I have to face up to the fact that I am getting older. I can feel my joints stiffening up,

aching, and the tiniest of movements can lock a hip, which is excruciatingly painful until I manage to somehow unlock it.

So one of my 2013 resolutions was to see whether gait analysis, where a specialist looks at the way you walk and sees whether this can be improved by adjusting your shoes and wearing insoles, might help.

In light of the Government shifting the goalposts on eligibility for the new personal independence payments, my resolution is completely ironic because the better my mobility, the less likely I am to qualify.

This potential downgrading of my disabled status is just ridiculous. I've not suddenly received a miraculous cure: I still have the same condition, which is only

likely to get worse. All the Government is doing is moving the goalposts so it can justify taking away money - under the guise of saving it - from the group of people it has persistently demonised as work-shy benefit-scrouring scum.

The original purpose of DLA was to balance out the inequalities between disabled and non disabled people, so where a non-disabled

person could get away with not having a car because they could use public transport, many disabled people, like myself, simply couldn't and so DLA covered that extra cost.

I will just have to find the money from somewhere to buy and maintain a car because not having a car isn't an option for me. But I know there will be many disabled people out there who simply won't be able to find this money and they will be forced to give up jobs, turn to social services for help, claim other benefits, be housebound or all of these things.

Not only is that not saving money, it's a horrific step back in time. Take a minute to write to your MP and complain about this now via the Hardest Hit website. [From Disability Now]

# London Marathon sets new benchmark

The London Marathon went beyond what was expected in disability sport. This year more disabled athletes - not in chairs - joined the throng. Amputees and visually impaired athletes also ran the 26-mile 385-yard route.



but their starting pistol went off three minutes later. As in the Paralympics each athlete was classified by impairment to ensure fairness, a kind of codified handicapping system (ignore the irony!)

Richard Whitehead (pictured), a double-amputee 'bladerunner' was not eligible for a medal.

He's a 'T42' class and no one else of that class was running in the marathon. He did it for the experience and to try to get his time down - his personal best is 2:42:52.

The lack of women and the small

field of athletes signposted the reason why this new race exists. The International Paralympic Committee is keen to extend road racing opportunities and to grow the number of marathon runners at future Games.

Other limb-impaired athletes were from abroad, including Brazil, Canada, and Germany.

There were no visually impaired athletes from the UK competing at the event.

It's the first time that 'standing up' athletes have run in a city marathon along with the now well-established wheelchair racers.

# Britain's new ice men come in from the cold

What is sledge hockey? And why should we be cheering for Team GB to qualify for the 2014 Winter Paralympics? 'It's the disabled version of ice hockey,' says GB sledge hockey goalie Rob Gaze. 'Most of the rules are the same, except obviously most of us can't move our legs.'

He started playing the rough and ready disability sport after a spinal injury eight years ago. 'We sit in a little chair, which is strapped to a frame, which has skates on the bottom. And we use two sticks rather than one. They're about a quarter of the length of normal hockey sticks but have the same shooting head on. They have [ice] picks on the bottom so we can push around on the ice.'

Gaze also plays wheelchair basketball too but said: 'There's something about being on that ice. It's cold but it's hot



... there's the mental game of psyching out opponents like in wheelchair basketball, but it's also very physical. It's one of the best sports in the world.'

Comparisons are made between sledge hockey and wheelchair rugby. People were shocked and delighted during the London Paralympics by the hitherto unlikely sight of disabled people being turfed out of their chairs onto the court. Sledge hockey is similar because of the speed, the

contact and the number of injuries received during play.

'The GB sledge hockey team describe themselves as underdogs. According to Gaze, this is a status they like.

They surprised everyone recently by winning bronze at the world championships in Japan and it has earned them a place at the final tournament later this year.

Winning a bronze there will mean they qualify for the 2014 Winter Paralympics in Sochi, Russia.

So, will they make it? Gaze said: 'I'm a bit nervous but we can do it. We push ourselves harder every time we go out, and people have started taking notice.

'So there's not much more you could want.'

[From BBC Ouch!]



**This is a shortened version of an article from the British Association for Supported Employment**

Disabled people are facing an unprecedented attack on their ability to live and work independently. Planned welfare reform changes will lead to reduced entitlements to welfare benefits, tax credits and housing benefit.

We have particular concern about some of the consequences of introducing Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and changes to housing benefit. These coincide with cuts to service provision, worsening access to welfare rights advice and a move to funding provision through personal budgets, which in many cases is simply a means of rationing support.

It's getting more difficult to access local social care support as local authorities tighten their eligibility criteria and many people with more severe disabilities are finding it impossible to access Government funded employment programmes.

An increasing number of people are being told that they're too independent to access social care but too far from the labour market to access employment support.

# Disability and welfare cuts

A number of reports have highlighted the impact of these changes though the Government has not carried out an equality impact assessment to gauge the cumulative effect of these changes.

The Government has said that disabled people won't lose out financially as transitional arrangements will be in place but these will not apply to new claimants.

There are a number of campaigns that are actively opposing the changes. Just some are listed here.

## **Campaign for a Fair Society**

The Campaign wants power and control to shift from government to citizens, families and communities. But we don't want the Government's 'Big Society' if that means a loss of basic human rights and unfair cuts focused on the most vulnerable. We want a fair society. We want to see the current broken system change. But change needs to be

underpinned by fairness and a vision for the kind of society we want to live in.

## **Centre for Welfare Reform**

The Centre works to redesign the welfare state in order to increase social justice, promote citizenship, strengthen families and enrich our communities.

## **Citizens Advice**

Do you want to live in a society with a just, efficient welfare benefit system that supports those who need it, when they need it most? So does Citizens Advice.

## **Disabled People Against Cuts**

DPAC fights for justice and human rights for all disabled people.

## **Hardest Hit**

The Hardest Hit campaign, organised jointly by the Disability Benefits Consortium (DBC) and the UK Disabled People's Council, sends a clear message to the Government: stop these cuts now.

## Disabled critic showed how it's done!

**The late Roger Ebert was one of the world's most respected film critics. He was also an inspirational figure for disabled people, says Scott Jordan Harris, a writer with ME.**



'Since he died on 4 April, so many articles have been written about the American film critic that even those who had not previously heard of him, now know he was the most famous and acclaimed film critic in the world. Many of the tributes say how admirably he faced the cancer that eventually killed him.

But far less attention has been given to the inspirational example he set for disabled people. In 2006, after repeated surgery which was only partly successful, Ebert lost the ability to speak and to eat. He had to be tube-fed. And ... he encountered painful mobility issues. But he kept working.

In 2007, Forbes magazine declared Ebert 'the most powerful pundit in America'. His reputation increased after he became disabled. To the Pulitzer Prize he earned in 1975 while able-bodied, he added a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Four years after he lost the power of speech, he won a Webby award as the internet's 'person of the year'.

President Obama acknowledged his death. Disabled people are often told we have the opportunity to participate in any profession. But seldom, if ever, are we told we can rise to its peak. Ebert proved you can be severely disabled and still be the best in the world at what you do. His profile grew after becoming disabled. He could no longer talk on television, which had made him a star, so he reached an even larger audience by speaking through his blog, Facebook and his beloved Twitter.'

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Contacts that  
can help

**A4U Disability Advice Centre** - Guildhall,  
Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ;  
01743 256218; [advice@a4u.org.uk](mailto:advice@a4u.org.uk)

**Autonomy** - self-help and social for Aspergers in  
Shropshire, Telford and Borders -  
[autonomyshropshire@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:autonomyshropshire@yahoo.co.uk)

**Care Farming West Midlands** -  
[www.carefarmingwm.org.uk](http://www.carefarmingwm.org.uk);  
[stewart.scull@carefarmingwm.org.uk](mailto:stewart.scull@carefarmingwm.org.uk) or  
Mobile:07957 839634

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

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

**Community Directory** for Shropshire, Telford &  
Wrekin

<http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/community.nsf>

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

**Disability Directory** – Information, aids and  
mobility services

[www.ableize.com/Disabled-Groups-and-Clubs-by-County/Shropshire/](http://www.ableize.com/Disabled-Groups-and-Clubs-by-County/Shropshire/)

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

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

**Disability Resource Centre**, Lancaster Road,  
Shrewsbury, SY1 3NJ; 01743 450 912;  
[robin.durham@shropshire-cc.gov.uk](mailto:robin.durham@shropshire-cc.gov.uk)  
[www.the-svab.org.uk](http://www.the-svab.org.uk).

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

**Enable** - supported employment services for  
people with disabilities in Shropshire and Telford,  
Unit 4, Owen House, Radbrook Road,  
Shrewsbury, SY3 9SR;  
[enable@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:enable@shropshire.gov.uk). 01743 276900

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

**Healthwatch Shropshire** - 4 The Creative  
Quarter, Shrewsbury Business Park, Shrewsbury,  
SY2 6LG; 01743 237884;  
[enquiries@healthwatchshropshire.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchshropshire.co.uk);  
[www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk)

If your organisation or cause is not listed here  
please let us know. Email the editor at  
[newsletter@shropshire-disability.net](mailto:newsletter@shropshire-disability.net) or write  
to him: Peter Staples, 8 Gorse Lane, Bayston  
Hill, Shrewsbury, SY3 0JJ

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

**Listen Not Label** - User Led Organisation for  
disabled and carers in Telford & Wrekin (Tina  
Jones, manager), 01952 211421, Meeting Point  
House, Southwater Square, Telford, TF3 4HS

**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](mailto:meconnect@meassociation.org.uk)

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

**Multiple Sclerosis Society** - 01952 250038;  
[www.mssociety.org.uk/telford](http://www.mssociety.org.uk/telford)

**NHS Choices** -

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

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

**Parent and Carer Council (PACC)** Full entry next  
page - making parents and carers aware of  
developments that affect their children and giving  
them a voice - [www.paccshropshire.org.uk](http://www.paccshropshire.org.uk); PO  
Box 4774, Shrewsbury, SY1 9EX; 0845 661 2205;  
[enquiries@paccshropshire.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@paccshropshire.org.uk)

**Parent Partnership Service** -

[www.parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.org.uk/#/useful-links/4551168089](http://www.parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.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](mailto:info@podstelford.org); [www.podstelford.org](http://www.podstelford.org)

**Primary Care Trust**

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

**RNIB**

[www.info.rnib.org.uk/exe/Agencies/Details.pl?480](http://www.info.rnib.org.uk/exe/Agencies/Details.pl?480)

**Scope (Cerebral Palsy)** -

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

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

**Shrewsbury Hard of Hearing Club** - URC hall,  
Coleham Head, Shrewsbury, SY3 7BJ; Contact  
Erica Horner 01743 873540,  
[ericahorner2@googlemail.com](mailto:ericahorner2@googlemail.com)

**Shropshire ME Group**-

[www.shropshiremegroup.org.uk](http://www.shropshiremegroup.org.uk); 07516 401097

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

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## **Shropshire Peer Counselling and Advocacy Service.**

[www.shropshirepcas.co.uk/default.htm](http://www.shropshirepcas.co.uk/default.htm)

**Shropshire Volunteering Team** - Promote your volunteering opportunities.

<http://shropshirevcs.org.uk/site/volunteering/>

## **Shropshire and Staffordshire Heart and Stroke**

**Network** Lambda House, Hadley Park East, Telford, Tf1 6QJ; Email:

[yuen-ting.cheung@shropshirepct.nhs.uk](mailto:yuen-ting.cheung@shropshirepct.nhs.uk) 01952 228490

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

**VCSA** - Voluntary & Community Sector Assembly

[www.shrop.net/shropvcsassembly](http://www.shrop.net/shropvcsassembly)

**Voluntary Association for the Blind** (linked to RNIB)

## **Shropshire Council Disability Services** -

[www.shropshire.gov.uk/disability.nsf](http://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=1000101](http://www.telford.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.aspx?fileID=116&categoryID=1000101)

## News round-up for carers (plus more news on other pages)

### **Carers Week**

Carers Week will be from 10-16 June, with many events and information sessions for carers. Visit [www.carers.org/carers-services/find-your-local-service](http://www.carers.org/carers-services/find-your-local-service) to find out what is happening locally.

### **Change of venue for Shrewsbury carers' group**

The Shrewsbury Carers' Support Group that meets on the last Thursday of each month is moving to the Armdale Community Centre off Woodcote Way. The next meeting is 30 May from 7-8.30pm and all adult carers are welcome. For further details ring 01743 341995.

### **Carers' arts workshops in Telford**

Telford Carers Forum is organising arts workshops at The Place, Oakengates. Mixed Craft starts on Wednesday 8 May (10:30 – 12:30) for eight weeks; Drawing and Painting starts Friday 10 May at the same times for eight week. Call Naomi Middleton on 01952 382365.

### **Practical carer workshops**

Free practical workshops for family carers are on offer in the Telford area. Subjects include: Ways to Well Being, Safe Handling, and Understanding Dementia. Call 01743 237888

### **Carers' grants**

The Triangle Trust 1949 Fund is open to applications (deadline 14 May) from organisations working with carers. Among other requirements, organisations must support unpaid carers. Application forms are available to complete online from <http://www.triangletrust.org.uk>

### **Something to sing about!**

If you enjoy singing!, consider joining the Carers' Choir which meets at Sutton Hill Community Centre in Telford. Call Naomi Middleton on 01952 382365.

## **Parent & Carer Council Shropshire**

[www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups](http://www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups)

PACC provides an index of support groups for children with disabilities in Shropshire. The following groups are listed on the PACC site. Where possible we list direct contacts, but refer to the PACC site for full details)

**Allsorts** (South Shropshire, for behavioural conditions) 07813043841

[www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/71-allsorts](http://www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/71-allsorts)

**Bridgnorth Buddies** (Parent-led, Special Needs)

07968 544182 or 07790 780631; email

[Buddies20@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Buddies20@yahoo.co.uk)

[www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/72-bridgnorth-buddies](http://www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/72-bridgnorth-buddies)

**Houghton School, Telford**, drop-in for parents of pupils with more complex special needs) 01952

387551 or 01952 387552; [www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/83-houghton-school-drop-in](http://www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/83-houghton-school-drop-in)

Onevision (visual impairment) 01952 385269

[www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/77-onevision](http://www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/77-onevision)

**STACS (Aspergers,16+)** 01952 254594 or 01939

260273; email [louise.griffiths@carerscontact.org.uk](mailto:louise.griffiths@carerscontact.org.uk)

[www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/76-stacs](http://www.paccshropshire.org.uk/parent-and-carer-groups/76-stacs)

**Autistic Supporters** (if you suspect your child is autistic, or has recently been diagnosed) 01743 356298

[www.shropshireautisticsupporters.co.uk/?q=node/2](http://www.shropshireautisticsupporters.co.uk/?q=node/2)

**Deaf Children's Society** 01952 770019; email:

[nat4sdcs@aol.com](mailto:nat4sdcs@aol.com); [www.ndcs.org.uk](http://www.ndcs.org.uk)

**Down's Syndrome** 01743 233802, 01948 880110 or 01588 640319; [www.dsa-shropshire.org.uk](http://www.dsa-shropshire.org.uk)

**Dyslexia Association** 01743 231205;

[www.thesda.org.uk](http://www.thesda.org.uk)

**Wheelchair Users** 01743 350460 or 01952 252243

**SKiD** (Shropshire Kids Insulin Dependent, associated with Diabetes UK) 01743 873724 or 01743 364366; email: [home@morkot.go-plus.net](mailto:home@morkot.go-plus.net)

**SPECTRUM (Autistic Support group)** email:

[netgriffiths@fsmail.net](mailto:netgriffiths@fsmail.net); [www.spectrum.t83.net/](http://www.spectrum.t83.net/)

**Telford STAA** (supports parents/carers of children with ASD, ADHD, and challenging behaviour) 01952 457439 or 01952 617758; email:

[julie@parentpartnershipshropshireandtelford.org.uk](mailto:julie@parentpartnershipshropshireandtelford.org.uk) or [lesley@parentpartnershipshropshireandtelford.org.uk](mailto:lesley@parentpartnershipshropshireandtelford.org.uk)

**Steps** (help for parents/carers, lower limb abnormalities) 01743 355363

**PODS** (Parents Opening Doors - Telford, forum for views on services) 01952457439; email:

[julie@parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.org.uk](mailto:julie@parentpartnership-shropshireandtelford.org.uk)

## **A tearoom to remember!**

Many people who have problems with gluten and dairy products find it difficult to eat out because so few places cater for their needs. However, a member of the Shropshire ME Group reported recently that she had made a great discovery in the Old Wheelwrights Tearooms on the road between Craven Arms and Clun, at the Bishops Castle crossroads.

Personal experience had made the owner both aware and savvy on the subject, and the tearooms catered well to meet these needs. The website is [www.theoldwheelwrights.co.uk](http://www.theoldwheelwrights.co.uk)

# The disability movement is at a crossroads as a raft of controversial new benefit reforms is introduced. In a recent article *The Guardian* asked charities, campaigners and social media activists what happens next. This is an extract.

## **Steve Winyard, Head of policy and campaigns, RNIB, and co-chair of the Hardest Hit coalition**

The lack of obvious leaders is a big concern for disability politics – we need disabled people themselves in those visible positions. It would be great if ‘bedactivists’ could be among those leaders. The idea of Hardest Hit is that if there's genuinely going to be a disability movement, charities and disabled people's organisations have to work together with a united voice. I don't think we impact on the Government significantly in smaller groups, but there's an enormous tendency to fragment, mainly because the charities aren't run by disabled people.

## **Richard Hawkes, Chief Executive, Scope**

At Scope, the first thing we're trying to do is recognise that we've got to work more closely with disabled people and disabled people's organisations. If I'm really honest, we've got to recognise that disability charities have contributed in the past in ways that perhaps might not have been the most useful: portraying disabled people as charitable causes is deeply unhelpful. It's absolutely crucial that we engage with government and seek to influence it. There's a place for making a noise at times ... It's fine to be critical of something, but we should also suggest a better way of doing it. It's about more than cuts, and more than the Paralympics.

## **Ellen Clifford, national steering committee member, Disabled People Against Cuts**

No one who cares about social justice can work with a Government that is intent on dismantling the welfare state, so disabled activists are having to find other means to try to stop what is happening. Legal challenges to reforms are one part of that.

They're a good way of getting access to restricted documents and exposing what is really going on behind the spin and the political rhetoric, and they can also raise awareness of issues that wouldn't otherwise get media attention... But legal challenges aren't an answer in themselves and need to run alongside other forms of awareness-raising, lobbying, protests and direct action.

## **Tom Shakespeare, disability studies academic**

Campaigners should focus on the need for welfare benefits to be fair. British people have a great belief in

fairness ... and it's only fair to expect the welfare state to meet the extra costs of being disabled or being unable to work. It's not scrounging, and it's not special treatment, because meeting those costs brings disabled people up to the same starting point as everyone else ... people do have a gut feeling of solidarity with disabled people and we can build on that.

## **Mark Harrison, Chief Executive of Equal Lives**

We run services, commissioned largely by the local authority, and have a turnover of about £3m a year, but we've also got 50 member groups and more than 500 individual members, and are probably one of the most active disabled people's organisations campaigning against cuts. I think those two sides should be joined up; politicians and local authorities should be big enough to understand that it's inevitable that a user-led organisation will be a sort of critical friend.

## **Alice Boardman, parent of two disabled children**

Every parent of a disabled child is forced to fight at the moment; every aspect of the system is against us. We're losing things all the time. Last week I was told we're no longer allowed six nappies, only four.

We're really struggling getting respite and care support, and it's like the NHS has shut its doors to us in terms of therapy ... Sometimes I can get help from a charity's legal team, if I'm a member, and sometimes their websites provide template letters

But I'd like to see it go further: I want to be able to find out what happened to other people who tried that, who was successful, and how. Someone somewhere might have won that battle already, but the charities aren't currently bringing us together to share that knowledge.

## **Liz Sayce, Chief Executive, Disability Rights UK**

It's crucial both that we draw attention to the very negative effects of policy changes, but also that we seize opportunities when they are there ... It's about seeing how we can keep alive the momentum for greater inclusion, participation, equality and human rights ... we need to be really looking at what we want the position of disabled people to be in 10 years' time, and go for it.

*The Guardian, Tuesday 2 April 2013*

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2013/apr/02/disability-benefit-welfare-reforms-cuts>