

June 2013

yourvoice

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AND MUCH MORE

Getting the message across about disability hate crime - let's all drink to that!

The campaign against hate crime is gathering pace. Supported by SDN, the Police, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils, Mencap and other agencies, a new initiative will be launched on Thursday 4 July. Meanwhile, these beer mats are getting the message across where it matters.



They are an initiative by action group True Vision in partnership with West Mercia Police. True Vision's website has a lot of useful information about hate crime, but the most important bit is that which urges victims or their families and friends to report incidents. If this is you, visit www.report-it.org.uk

Wednesday 12 June will see SDN hold its first Members' Meeting in the north of the county. The venue is Oswestry Cricket Club, in Morda Road, with refreshments at 10.30 for an 11.00am start and a 1.00 finish.

There are two guest speakers: Colin Smith from the Department for Work and Pensions on the subject of 'DLA to Pips', and Ann Johnston, the Support Service Manager of Shropshire Housing Alliance, who will talk about the impact of changes to housing benefit.

Also, Sgt David Braid of West Mercia Police is going to update us on 'Safe Places Shropshire', a project to help the victims of hate crime which has brought together the Police, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils, Mencap, SDN and several other agencies. It will be launched in the coming months.

If the meeting is well supported SDN will be able to consider adding Oswestry to Shrewsbury and Telford for regular meetings in the future.

SDN lines up speakers to help you

SDN encourages organisations to 'set out their stall' at Members' Meetings, and at Oswestry a neurologist and speech therapist are taking an Information stand. One of them, Nichola Clarke, is an SDN member.

As well as displays and one-to-one conversations with audience members, those taking stands also have five minutes to address the meeting about what they do.

Anyone wishing to know more about this for future use should call Ruby on 01743 340832

The meeting programme for the rest of the year is looking pretty exciting. There will be lots of good news to report at the SDN annual meeting in September, plus a fascinating speaker in the person of local BBC radio presenter Jim Hawkins, who is also a dab hand behind a camera

In fact, Jim has been hired by SDN to create a portfolio of professional quality pictures that we can use in our own literature and for publicity. He will talk on 'Taking a good snap and the benefits of using Twitter'.

Our last Members' Meeting of the year will be in December, when the guest speaker will be SDN member Haydn Jenkins, who specialises in helping disabled and elderly people in learning to drive with confidence. [See page 5]

And looking further ahead, we already have a couple of speakers lined up for next year's Members' Meetings – both of whom will be talking on subjects that can make a big difference to our daily lives. So keep an eye on YourVoice and the SDN website!



Are you the right person for this important role?

Here's a great job opportunity for the right kind of person. SDN is looking to recruit an honorary secretary - this is a key voluntary position for a current member or a new/potential member.

The role involves attending monthly management committee meetings, which are held in or near Shrewsbury; booking venues for meetings across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin; attending quarterly Members' Meetings; emailing information such as agendas and minutes to members prior to the Members' Meetings; and emailing details of forthcoming events to our membership. It is important that you

are a team player with good communication skills as apart from emailing members/contacts there will be times when you will need to make contact by telephone.

If the role appeals to you and you feel it is within your abilities please email enquiries@shropshire-disability.net or call the SDN chair, Sonia Roberts, on 07930 397270. You will be making a major contribution to the continuing growth and influence of a powerful voice in Shropshire on behalf of the disability community.

However, if you think you would like to do most of the job but doubt your

ability to take minutes please still apply because alternative arrangements can be made for that task.

Since its foundation in 2008 SDN has grown as the voice of disability in Shropshire. It appeared on the scene just in time – in the past five years the disabled have been put under increasing economic and political pressure, stigmatised and increasingly marginalised in society.

Without SDN and other organisations like it around the country, there would be few collective voices to represent the disabled. So please think about what you can offer. It's important!

Daisy wins town honour - and college funding!

A remarkable Wellington teenager, Daisy Nash, has won the title of Town Council Young Person of the Year. And when you look at the 16-year-old's achievements you can see why.

Daisy, who has quadriplegic spastic cerebral palsy, has led an active life playing for a top powerchair football team, was invited to Olympic trials at Boccia, plays for Telford Youth Symphony Orchestra, has choreographed a dance display at Oakengates Theatre, and piloted a light aircraft.

She has also taken part in several charity events, including last year's SDN Shropshire Hills challenge (and we hope to see her again next time!)

Daisy attends Lord Silkin School and has just been funded to attend Hereward College to do performing arts, which is her favourite subject.



Above, Daisy shows her dramatic talent, and, below, with fellow medal winners.



Hard of hearing group members like a good chat

Shrewsbury Hard of Hearing Group brings a light touch to its important business and describes itself as 'a friendly group who all understand the problems of being hard of hearing'. The group meets on the second Monday of the month at the United Reformed church hall, Coleham Head, Shrewsbury, SY3 7BJ.

There is a varied programme of speakers followed by tea and biscuits 'and a lot of chat'. The group aims to provide information on hearing related matters and 'always close the meeting with a raffle and a joke!' A loop and a text-to-screen system are used. Subscriptions are £15 a year, visitors £2. For more information contact Erica Horner on 01743 873540 or email her at ericahorner2@googlemail.com; or write to her at 41 Eric Lock Road West, Bayston Hill, Shrewsbury, SY3 0QA.



Legal Aid cuts hit Citizens' Advice

Legal aid cuts, which see welfare benefits funding virtually entirely removed, have most definitely begun - but the reality is that agencies with staff funded under Legal Aid are likely to have stopped taking on new cases some months ago. So, to some extent, the cuts to welfare benefits advice began in December or January. Where the staff who are being made redundant will now be missed, however, is in the special-

ist support they gave to volunteers in Citizens' Advice bureaux and similar agencies.

As a result of the cuts, there are already warnings of 'advice deserts' (see <http://tinyurl.com/cocb3l4>) in areas where PIP and UC are being piloted, as well as the south-west, Wales and also in the Midlands. [From Shropshire ME Group newsletter]

Day at See Hear proves a real winner for SDN

This year's See Hear Exhibition, held at the Sports Village in Shrewsbury last month, proved another very worthwhile day for Shropshire Disability Network. Ten new members were enrolled, some very good contacts made and we even met several people who offered to speak at our Members' Meetings.

In addition, we gained some more sponsors for Vic Davies who is running the Shrewsbury Marathon on Sunday 23 June on our behalf. Oh yes, and we were given a couple of raffle prizes (as hardened meeting-goers all know, these are an essential of life!)

'Both morning and afternoon at See Hear were very busy and the whole event was an improvement on last year, which had been pretty good anyway,' said Ruby Hartshorn, who led the SDN presence.

'We met some lovely people and it was impressive that so many visited



our stand to talk to us and ask for leaflets. I was amazed by the number of leaflets taken. I see this partly as a way of measuring the success of the day - last year it took well over a month to complete the follow ups. So it was another great awareness day for SDN and I love the network-

ing that takes place at these events.'

SDN chairwoman Sonia Roberts staffed our stand by herself for much of the morning, and was rewarded for her solo effort by an interview with Radio Shropshire's roving reporter. Later, Ruby, Vic (who had worked all morning as a guide) and Ian Lloyd-Jones were on duty. Ruby and Vic are pictured with Andrew Sharman of Remap [*What's Remap? See page 7*] and his wife Helen, long-standing SDN members who were visiting the exhibition.

The next See Hear Exhibition will be on 14 May 2014.

Takeoff at RAF Shawbury

Another event supported by SDN recently was a 'market place' at RAF Shawbury where Ruby, Roland, June and James staffed our stand. After the event our Community page on Face Book attracted more interest than even last year's SDN Disability Challenge (which had held the record for reaching the most people). For the first time we reached youngsters of both sexes in the 13-17 age group. Some 34% of those reached are under 34 years of age, with a further 18% aged 35-44. But the Silver Surfers were healthily represented - with 6% aged over 65. So we have a good following in all age groups.

Working with Talking Newspapers

Talking Newspapers is looking at the ever increasing needs of SDN members with vision impairment and our Publicity and Outreach Officer, Ruby Hartshorn is working with them on how best to inform members of YourVoice items.

As a first step, it has been agreed to include details of all SDN meetings and events in the weekly Talking Newspaper.

Free Ironbridge passes for carers

Ironbridge Gorge Museum is offering free passes for carers. If you are registered with the Carers Contact Centre or Telford & Wrekin Council as the carer of an adult in Telford & Wrekin, you can borrow a pass giving unlimited free access to Ironbridge Gorge Museums for up to five days.

The pass is valid for up to five people and also includes a 10% discount on purchases from the Museum shops. For details of how to apply call 01952 240209.



Telford Disability Games all set for July weekend

This year's Telford Disability Games will take place on the weekend of 13-14 July. On the Saturday Oaken-gates Leisure Centre and Telford Athletics Track will be the venues, with sessions being held between 10.00 and 4.00. And on the Sunday the venue will be Telford Ski Centre with sessions between 11.00-3.00.

Activities on Saturday will include more than 14 sports:

- Wheelchair Basketball
- Powerchair Football
- Target Boccia
- Boccia Bagatelle
- New Age Kurling
- Basketball
- Football
- Short Mat Bowls
- Dance Mats
- Rugby
- Cricket
- Athletics
- Martial Arts
- Tennis
- And much else...

These activities will be taster sessions. No booking is required, so



please just turn up. The Sunday activities at Telford Ski Centre will include:

- Sit Ski
- Snowboarding
- Skiing
- Tubing
- Tobogganing

These activities will require pre-booking. To book contact Telford Ski Centre on 01952 382688.

A week later, on Sunday 21 July, there will be Sailability sessions at Priorslee Lake between 11.00 and 4.30. Each 30 minute session can accommodate up to six people. This

also requires pre-booking. To book, contact Telford Sailability Club or book at the Telford Disability Games on 14 July at Telford Athletics Track. Telford disability Games started last year, when some 70 people of varying ages took part in the ground-breaking games, organised by Telford & Wrekin Council (opening pictured)

This year the council is continuing the legacy of London 2012 and inspiring people of all ages and abilities to get active and get involved in sport and physical activity. Sports included tennis, touch rugby, skiing and Boccia.

Organiser Rachel Threadgold said the successful event would encourage people to carry on with sport for years to come.

'A number of people tried sports for the first time. In the tennis we had wheelchair users who hadn't played before, and others were able to try climbing with harnesses.'



YourVoice in print sets the pace

Not that long ago SDN decided to print a few copies of YourVoice every month for members who can't use or have not got access to a computer. Since then demand has gone up and up, and for the issue you are now reading the number being printed is 90!

Newsletter for voluntary organisations due to launch

A new bi-monthly newsletter for voluntary organisations in Shropshire, and in Telford and Wrekin, is due to launch in August. Its primary purpose will be to carry news about voluntary organisations in both areas. It will be ready to accept articles and ads from the middle of June onwards, with a copy date of 9 August. Submissions should be sent to leslie@oyez-news.org.uk [From SIP newsletter]

Fact sheets on reforms

In the year that is seeing the biggest changes to the benefits system since it was created well over half a century ago, Disability Rights UK has produced a wide-ranging series of welfare reform fact sheets. DRUK says the fact sheets are regularly updated to keep pace with changes. They can be found at <http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org>

Build yourself up!

The 'Compass' programme is a free five-part course which looks at enhanced social skills, interpersonal problem solving, increasing self-confidence, stress management and coping skills.



It is run by Home-Start North Shropshire and Oswestry and there are course dates throughout 2013. For full details call 01948 890458 or email info@homestartnorthshropshire.org.uk



People with disabilities who don't know how to drive often lack the confidence to believe they could learn, and so limit their independence in getting about. One person who may be able to help overcome such problems is SDN member Haydn Jenkins who is a fully qualified driving instructor with his own school, Alpha.

Haydn will be speaking about disability driving at our December Members' Meeting, drawing on his 20 years'

experience in driver training and sharing his wealth of knowledge in educational special needs. Haydn has his own disability, so he has first-hand knowledge of the many adaptations that can be made to motor vehicles.

There is more information about Alpha on the A-Z listing on SDN's website and those with no IT access can call Hayden on 01743 240283 for more information. The article below is his first contribution to YourVoice

Mobility centre helps to get disabled on the road

By Haydn Jenkins
DSA ADI MIAM RoADA

I would like to introduce the North Wales Mobility and Driver Assessment Service, one of several Mobility Assessment Centres around the UK, which is a registered charity funded by the Welsh Government. Its aim is to offer impartial and professional advice that will enable people who are elderly or have a disability to achieve their optimum level of independent outdoor mobility.

I was recently invited to spend a day at the centre, which is Motability accredited, DVLA approved and a member of the Forum of Assessment Centres UK.

It offers both driver and passenger assessments that aim to provide clients with long-term mobility solutions. All assessments are conducted by qualified members of staff and are treated confidentially. Following assessment clients are provided with the necessary information and a written report of the findings and recommendations. Clients may decide to use their report as evidence of their ability when informing DVLA or insurance companies of medical history.

The driver assessment is *not* a driving test; the aim is to evaluate the physical and cognitive ability of the individual to drive a motor vehicle safely and comfortably. For clients who experience physical disability, the centre has a wide range of adapted vehicles that can

be tailored to specific requirements. Should more sophisticated, high-tech vehicle adaptations be required, the centre may be able to arrange a practical driving assessment in a suitably adapted vehicle.

For clients who experience neurological and cognitive disorders, the centre offers expert assessment of their ability, and consideration is given to the individual's cognitive abilities at a practical level. During an assessment drive, the client's concentration, perceptual and decision making abilities are explored, all of which are necessary skills to ensure safe driving.

For clients who are experiencing difficulties getting in and out of a vehicle, the centre has a wide range of equipment that may reduce or eliminate the physical effort involved. This assessment explores safe transfers and travelling needs, vehicle suitability and equipment options and stowage.

The centre offers a free information

and advice service and can advise on a range of issues, including DVLA legislation, Motability Scheme driver tuition, vehicle adaptation companies, grant funding schemes and much more. You ask the question, the centre will do its best to find the answer. These are the main reasons for contacting the centre:

- To determine your ability to drive a motor vehicle
 - For current, impartial information and advice on vehicle choice and adaptation
 - For driving instructors who have clients with disability or SEN
- If you have a client or you are a driver who is experiencing difficulty with the following:
- Physical or cognitive fatigue
 - Vehicle entry and exit
 - Stowage of equipment, such as wheelchairs scooters, etc.
 - Disability or special educational needs, learning to drive

Next month Haydn will reflect on his day in North Wales. He can be emailed at alphaautomatic@hotmail.co.uk

This year's Mobility Roadshow, the 30th, is being held at the Telford International Centre from 27-29 June. For the first time, test drives will take place on public roads around the venue, offering a more 'authentic' driving experience.



The Mobility Roadshow was the first event to offer opportunities to test

drive production model vehicles with a variety of adaptations, enabling people with disabilities the rare opportunity to 'try before you buy' - something the able-bodied just take for granted. Test drive vehicles at Telford will not just be

cars - they will also include wheelchairs, powerchairs, scooters and cycles



The right to independent living: is it about to become history?

Closure of the Independent Living Fund in 2015 will signal a return to institutional culture, says Ellen Clifford of Disabled People Against Cuts. Writing for Disability Now she says that funding for local authorities to take over the functions of the ILF will be for one year only - there is nothing after April 2016.

'The focus for 2015-16 will therefore be for local authorities to support existing ILF users to transition from their current levels of support to what is deemed to be affordable,' she says.

'That means a loss of support, an end to choice and control and in some cases a return to the institutions. Whereas the ILF was needs-

based, local authority support is dependent on available resources and local politics.'

The ILF was closed to new applicants in December 2010 without consultation or any vote in Parliament. The consultation on the future of the fund that finally appeared in 2012 was flawed and inaccessible and became the subject of a legal challenge against the Department for Work and Pensions.

According to The Guardian website, that challenge, by five disabled people, was lost in the High Court but is going to appeal. Their lawyers had asked the judge to declare unlawful the consultation process that led to the proposed axing of the £320m in-

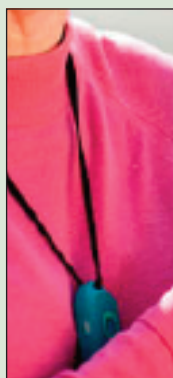
dependent living fund (ILF). Although he dismissed the application, Mr Justice Blake said many issues relating to the future funding of ILF users remained outstanding, but the issue he had to decide on was whether the consultation process had been lawful.

Lawyers acting for the five said they saw the appeal as vital and that 'the decision is quashed and the matter reconsidered on a fair and lawful basis.' The five are among 19,000 people who receive assistance from the ILF. Campaigners have warned that the proposed closure of the fund, and its transfer to local authorities, will have a catastrophic impact on the independence and life chances of severely disabled people.

'I have dementia and would sign up for a police tracking device'

Sussex police sparked controversy when they decided to fit dementia sufferers with GPS systems intended to help them stay safe and live a normal life. The police motive is basically pragmatic - to save money on costly call-outs. But care campaigners have criticised the proposals as 'inhumane'.

A writer in The Guardian disagreed. Norman McNamara wrote: 'Having lived with dementia for the last five years and committed myself to making changes for the better, I can only say that I wholeheartedly agree with Sussex police's scheme.'



'Calling these systems "tags" is putting the wrong slant on things: these are GPS systems which do not go on the ankle, but around the neck or waistband (pictured)

'For those living with people with dementia, the thought of losing them - knowing they could quite easily cross a road and be seriously injured, or catch a train to goodness knows where - is absolutely terrifying. Which is why I think most carers will welcome this proposal. All we are talking about is a new way of keeping people safe and helping them to live as normal a life as possible.'

The 'Mindme' GPS device is monitored by a local authority careline that supports vulnerable people 24 hours a day. Those who become lost or disorientated can be found by their families through a website or the careline.

As long as wearers have a mobile signal, they can be located anywhere. Information on their where-

abouts is given only to the carer or family after security checks. The device is seen as a way of helping police, who say they are regularly called out to help find people with dementia.

But Dot Gibson, the Pensioners Convention general secretary, said: 'I think they should withdraw it straight away. Trying to equate somebody who has committed a criminal act with somebody who is suffering dementia is completely wrong.'

There are more than 800,000 people with dementia in the UK. A number of local authorities already use similar devices, but this is believed to be the first time a police force has taken on such a scheme. The devices cost £27.50 a month, which includes monitoring round the clock.



Skill and ingenuity benefit 4000 disabled people a year

Remap is a charity that works through a nationwide network of volunteers who use their ingenuity and skills to make equipment for people with disabilities and thus help them achieve independence in some aspect of their lives, or to enjoy leisure opportunities previously closed to them.

Remap's unique pieces of special equipment are tailor-made and given

free to the people who need them. 'We make or modify equipment when nothing suitable is available through mainstream sources,' explained Andrew Sharman, who is an Oswestry area volunteer.

'Items are tailor-made to be suitable for individual needs and to make a real difference to people's ability to rise to a particular challenge and achieve something not otherwise

possible for them. Some of the solutions are quite complex, such as a remote controlled wheelchair, while many others are simple, such as an extension to a walking frame - but they make a big difference to someone's life.'

Further examples can be seen on the Remap website - www.remap.org.uk

Remap has 80 panels of volunteers across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and helps some 4000 people with disabilities each year. In Shropshire, the contact for the 'Salopian Panel' is Steve Bloor, who can be reached on 01743 340237. Andrew Sharman's number is 01691 671766.

Each panel consists of skilled technicians and craftsmen, and the practical skills utilised include engineering, woodworking, metal smithing, upholstery and electronics.

But there are also the 'backroom boys', the volunteers with management and administrative skills whose role is to manage the caseload and provide back-up functions.

The volunteers give their time and talents freely, and there is no cost to their 'customers'. The principle is that if someone needs help they should get it if the skills are available.

Remap is a registered charity and is funded entirely by donations, which are mostly needed to buy materials.

YourVoice got to know of Remap's work when Andrew called in for a chat at the SDN stand during See Hear last month.

PS: Remap stands for Rehabilitation Engineering Movement Advisory Panel.

Join our new Carers Forum

- Build a stronger voice for carers in Shropshire
- Develop new skills to help you influence services.
- Share your views on local services

Thursday 6th June 2013
10.30am to 12.30pm

Venue:

Mears Group Shropshire Home Services
Unit 3, Hartley Business Centre
Monkmoor Road
Shrewsbury, SY2 5ST

Let us know if you are coming or have a query.

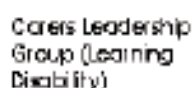
Ring 01743 341995* or

Email: carersupport@shropshire-rcg.org.uk

10am coffee and cake served

All family carers, carers groups and
carer organisations welcome

*Shropshire RCG Carers Support Service is providing interim administrative support to the Carers Forum launch event.





There are many reasons why Shropshire is a county to be proud of and a desirable place to live, but what sets Shropshire apart is its rural and breath-taking landscape. Shropshire is one of England's most rural and sparsely populated counties. All of this is a reason to love Shropshire, but with only six main towns living here means that transport, for many, is a vital part of life. We are living in difficult and challenging times, with ever increasing cuts in spending which have had a huge impact on public and social services. In recent years, economic problems have made an even bigger reduction in local services and amenities. None of this aids the plight of those who live in remote or rural areas.

When you are also disabled, increasing cuts in public transport are a real problem. We have a number of clients who live in one of the main towns of Shropshire and, perhaps surprisingly, it can also prove to be a county that is as inaccessible to live in - even within a town if you cannot find a suitable method of transport.

The majority of our clients are unable to drive or do not have the financial means to own a vehicle. However, even those who are able to drive and have access to a vehicle have experienced problems. Access to destinations is often limited by an insufficient number of disability parking spaces. If you experience mobility issues the misuse of disabled parking by non-disabled drivers is an added and unwelcome problem.

We would encourage businesses, planning authorities, attractions and retail outlets to increase provision of disability parking spaces. We would also like to see the misuse of such spaces being taken more seriously, a blind eye to an able-bodied offender often means a wasted journey, disappointment or even a serious problem for disabled drivers.

Our clients who rely on public transport are increasingly finding it difficult to find suitable and affordable transportation. Taxis are a reasonable

Time for a rethink on travel, for the sake of everyone in the county

says Lizzie Evans of
Headway Shropshire

way to travel within the county and can usually make provisions for those with disabilities and any required disability aids but at a cost that many cannot afford.

When the only options left are trains and buses, there are many problems. Trains are, unsurprisingly, less accessible as a method of transport for the disabled. If you are lucky enough to have a station in the area where you live you may struggle to get there and the chances are that the desired destination will not be within an easy walking distance of the station you arrive at.

Many train stations are not within walking distance, even for the able-bodied, of bus stations. We would encourage bus stops within train station car parks, with a frequent timetable. This would be of use not just to those with mobility issues. Train travel in Shropshire often means a taxi journey too.

If you were brought up in a rural location you probably grew up with the great sense of excitement as many of us did when we saw a bus meandering through the village. Buses

were such an infrequent sight throughout the day that a 'rarer spotted bus' was a thing of great wonder!

Well the years have advanced but the numbers of buses travelling around our county has not. In fact, on the whole, they have become a rarer sight. With this in mind it is so sad that we have had a number of incidents involving our clients where the bus drivers have declined to allow them on the bus due to their walking aids being too bulky or that they have mobility scooters with them. Sadder still, we have incidents of this happening on return journeys thus leaving the client stranded as the outward journey driver had allowed the same walking aid that the return journey driver apparently couldn't accommodate!

A letter of complaint to a local bus firm about exactly this incident has never received a reply. Further investigation with the bus drivers themselves has produced only the answer that 'it is up to the driver's discretion' on allowing passengers and what they have with them on the bus.

We don't have anyone currently using Dial A Ride, and with the exception of those who have loved ones or friends who can give them lifts, we don't have any further transportation methods being used by our clients. I would love to be able to conclude by telling you how wonderful and accommodating the transport services are for the disabled in Shropshire but alas I find myself cringing as I realise that our clients' experiences are overwhelmingly negative.

It is perhaps time to appeal for someone to listen to the voices of those who depend on public transport. Many more people these days would use a cheap alternative method of public travel if the services were adequate. It is not just the elderly, disabled and vulnerable who would benefit. It is time for a change to keep this county such a desirable place to live.



Jobcentres keep quiet over available help

There is growing evidence that the Department for Work and Pensions is trying to prevent people from requesting Short Term Benefit Advances.

STBAs were created to help those in need to avoid damage to their health or safety, such as going without food, heating or lighting.

The STBA has replaced crisis loans for people who are, for example, waiting for a decision about their benefit claim.

However, according to the Guardian (at <http://tinyurl.com/cdjds2o>) JobcentrePlus staff are sending people to food banks rather than telling

them about the possibility of applying for an STBA. The situation is so bad that England's eight biggest city councils have sent a joint letter to the Department of Work and Pensions asking why Jobcentres are not issuing the loans.

Find out more about STBAs on the Turn To Us website.

Hydrant means water 'on tap'

To celebrate MS Awareness Week (and winning the Queen's Award for Enterprise Innovation) Hydrate for Health offered a free 'Hydrant' to the first hundred people to get in touch. The Hydrant is said to be making a big difference to the lives of many MS sufferers and others with limited mobility. It is designed to help people drink whenever they want to, without assistance. It quite simply prevents dehydration by solving the problem of reaching, lifting, or holding drinks. For more information call 0800 292 2382 or watch the video at <http://bit.ly/Hydrant1>

Learning Together
Helping you care with confidence

All About Dementia

A Carers survival guide

Friday 21st June
10.30am till 3.30pm

The Guildhall Oswestry

Refreshments and light lunch provided

Places must be booked in advance for catering purposes

What the day will cover

What is Dementia- diagnosis and treatment?

Managing unusual behaviours, communication and coping skills

'Shifting not lifting' helping maintain mobility

Relaxation techniques
Comforting through touch- using hand and shoulder massage

We can help with transport and parking costs if needed

Let us know if you need help arranging respite care to be able to attend

Please discuss this on booking

To book ring Julia Wenlock on 01743 341995



ME presentation for schools

The executive director of the Young ME Sufferers Trust, former head teacher Jane Colby, has produced a 25 minute talk with slides which shows how the Department for Education's new statutory guideline helps children with ME. She points out that ME can be so severe and chronic that the education system has great difficulty in coping with it. The talk, aimed particularly at schools, parents and local authorities can be downloaded at http://www.nisai.com/Articles/350386/Nisai/News/Jan_e_Colby_on.aspx [From Shropshire ME Group newsletter]

Printing just got better!

The Roy Fletcher Centre in Shrewsbury has acquired a brand new photocopier with some excellent additional features, including - a booklet finisher i.e A3-A4 and A4-A5 finished sizes, the ability to print banners, and to print directly from a memory stick

The centre's prices remain the same, and the best value in Shrewsbury: Colour - A4 (20p), A3 (30p) black and white A4 (4p) and A3 (6p). All prices are per printed side. After the first 50 copies of B&W or colour the prices are discounted by 50% and staff are always on hand to help. For further information contact Jenny or Barbara on 01743 341300 [From Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership newsletter]

Fairer WCA test

The DWP is to pilot an alternative work capability assessment (WCA) next spring. Work and pensions minister Mark Hoban says the new test has been designed and approved by two groups of charities and is intended to assess mental health and fluctuating conditions more fairly than the current WCA. His full statement, as reported in Hansard, is available at <http://tinyurl.com/ctevgbu>. [From Benefits and Work, April]



Court case leaves disabled bus users still waiting at the stop

A court case against the bus company Arriva North East has implications for all wheelchair users who use buses

In the case, disabled people challenged the bus company's 'first come, first served' policy which it operates in relation to the allocation of wheelchair spaces on its buses. This policy had led to disabled people not being able to board because the driver had not insisted that parents with buggies move to create space for them.

The bus company argued that they were just following government regulations for public service vehicles which state that it may not be practical for the driver to clear the space if it is already full with baggage or a baby buggy.

But Unity Law, which was conducting the campaigners' legal case, argued that these regulations are completely different to the bus company's corporate duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' under the Equality Act 2010. The judge agreed that the reg-



ulations were different to the duty, but he did not agree that the disabled people had suffered a substantial disadvantage or that the bus company had breached the Equality Act.

So there is still no clear guidance on who has priority in the disabled space. It seems that if someone is already in the space and refuses to move, then they cannot be made to move, even if a wheelchair user cannot board the bus.

In some areas, you only need to wait 10 minutes for the next bus. But elsewhere, it can be an hour or it could be the last bus at night so a disabled person could find them-

selves stranded.

However, the judge did make some recommendations for improvements, including a 'hotline' for wheelchair users who want to use the service. The judge also said Arriva should make adjustments to ensure that wheelchair users were not 'unduly disadvantaged' when using its buses. The claimants are to appeal.

Issues like these can be solved by having two spaces, one for wheelchairs and the other for buggies, and this design is becoming more common on new buses.

But without proper guidelines, the wheelchair space could still end up with a buggy in it or the buggy space with baggage in it.

So whatever the outcome of an appeal, there is still a need for regulations to ensure that the wheelchair space is kept free for wheelchairs.

[By Helen Dolphin, Disability Now, <http://www.disabilitynow.org.uk/user>

Stats lies continue

The Guardian has published an exposé of the continuing dishonest misuse of official statistics by ministers, apparently to encourage hatred (or at least contempt) for sick and disabled claimants (see the May issue of YourVoice).

For example, Conservative party chairman, Grant Shapps, alleges that 878,000 people on ESA dropped their claims rather than face being assessed. In fact, the DWP's own research shows that the vast majority dropped their claims because they got better or went back to work whether or not they had got better.

Scoring your treatment

Do you want to know how well your local hospital is doing? Do you want to rate your local GP practice and give your doctor feedback about the care you have received? The answer must surely be 'yes' and NHS Local is now offering a simple way for you to do exactly that. Simply visit <http://www.nhslocal.nhs.uk/perf> to find out more.

Advice surgery dates this month

Rural advice surgeries have been organised by the Community Council (RCC) to help groups looking for funding advice, thinking about becoming more commercial, needing information on governance or volunteer management, and other subjects. The dates are: Monday June 10, noon-1.30, at the Qube in Oswestry; Thursday June 13, noon-1.30, at the Barnabas Centre in Coleham, Shrewsbury.

If you would like some time with any of the advisors please mail to Lorna.crawford@Shropshire-rcc.org.uk or phone 01743 360641 [From Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership Newsletter]

It's tough at the top

If you want to see how tough life is for the secretaries of state and ministers who make the decisions to cut benefit and welfare rights of mere mortals, there are several excellent videos of a bedroom tax protest visit to the mansion of Iain Duncan Smith by Disabled People against Cuts and UKUncut. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/d8ueoz4>



Big push for Health Information Week

Health Information Week runs from 1-7 July and in our region staff from councils, libraries, NHS, voluntary sector, and information and advice centres are working together to make it a success.

Extra health information is available, including sessions to show how to use computers to find good quality health information.

Look for posters or visit your library to find out more. There will be more information available on the EQUIP area on NHS Local's learning site - <http://learning.nhslocal.nhs.uk/feature-list/health-information> [From Health Information News]

New approach to ME research

A research collaborative has been launched to bring together researchers, major funders and ME charities in a coherent professional approach to the investigation of the illness and to developing therapies.

The aims of the collaborative are to:

- provide a mechanism for ME charities, researchers and clinicians to work together in a coordinated way
- increase awareness of ME within the research community

- highlight priorities for research funding to assist funders
- increase funding for ME research

'The launch of the Collaborative is a major step forward,' says Action for ME's chief executive officer, Sonya Chowdhury. 'We are committed to working collaboratively with others on common goals, even where we have differences of view. As an executive board member, we have the opportunity to influence the work of the Collaborative and help shape

the future direction of ME research.

'We have every reason to hope that the Collaborative will attract new researchers into the field of ME research, increase our knowledge about the condition and stimulate much-needed investment in high quality, peer-reviewed research. We have received overwhelming support for our involvement in this new, exciting and ambitious initiative. Together we have the potential to make a real difference for people affected by ME.'

County handyperson service is commended at national awards

Mears Shropshire Home Services has been commended at the Home Improvement Agency Awards, hosted at the House of Lords by Baroness Andrews OBE.

Mears' success came in the 'Excellence in Delivering a Handyperson Service' category.

The annual awards - organised by Foundations, the national body for Home Improvement Agencies - recognise excellence across a range of services, and Mears Shropshire Handyperson Service is thrilled to win this award which recognises the innovative work it has done around providing practical support, assistance and advice to householders.

Mears Shropshire Handyperson Service operates throughout Shropshire, providing older, disabled and vulnerable people with a trustworthy, reliable and affordable service carrying out small jobs around the home.

The aim of the service is to ensure



Mears branch manager John Simcox (left) and Phil Parry of the Handyperson Service are pictured with the commendation at the awards ceremony

residents are safe and secure and can continue to live independently in their own homes, and is part-funded by Shropshire County Council.

Jobs include minor joinery and plumbing work, fitting security measures such as door chains, key safes and locks, and installing grab rails, ramps, pathways and steps. In the year to the end of March 2012, the Handyperson Service completed more than 3,000 jobs at over 1,400 homes across Shropshire. Branch

Manager John Simcox said: 'This is an invaluable service and makes a real difference to the lives of the people of Shropshire. Our handyperson team not only has the skills, but empathy and care in delivering this service - something that is embedded within all employees who work for Mears Shropshire Home Services. A huge debt of gratitude must be given to Shropshire Council for its financial support and commitment in working with the Agency to make this service possible.'



Supporting older carers to make their own decisions

"Provided they have self-confidence and access to a flow of reliable, up-to-date information, people can be supported to make important decisions and solve problems themselves. We know that we cannot help this remarkable group of older carers without having a deep respect for their achievements and without making an effort to get to know them individually.

The Omega approach comprises a balanced mix of outreach, collaboration, peer-support and information sharing. We encourage and support people to determine their own priorities and we want them to become even better equipped to deal with problems themselves.

We do this by building trust, asking questions and listening carefully. Sometimes the answers to the questions we ask are difficult to deal with. Sometimes the responses we

Tom Memery, the development director of Shrewsbury-based national charity Omega which focuses on end-of-life care, and also a former treasurer of SDN, has written with deep feeling about why they do what they do. Here is his editorial from the latest Omega newsletter:

receive are not ones we might expect. Occasionally, of course, we are asked some very tricky questions. Whilst we can never guarantee that we can assist directly in every case we will do whatever we can to support people to find the extra help they need.

The entire Omega Team is continuously searching for new ways to improve our performance and the way we engage with busy family care-givers. We are, therefore, always extremely grateful for suggestions and valuable feedback.'

Omega holds regular feedback discussion groups but it also wants to hear from people before they are asked for feedback; it will always be

appreciated. Tom writes: 'We would particularly value your help identifying opportunities to strengthen the service we offer.'

Omega is also looking for more organised, intelligent volunteers with research and investigative skills to collate essential information. This is an opportunity to do some interesting work, addressing the information needs of unpaid care-givers and their families, the bereaved and people who are socially isolated. You will need IT skills, a good standard of written English, research skills, good general knowledge and a commitment to life-long learning. Get in touch for a full role description and details. [From Omega Network Bulletin, May 2013, www.omega.uk.net]

All voices raised over £2bn care gap - except the Government's

Recent research has shown that there is a funding gap of more than £2 billion in local care, leaving councils no choice but to squeeze the support they provide to disabled and older people.

Disability charities and others are urging supporters to email Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt calling for an end to end the spiralling care crisis once and for all.

A Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament which scrutinised the draft Care and Support Bill has warned the Government that its plans will fail without a greater focus on prevention and integration.

Councils have been warning that the funding crisis is engulfing social care

and will bring local government 'to its knees'.

Richard Hawkes, chair of the Care and Support Alliance, said: 'We urge the Government to listen to MPs, Peers, councils and the thousands of disabled and older people and take the bold but necessary steps it needs to address the chronic funding gap that exists in social care today.

'If the Government is serious about giving disabled and older people a future with dignity it needs to ensure social care support isn't just available to a lucky few but to the thousands of people who are struggling with their everyday lives.' [This information is from the Alliance, a coalition of 70 organisations representing older and disabled people's concerns]

Holiday grants still available says charity

The Shropshire Cerebral Palsy Society still has grants available to help people go on holidays this year. It has helped several families already, 'and we could help you too' says secretary Ami Price.

'We give grants for a very wide range of therapies and equipment for adults and children who have cerebral palsy and live in Shropshire or Telford & Wrekin.'

For more advice email Ami Price at apriceshropscp@gmail.com; write to her at 5 Ashley Street, Shrewsbury, SY2 5DU; or call 01743 343844. The society is also on Facebook.



Social care budgets down by 20% - and worse to come

Almost 20% has been wiped off adult social care budgets in England since the coalition Government's programme of spending cuts began in 2011, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services has revealed.

Its latest budget survey found that councils have reduced their adult social care budgets by £800m in 2013-14, bringing the total level of real-terms spending cuts to £2.68bn since 2011, almost 20% of the £14.6bn that was spent by councils in 2010-11, net of client contributions.

While most of this year's reduction is coming from efficiency savings (82%), 13% or £104m derives from reducing the level of services provided to individuals or restricting eligibility.

Thirty per cent of directors surveyed by Adass said that one impact of savings made to date is that fewer people can access services, while a similar proportion said that people were receiving personal budgets of

reduced value. And efficiency savings, which have accounted for the bulk of savings made since 2011, also appear to be taking their toll, particularly those accrued by limiting or denying increases in fees to care providers to keep up with the costs of care.

Forty five per cent of directors polled said they did not increase fees to care homes to cover inflation this year, while nearly half said that providers in their areas were facing financial difficulties as a result of savings made by councils.

Directors are predicting worse to come over the next two years with the Government imposing deeper than planned cuts on its funding to local authorities in 2014-15, with further reductions pencilled in for 2015-16, the level of which will be confirmed on 26 June.

Half of directors said they expected that fewer people would be able to access adult care as a result of cuts in the next two years, and a similar proportion said that the value of

personal budgets would be reduced. Some 86% of directors said that actions they had taken to date had not resulted in deteriorations in quality of life for service users, compared with 8% who thought quality of life had deteriorated.

However, while 55% thought quality of life would not worsen for families over the next two years as a result of cuts, 19% thought that it would.

Adass president Sandie Keene warned ministers that further cuts could have seriously adverse consequences for families.

'It is absolutely clear that all the ingenuity and skill that we have brought to cushioning vulnerable people as far as possible from the effects of the economic circumstances cannot be stretched any further, and that some of the people we have responsibilities for may be affected by serious reductions in service - with more in the pipeline over the next two years.'
[From Community Care, 08.05.2013]

When charities become 'part of the problem' over cuts

Some charities, far from organising legal challenges to benefits cuts, have been joining up to a DWP organised group – the Disability Action Alliance (DAA) – headed by Disability Rights UK. The DAA claims that it is 'committed to making a difference to the lives of disabled people by designing and delivering innovative changes.'

There's no doubt that slashing benefits and vicious propaganda campaigns are making a huge difference to the lives of disabled people, but it's surprising that any charity would want to be associated with the people behind them.

So far, only the TUC's Disabled People's Committee has openly refused to join the DAA, saying that it will not be 'conned into becoming part of the problem rather than part of the solution.' Meanwhile, DAA claims on its website to now have more than a hundred member organisations - but it refuses to reveal who any of them are.
[From Benefits and Work, April]



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www.shropshire.gov.uk/community.nsf

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Telford & Wrekin Council, and the NHS



Multiple cuts to cost disabled £28.3bn, new research shows

Hundreds of thousands of disabled people will be hit over and over again by up to six different welfare cuts, according to new research published by the think-tank Demos.

The shocking figures, which are the result of analysis commissioned by Scope, reveal for the first time the cumulative impact of the Government's welfare reform plans with an astonishing £28.3 billion being taken out of disabled people's pockets by 2018.

Up to 3.7 million disabled people will be affected.

The study shows how cuts to a host of benefits including Disability Living Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, housing benefit and the 'bedroom tax' are hitting the same group of disabled people repeatedly.

For example, 26,600 people will have a triple whammy of losing their ESA (through changes that time limit it), DLA (through PIP reform), and having their ESA uprating capped at 1% (before they lose it).

This loss is worth between £17,000 and £23,000 over the five years (or £3,400 to £4,600 per year) depending on when an individual loses her or his DLA during the transition to PIP.

At the same time an estimated 12,500 people who are in receipt of

Thousands of disabled people are being hit simultaneously by cuts in up to six different benefits, with some 3.7 million people affected

DLA, ESA (WRAG) and living in social housing will be hit by five cuts, losing £11,517 each (£2,303-a-year), or a total of £481 million as a group.

At the extreme, an estimated 3,000 people will be hit by six different cuts, each losing £23,000 as a household (or £4,600 a year).

The losses come against a backdrop of flat-lining incomes and spiralling costs of living for disabled people, for whom daily life already costs more.

At the same time it's becoming harder for disabled people to be part of the community.

Councils – facing average budget cuts of more than 28% – have been

forced to ration social care support, leaving as many as 40% of disabled people without help to get up, get washed, get dressed and go out.

Scope and Demos argue that the Government has repeatedly failed to look at the bigger picture of what it's like to be disabled in 2013, and how combinations of cuts impact on disabled people.

Claudia Wood, lead researcher on the project and deputy director of Demos, said: 'Our research reveals that disabled people are bearing the brunt of the austerity measures, losing an estimated £28.3 billion by 2017/18. While striking, these calculations will invariably be an underestimate of the true impact of the cuts – as we opted for the most conservative estimates on the more unknown elements of reform.

'What's shocking is that the Government doesn't assess the likely combined impact of these changes, only the impact of each change individually.

'However, many disabled families are being affected by combinations of four, five and even six changes, so we're asking the Government to change tack, and start to publish cumulative impact assessments.'

The complete Demos analysis, can be accessed at www.demos.co.uk/blog/destinationunknown-april2013

DWP bans record of medicals going to disabled

The Department for Work and Pensions is refusing to let Capita give claimants a recording of their Personal Independence Payment medical, even though Capita want to do so at no cost to the taxpayer.

The DWP and Atos seem desperate to prevent widespread recording of medicals, for reasons that will be apparent to anyone who has been through a work capability assessment. Perhaps it is time for

claimants to follow the example of David Johnson [see page 17] and make use of the Equality Act to argue that recording their PIP medical for personal use, in the way you might otherwise make handwritten notes, is a reasonable adjustment for claimants with memory or concentration impairments and for those who have a physical difficulty with writing. More details on recording PIP medicals are available at <http://tinyurl.com/btfr6e9>.



Cricket squad wants to increase its score

Shropshire County Disability Cricket Squad is looking to increase its membership for a number of county and club friendly fixtures.

Player Dave Hassall said: 'We are a friendly mixed disability group, with members having physical or learning difficulties. The team has an open age group in which players can start at just 10 years old, and there is no upper age limit. We are looking for new players including beginners who we will encourage

and help to play.' The squad plays both hard and soft-ball cricket, focusing on ability not disability, so no one is judged on their disability - a form of cricket will always be found that suits an individual's abilities and needs.

The England manager for the Physical Disability Cricket Team, Neil Bradshaw, has been reported as saying county numbers are dropping 'but we now have a number of local teams being set up and ac-

tively searching for and encouraging new players to sign up.' Shropshire has 11 players and each squad can have up to 16 members. Coaching sessions are held at Wrekin College and anyone interested should contact Jonathan Caldecott on 07748 984 020

If you are interested that's good, but maybe you also know someone else who might be interested, so please share this information with others.

Tennis on wheels: all welcome!

The Shrewsbury Summer Wheelchair Tennis Open takes place at the Shrewsbury Club on 22 and 23 June and is part of the Tennis Foundation Wheelchair Tennis Development Series.

The club is urging people of all levels to enter and aims to have both a main draw and novice division.

There is an online entry form at <http://www.theshrewsburyclub.co.uk/tennis/tournaments/wheelchair-tennis-tournament-2013/>.

The closing date for entries is Monday 17 June. A paper version of the form is also available, so any tennis playing computer-phobes should call the club on 01743 467755.

The Shrewsbury Club also has a Wheelchair Tennis group with coach-



ing and sessions taking place twice a week. Shropshire Wheelchair Tennis is one of the largest groups in the UK with members across a range of abilities.

Wheelchair tennis is one of the fastest growing wheelchair sports in the world. It integrates very easily with the non-disabled game since it can be played on any regular tennis court without any adaptations to equipment.

Wheelchair tennis players are al-

lowed two bounces of the ball and therefore can play against other wheelchair tennis players, and alongside or against non-disabled players.

Wheelchair tennis has been a Paralympic sport since 1996 and a quad division was introduced in 2004 for players with limited mobility in one of their upper limbs.

Are there any members or supporters of SDN - or just readers of Your Voice - who play Wheelchair Tennis? If so tell us your story.

And what about other sports? Do any of our readers play for Telford Powerchair Football Club (Telford Wolves) or Shropshire Rugby Rebels or Disability Tag Rugby Group. Or, indeed, any other game. We would love to hear from you!

New info website on hunt for writers

A new website has launched with the aim of becoming a major resource for information – and its founder is urging would-be writers and reviewers to get involved. The Accessible Britain website is the brainchild of Stewart White, a former college tutor and himself a wheelchair user.

The site will need a broad pool of contributors in order to work. Stewart stresses that the overall written standard of contributions is less important than the need for honesty and first-hand experiences. 'I want to hear

from people who have had good and bad experiences ...I want Accessible Britain to be the first place disabled people will go to for information on places, wherever they are coming from.'

In the long term, Stewart hopes the site will become a industry-wide standard. It can be seen at www.accessiblebritain.co.uk; those interested in contributing should contact Stewart via email at info@accessiblebritain.co.uk [From Access Magazine, <http://www.accessmagazine.co.uk>]



In just over 20 years the lives of some 135,000 desperately poor disabled people in 90 countries have been revolutionised by the work of two students at the Royal College of Art. It all started in 1989 when David Constantine and Simon Gue were tasked with designing a wheelchair suitable for use in developing countries. It had to be robust enough to cope with potholes and uneven ground and made from affordable, locally available materials.

Their design won them a prize, and some cash. The pair teamed up with their friend Richard Frost and used their prize money to travel to Bangladesh, where they built their wheelchair for a disability organisation in Dhaka.

It went down so well that the organisation asked the team to help them start producing the wheelchairs on a larger scale. Recognising that people with disabilities were the poorest of the poor and that an appropriate

Motivation puts wheels under hope for poorest of the world's poor

wheelchair was the fastest route out of poverty, the team needed little convincing.

In 1991, David, Simon and Richard established Motivation, raised funds in the UK and returned to Dhaka to start their first wheelchair workshop. From there, they set up wheelchair workshops in Poland, Indonesia and Russia.

Now, Motivation is internationally recognised as a leader in designing, producing and distributing high-quality, low-cost wheelchairs for developing countries. So far, its products and training programmes have reached over 135,000 people in 90 countries.

With the catchphrase 'Freedom through mobility' Motivation continues to transform the lives of those with less than nothing. Find out more about this amazing work on www.motivation.org.uk

Our pictures, taken from the Motivation website, show one of their wheelchairs in use on a busy road, and a three wheel 'active wheelchair' with a large rubber castor wheel and long wheelbase to enable safe and stable propulsion over uneven ground.

The user's comfort is very important and the chair provides good postural support and is supplied with a contoured pressure relieving cushion.

Where are we in the aspiration nation?

George Osborne has been talking about building an 'aspiration nation'. It's left disabled people scratching their heads. They're wondering where they fit in.

Life simply costs more if you're disabled. But in 2013 disabled people are struggling to pay the bills. They're feeling more keenly than most the effects of flat-lining incomes and spiralling living costs. We know many disabled people are turning to loans to pay for essentials.

What's the Government's response? At the last count, cuts to 13 different pieces of financial support that give disabled people the chance to do

The New Statesman recently published an article by Richard Hawkes, Chief Executive of Scope. He says much that disabled people know to be true, as these extracts demonstrate.

things everyone else takes for granted. We asked the think-tank Demos to make sense of the impact this will have on disabled people, many of whom are already struggling to make ends meet...the results paint a bleak picture...by 2018, disabled people are set to lose an astonishing £28.3bn worth of financial support. These changes are going to affect up to 3.7 million people in total.

What's more, the research also showed that thousands of disabled people are being hit by different cuts

to support over and over again. For example, it's very possible that someone could see their Disability Living Allowance taken away, see their Employment Support Allowance capped at one per cent and have to pay the bedroom tax.

The Government is writing this research off as scaremongering, arguing that some disabled people may be better off after the benefits changes. But ... how can the Government know? It has so far refused to do any cumulative assessment.



Bedroom tax made life 'just too hard' says suicide victim's son

A disabled Midlands woman who committed suicide left a note blaming the Government's new bedroom tax for driving her to take her life, her family says.

Just days before she died Stephanie Bottrill, 53, from Solihull, had told neighbours she simply could not afford to live any more. Her family said she could not afford the £20 extra a week that she had been told to pay for two 'under-occupied' bedrooms in her home.

She died instantly on 4 May after being struck by a lorry on the M6. In a letter to her son she said: 'Don't blame yourself for me ending my life. The only people to blame are the Government.'

Her son Steven said: 'She was fine before the bedroom tax. It was dreamt up in London, by people in offices and big houses. They have

no idea the effect it has on people like my mum.'

He said she was distraught at having to leave the home she had lived in for 18 years, where she had raised two children as a single mother. 'She didn't want to go but she knew she had to. She couldn't afford to stay. It was too hard.' Steven said his mother had an auto-immune deficiency and doctors had told her she was too ill to work.

Under the bedroom tax, introduced in April, benefits are deducted from social housing tenants of working age who have more bedrooms than they are deemed to need. Some 660,000 social housing tenants are affected nationally.

Tenants with disabilities are subject to the penalty, unless a bedroom is used by a non-resident carer who stays overnight.

Channel 4 News has highlighted the case of a couple forced to contribute an additional £11.90 per week for their two-bedroom flat, even though one of them has spina bifida and sleeps in a hospital-style bed while the other sleeps in the second bedroom.

Several charities have written to Welfare Secretary Iain Duncan Smith warning the bedroom tax could hit 420,000 disabled people, their families and carers.

The letter, from Carers UK, Mencap, the MS Society, Macmillan Cancer, Disability Rights UK, Carers Trust and Contact a Family, says 'unless disabled people and their families are protected, those affected face financial hardship or being forced to move - moving them away from their networks of support and out of homes adapted for their needs.' [From Channel 4 News/Sunday People, 12 May]

Disabled man beats Atos in court over inaccessible assessment centre

A disabled man has won an out-of-court settlement against Atos for making him attend a WCA assessment in an inaccessible venue despite him having entered on the ESA50 form that he was disabled.

David Johnson was amazed to be informed that such information 'is not viewed in detail by the administrative staff, save to link it to the appropriate file on receipt of the completed questionnaire.'

He writes: 'It is unacceptable that a government-funded assessment which sick and disabled people, many with mobility problems, have no option about attending, takes place in an inaccessible location without disabled parking or a drop-off point near the door.'

'To ask specifically about access needs in the ESA50 form and then not have adequate processes in place to respond properly to those access needs leaves me totally astounded.'

'Atos tried to argue that they were not bound by the Equality Act when delivering WCAs, and so did not need to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people and also tried to claim that I was not disabled, as defined by the Equality Act 2010.'

Mr Johnson was awarded 0 points and assessed as fit for work, a decision that was rubber-stamped by the DWP. He went to appeal and was placed in the support group after a five-minute hearing – having waited months on reduced benefit.

But Atos immediately demonstrated its capacity for malice by sending him another assessment form to fill in, a nasty touch that has left him seriously upset.

Mr Johnson, who was assisted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in his case, is urging others to follow his example in using the Equality Act to take action against Atos.

[edited, from From Benefits and Work, 12 April]



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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, Unit 4, Owen House, Radbrook Road, Shrewsbury, SY3 9SR enable@shropshire.gov.uk. 01743 276900

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

Healthwatch
Shropshire - 4 The Creative Quarter, Shrewsbury Business Park, Shrewsbury, SY2 6LG; 01743 237884; enquiries@healthwatchshropshire.co.uk; www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk
Telford & Wrekin - Suites A & E, The Place, Oakengates, TF2 6EP; 01952 384990; info@healthwatchtelfordandwrekin.org.uk; <http://www.healthwatchtelfordandwrekin.org.uk>

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

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

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/

OSCA Citizen Advocacy - Roy Fletcher Centre, 12-17 Cross Hill, Shrewsbury, SY1 1JE; 01743 368370; info@oscacitizenadvocacy.org.uk; www.oscacitizenadvocacy.org.uk

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

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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, ericahorner2@googlemail.com

Shropshire ME Group - www.shropshiremegroup.org.uk; 07516 401097

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

Sight Loss Shropshire (formerly Voluntary Association for the Blind) The Lantern, Meadow Farm Drive, Harlescott, Shrewsbury, SY1 4NG; 01743 210808; SVABadmin@shropshire.gov.uk

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

Voluntary Association for the Blind (see Sight Loss Shropshire)

Marathon (and a half) man!

SDN member Vic Davies is running the Shrewsbury Marathon on 23 June and Lake Vrynwy Half Marathon on 15 September for us. Give him an incentive! Come along and cheer him on in his SDN tshirt, and even sponsor him! From a mobile text SHDN12 £1 to 70070. You can donate up to £10 in one free message and (if you're a taxpayer) Gift Aid your donation. If you prefer more traditional means, please send cheques payable to SDN to SDN-Fund-Raising Lead, c/o 26 Aldwick Drive, Radbrook, Shrewsbury, SY3 6BN.

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. 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

We're on special at Sainsbury's!

SDN has been offered table space at Sainsbury's in Shrewsbury during Carers Week (10-14 June), which is something their stores all around the country are doing. For us, it will be a very valuable chance to get information across to the public. The display does have to be staffed all the time and we can also collect donations if we want to. This really is a wonderful opportunity being given to us. It will also be a great way to network as others taking part include the Stroke Association, McMillan Cancer Support, Headway, Age UK, PACCs, Crossroads, Parkinson's Association and Carers Support.

Volunteers' Week will say thank you to millions who contribute so much

Volunteers' Week is an annual celebration of the fantastic contribution millions of volunteers make across the UK – and it is taking place from 1-7 June. This year's Volunteers' Week focuses on saying 'Thank You' to the millions of volunteers who regularly contribute to society, and to recognise the way that organisations celebrate the work of volunteers across the UK. This year will mark the 29th anniversary of Volunteers' Week.

In Shropshire, the Rural Community Council (RCC) will be hosting a market type event in Shrewsbury Square on Thursday 6 June and Oswestry Community Action (Qube) will be putting on a Charity Market at Bailey Head on Friday 7 June. There will be many organisations and groups with stalls at either or both events.

On 7 June there will also be an event in Bridgnorth. To get involved in Shrewsbury or Bridgnorth email steve.jones@shropshire-rcc.org.uk and for Oswestry contact Kim via k.thompson-lawrence@qube-oca.org.uk [From Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership Newsletter]

Dyslexia conference to hear two top speakers

Shropshire Dyslexia Association Summer Conference, to be held in Shrewsbury on Saturday 22 June, will feature two high calibre speakers. Judy Capener, an experienced assessor, will introduce the morphological and etymological structure of English words and show why English spelling is not awkward if you use the right set of rules! Louise Green will talk about how to motivate the student who finds it hard to work, giving practical and workable strategies from primary school through to university. Contact SDA on 01743 231205 or email shropda@hotmail.com



VCS Annual Assembly looks at priorities for the year ahead

More than 120 representatives from the Voluntary and Community Sector came together recently to discuss common issues, reflect on the achievements of the last year and agree priorities for the future.

The event was organised by Shropshire Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Assembly. Shropshire VCS Assembly brings together around 300 voluntary and community sector organisations delivering services in Shropshire.

The Annual Assembly, the largest voluntary sector event of the year, took place at Greenhouse Meadow Stadium and included the welcoming of a new Chair for the VCS Assembly.

After two years as chair of the

Assembly, Sonia Roberts handed over to Jackie Jeffrey, Chief Executive of Shropshire's Citizens' Advice.

Jackie said: 'The AGM is an important date in our calendar where we can all come together as an assembly and celebrate our achievements over the last year and look to our priorities in the next.

'Particular thanks go to Sonia for all her hard work over the last two years as Chair of the Assembly.'

Highlights of the event included updates from VCS Forums of Interest (groups of organisations working together to address common issues) and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding setting out key principles for partnership between the VCS Assembly, Shropshire Clinical

Commissioning Group and Shropshire Council.

In an important and informative exercise, all Forums were allowed one minute to tell the Assembly about their Forum. This gave real insight into the volume of work in this area carried out by the VCSA.

Other presentations included an overview of Welfare Reform from Jackie Jeffery and Steph Jackson from Shropshire Council, and a presentation on the work of the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group from Helen Herritty, CCG Chair.

For more information on the Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly, contact - phone 01743 252740; email VCSAssembly@shropshire.gov.uk Website: <http://vcsvoice.org>

Free social network to help support vulnerable

Family members, friends and care professionals will soon be able to make use of a free social networking service - Yecco - to help co-ordinate support for vulnerable individuals.

The main aim of Yecco is to relieve the demands placed on carers and to foster more effective communication between the carer and client/family member and other third parties.

The finished site will boast a number of features and facilities, including a shared calendar, a built in 'Yecco Messenger', the ability to schedule alerts and reminders and a newsfeed display.

The site also offers a series of forums, links to external care resources, a directory of service providers and an online retail operation.

Yecco apps for Android-based smartphones and tablets are already available at the Google Play store, ready for when the site goes live.

Those interested in finding out more about Yecco prior to its official launch can sign up for email notifications at www.yecco.com. [From Access Magazine, <http://www.accessmagazine.co.uk>]

ME group meetings across the county

Shropshire ME Group holds informal meetings around the county every month. All are welcome to drop in for a chat, or for more details call the numbers given

Bridgnorth (01902 758822) first Tuesday from around 12–2.00 at Parlour's Hall Hotel
Oswestry (01691 657730) third Thursday, Wynnstay Hotel, Church Street, 11.00-1.00, phone to confirm venue.

Shrewsbury (01743 356018) first Thursday, 11 am and 1 pm front foyer lounge of Lord Hill Hotel, Abbey Foregate

Montgomery/South Shropshire (01686 669685) In Montgomery about every two months, usually on Wednesdays. Contact karen@kandm46.plus.com

All SDN members and supporters are very welcome to express opinions or promote events in YV. Email us at newsletter@shropshire-disability.net or write to the editor at 8 Gorse Lane, Bayston Hill, Shrewsbury, SY3 0JJ