

November 2013

yourvoice

Registered Charity No 1148256 Free, but donations welcome!

Some 50 voluntary organisations took table space for the recent Market Place event organised by the Shropshire Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly (VCSA).

The Assembly has more than 300 members, and provides a way for local groups and voluntary organisations to work with each other and other public groups and organisations.

From SDN's point of view taking part in the Market Place, at Shirehall, was a day very well spent. Our volunteers, like those from all the other organisations, were able to mingle and meet, make new contacts and renew old ones, and 'show the flag' for the wide variety of work we do.

Pauline James of the VCSA said: 'The event was organised to provide an opportunity for people to find out more about Shropshire's voluntary services. It also provided a networking opportunity for the organisations taking part, helping them to share ideas and offer mutual support.'



SDN's membership secretary Philip Kent with one of the numerous visitors to our stand.

Press ads condemned by county ME group

Controversial claims are being made in the Shrewsbury and Telford local press about products that can bring relief from a number of disabling conditions.

Shropshire ME Group has reported several instances of dubious advertising to the Advertising Standards Authority, but until the whole thing is settled the best advice is not to be persuaded by advertising, however much pain you are in and however tempting the adverts may seem.

Some of them include numerous pages of eulogies allegedly by local

people for one particular treatment. In its October newsletter the ME Group reports that a member found news of the failure of an appeal by one company against an ASA ruling. (Visit <http://tinyurl.com/pgz3eft>).

The ASA said: 'The ad must not appear again in its current form... adequate substantiation [is needed] before making claims to provide certain forms of therapy in their advertising.'

'We also told them not to imply [they] could help with emotional or mental health issues unless they held robust

documentary evidence to that effect.'

The ME Group has written to the company, repeating previous requests for contact details of the authors of articles, full and specific details of 'ongoing clinical trials' and details of which 'neurological and, therefore, physical' ME symptoms have been demonstrably helped.

'Strangely enough, there has been no reply so far,' says the ME Group, 'but we shall be in touch with him again for his comments.'

[Source: SMEG Newsletter October 2013]

Cuddle up with a winner on SDN tombola!

SDN is holding a soft toy tombola, with a sale of home-made cakes and cards, gift tags and more - not to mention a raffle and maybe something helpful for Christmas preparations! Come along and meet us, grab yourself a bargain and a bite - it's all happening at the Inn on the Green, Bank Farm Road, Radbrook, Shrewsbury, from 11.00-1.00 on Saturday 16 November. Donations of cakes and soft toys welcome - call Ruby on 01743 340832.

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Remembering those who died over 'fitness to work'

The Government's austerity programme might be indiscriminate, cruel and callously unfair, but it brought together the most unlikely crowd outside Parliament - disabled actors and performers, disability activists, religious leaders, social campaigners and even some politicians, for a memorial event in memory of the thousands of disabled victims of government policy.

The '10,000 Cuts and Counting' event saw a swathe of Parliament Square covered with white flowers, each one representing a disabled person who died soon after undergoing the Government's so-called 'fitness for work' test. And that is the official government statistic.

Campaign groups stood with the dean of St Paul's Cathedral, Dr David Ison, to hear speakers and performers including Penny Pepper,

Sophie Partridge, and the Labour MPs Michael Meacher, John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn.

Ellen Clifford from DPAC said: 'We are doing something important, we are remembering our dead, and those individual lives damaged and destroyed, individual lives of people not born into money, real people whose lives meant something.'



Michael Meacher said he saw signs of hope. 'I am convinced that things are going to change and that your efforts, your courage, your resolution, is going to bear fruit. I believe we are getting increasing public

support. I have no doubt that public support for your cause – our cause – is growing. I firmly believe this is a fight we can win.'

John McDonnell MP said that in the last four months, five people had killed themselves 'as a result of austerity' by stepping off the railway platform in Hayes, in his constituency.

He said: 'It is a community under siege. The worst affected are those with mental health problems who just cannot cope with the abuse of the Atos system. There are people who are dying as a result of this system.'

The crowd of more than 150 people were led in prayers while they faced, in turn, Westminster Abbey, the Supreme Court, the Treasury and the Houses of Parliament.

[Source: The Fed 01.10.2013 and DNS]

Headway carers get respite for support group

Headway Shropshire is now offering respite care for its Carers Support Group in order to make the group more accessible to all carers, so that nobody is excluded as a result of their caring roles.

The support group started in February this year and has proved to be a great source of help, information sharing and humour, says Headway.

From last month (October) it is offering to provide 1.5 hours respite for the 'cared for' while their carers attend the group. It hopes this could provide them with a fun and relaxing evening out and most importantly an opportunity to share and talk about any issues.

Anybody who cares for someone who has had an ABI (Acquired Brain

Injury) from a stroke, accident, fall, tumour or illness, is likely to benefit. The group will be held on a monthly basis at Headway House in Shrewsbury from 6-7.30pm. The next two dates are: Wednesday 20 November and Thursday 5 December. Dates for 2014 will be advertised early next year.

Headway Shropshire says that all clients already accessing its services and who have had an assessment will be able to attend.

However, for new clients who have not already had an assessment, one will need to be completed. The group is also subject to availability.

Donna Smith, outreach worker for Headway Shropshire says: 'We offer a quiet, confidential place

where the right to privacy is respected. We offer practical help, advice and information and the opportunity to meet others in a similar position. Guest speakers who are of interest to attendees will also be invited along. In fact we have a great guest speaker arranged for the November meeting and this is Mandy Hughes – carers' hospital link worker based in RSH which will be a particularly interesting subject for our carers to hear about.

'Feel free to come along, to talk and share your thoughts. If you do not want to share that is fine, we will respect your right to quiet and privacy.

Please talk to me for further information or to inform me if you would like to take part.' Donna can be contacted on 01743 365565



People receiving care and support from Shropshire Council, their carers and council staff are working together to look at feedback on adult social care and how this will shape services.

The Making it Real (MiR) Reference Group met for the first time recently as part of work taking place to give people more choice and control over how they are supported, and ensure it is personalised to their needs and interests. Shropshire Council has signed up to MiR to help make sure it is improving adult social care services in this way.

An MiR survey is running for people to tell the council more about their experiences of social care, and how well they think it is supporting them to live their lives in the way they want.

The survey, based on a checklist developed by people using services

Working together to 'make it real'

and their carers, is supported by more than 30 national social care organisations.

The checklist is a list of statements which outline what people expect if services are personalised.

The reference group discussed the survey feedback received to date and the next steps in using the information to influence services.

Members of the reference group

also form part of the MiR board, which will agree the priorities for future work and develop an action plan.

People can still take part in the survey. There are two versions – one for those receiving services and one for carers. To complete either version, which should take 20-30 minutes, go to <http://shropshire.gov.uk/adult-social-care/personalisation/>

Regular updates on MiR, and the wide variety of work taking place across adult services in Shropshire, are being placed on the council's Live Life Your Way Facebook page at www.facebook.com/shropshireliveyourway

To find out more about MiR call Charlotte Cadwallader on 01743 253798 or email makingitreal@shropshire.gov.uk. The national website is www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk [Source: VCSA 11.10.2013]

New SDN appointment boosts campaign to reach all parts of county

SDN is very pleased to have appointed Ian Roberts as an outreach officer for the Telford area and also as a member of the management committee. Ian brings a wealth of knowledge on disability issues to his new voluntary role.

SDN is hoping to appoint outreach officers throughout the county, and we are initially focusing on the towns. But that does not mean we will neglect the county's vast rural areas, where people with disabilities are often doubly disadvantaged.

We think town and country can work well together when there is a shared need. The more outreach officers we can recruit, the greater will be our capacity to communicate and network effectively.

The need is real and the job is important. If being an outreach officer appeals to you or you want to find out more about it please contact enquiry@shropshire-disability.net or call the current outreach officer for Shrewsbury on 01743 340832.

Carers' voice starts off loud and strong

Back in June some 40 people, many of them carers, took part in the new carers' forum launch - bringing together local carers and organisations supporting carers.

Those present were asked what the forum should be called and the result is 'Shropshire Carers Together – the voice for carers in Shropshire'. The discussions were reported to both the Family Carers Partnership Board and Health and Well-Being Board.

The steering group decided to

focus initial efforts on improving support for carers in GP practices. Actions proposed include providing GPs with information packs on local support service for carers, improving carer information in GP waiting areas, and building key links with each practice.

To find out what progress has been made come along to the next meeting - on Tuesday 19 November 10.30-1.00 at Mears Shropshire Homes Service, Unit 3 Hartley Business Centre, Monkmoor Road, Shrewsbury. [Source: VCSA]

It's might seem a bit odd reporting that the new SDN website has been launched, because unless you've gone onto it you can't be reading this. You could be reading our paper version, of course, but then you won't use the website anyway! However, it's such an important event that YV couldn't let it go unrecorded. So never forget - www.shropshire-disability.net



Forum members hear details about PIP

Members of the Pan Disability Forum, which is part of the Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly, heard in detail about PIP (Personal Independence Payments) at a recent meeting at which the speaker was Colin Smith MBE, of the DWP National Partnerships Team.

As promised on the day, he got in

touch soon afterwards to provide links to two 'toolkits' that the DWP has developed to assist community organisations get to grips with welfare reforms. These are the PIP Toolkit and the Universal Credit Toolkit - either of which can be found by logging on initially to www.gov.uk/government/organisations/departments-for-work-pensions

The toolkits contain lots of information about both new benefits. A PIP 'Quickguide' and list of useful telephone numbers were handed out on the day.

Colin Smith offered to attend meetings for individual organisations to speak about welfare reform. He can be contacted at 01543 461059 or colin.a.smith@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

...and speaking of PIP, what's happened to it?

Mystery surrounds what has happened to all the PIP claims that should by now have had decisions made.

PIP was introduced in pilot areas of the North of England in April, 2013. It then went national for all working age claimants on 10 June - that's some five months ago.

Similarly, on 'Rightsnet' - the online forum for welfare rights workers - virtually the only decisions anyone has seen have been for terminally ill claimants. (See <http://tinyurl.com/pj3ru4c>)

Whether it is because of Atos and Capita failing to get their act together or because of doubts about how the mobility component should be treated, it seems that most PIP decisions are being unreasonably delayed.

Both explanations are possible. Atos has failed to provide a single assessment centre within the area covering hundreds of thousands of disabled people living in north London.

In fact, of the 740 sites the company said it would provide, Atos has come

up with just 96. In addition, the Government put back the introduction of PIP claims for existing DLA claimants to 28 October, following a consultation on the highly controversial reduction of the qualifying distance for getting the enhanced rate of the PIP mobility component.

The Government says the delay should not be seen as evidence that it is planning to do a U-turn on the harsh new mobility criteria, but it does seem possible that some changes are underway.

[Source: Shropshire ME Group Newsletter, Oct 2013]

Have your say on future of local NHS

Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Clinical Commissioning Groups are calling on patients, the public, staff and stakeholders to discuss the future of the NHS - not just hospital services, but the local NHS as a whole. This 'Call to Action' is part of a national debate led by NHS England.

The NHS needs to be able to deal with challenges ahead, such as an ageing population, a rise in the number of people with long-term conditions, lifestyle risk factors in the young and greater public expectations. Combined with rising costs and constrained financial resources, these trends threaten the long-term sustainability of the health service.

The CCGs are attending meetings with voluntary groups and the public to gather comments and experiences. But people can also go online and fill in their survey by visiting either www.telfordccg.nhs.uk or www.shropshireccg.nhs.uk

For a paper copy go to either of the CCG websites, email calltoaction@telfordccg.nhs.uk or call 01952 580478.

A Call to Action conference will be held at the Telford International Centre on Monday 25 November, where the CCGs will set out the facts about the challenges facing local NHS services in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin and share the feedback gathered.

Stand-up is counted

One of the UK's most successful stand-up comedians, Francesca Martinez, has gone in to bat against the iniquitous fitness-to-work tests. She stars in a recent episode of Disability Now's podcast, 'The Download'. She is leading an internet campaign to force the Government to hold a Commons debate on its programme of cuts and to abolish the fitness-for-work tests. She also shares her concerns about food poverty.



Motability steps in to ease blow as thousands face loss of vehicles

Every disabled driver whose car is taken away after they are reassessed for the Government's new personal independence payment (PIP) will be given up to £2000 by the Motability car scheme

This is one of a series of measures designed to help those who are assessed as no longer eligible for the higher rate of mobility support, and therefore no longer eligible for the Motability scheme.

Over the next five years, the Department for Work and Pensions is to reassess about two million disabled people aged 16-64 who presently

claim disability living allowance. The first cases of people losing their vehicles are expected early next year and Motability says up to 100,000 could do so in the three years to 2016.

The £2000 is a one-off 'transitional support' payment to help people buy a used car as a replacement if they want to do so. Those who joined the scheme this year, and therefore knew they could lose their Motability eligibility, will receive £1,000.

Motability will allow customers to keep their vehicles for three weeks before they need to be returned and it is working with suppliers to ensure

customers have access to information on services such as insurance and breakdown cover.

People will be asked if they want to buy their vehicle, and if not they will be given help with the cost of transferring adaptations from their Motability vehicle to a replacement.

There will also be a package of support and advice for those leasing a scooter or powered wheelchair, aimed at enabling them to keep their machine.

Disabled Motoring UK praised Motability for its 'very generous package' in support of disabled drivers.

Commercial firms are set to fill disability car market

With thousands of disabled drivers likely to lose their Motability vehicles it is inevitable that commercial providers will fill the gap. One such is Mobility Vehicle Hire, which describes itself as 'market leaders in the supply of specifically adapted vehicles to cater for the needs of disabled drivers.'

It offers hire on a daily, weekly or monthly basis and provides door-to-door delivery and collection. The company says: 'We are currently

developing ways to "fill the gap" for people who find themselves without a Motability vehicle while their appeal is heard. We realise this will be a stressful time, and our aim is to offer a simple interim solution. This could also result in a longer term option once the appeal process has concluded, should the appeal have been unsuccessful.'

Mobility Vehicle Hire can be contacted at 0845 293 2799, or visit www.mobilityvehiclehire.net

[Source: Access Magazine, 01.10.2013]

New version of mobility buyers' guide

The online mobility aid resource, Help My Mobility, has launched an updated version of its buyers' guide booklet, which is available to download and contains advice and information on purchasing mobility aids.

The items covered include mobility scooters, electric wheelchairs, stairlifts and adjustable beds.

The guide highlights the main bene-

fits and features and key questions to ask when it comes to owning each type of aid. It also includes payment guides, enabling users to think about how their product will be paid for, and a broad overview of where items can be purchased.

Help My Mobility says it aims to offer free, impartial guidance to ensure that users have the necessary information required to make an informed mobility equipment purchase. As

such, the guide is not intended to serve as a marketing platform and therefore does not refer to specific brands or product names.

For more details and to view the guide, call 0845 838 7085 or visit www.help-my-mobility.org.

The organisation can also be found on Twitter (@MobilityAdvisor), and is on Facebook and Google+. [Source: Access Magazine]



Tribunal ruling is new blow for bedroom tax

A tribunal's ruling that a disabled man and his wife do need to sleep in separate bedrooms has added more weight to the campaign against the Government's 'bedroom tax'.

The couple's local authority, Here-

fordshire Council, decided to cut their housing benefit because they were 'under-occupying' their two-bedroom flat.

The judge's decision is the latest in a string of cases in which tribunals have overturned bedroom tax deci-

sions by local authorities.

The judge said he was following a decision by the Court of Appeal, which has ruled that the Department for Work and Pensions is in breach of the Human Rights Act.

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Wheelchair users win battle of the buses

Bus companies must ensure wheelchair spaces are available for wheelchair-users who need them – and that's the law.

After a hearing in Leeds County Court, the judge said that the 'first come, first served' policy discriminated against disabled people under the Equality Act.

The case was brought by a wheelchair-user who was prevented from entering a bus because the driver refused to insist that a mother with a pushchair should move from the wheelchair-space.

In a written judgment the judge said it was reasonable that 'the system of priority given to wheelchair-users should be enforced as a matter not

of request, to any non-disabled user of the wheelchair space, but of requirement'. He added: 'Although such a policy might inconvenience a mother with a buggy that, I am afraid, is a consequence of the protection which Parliament has chosen to give to disabled wheelchair-users and not to non-disabled mothers with buggies.'

The case should force other operators to take action and provides a legal precedent for many other

disabled bus passengers who have faced such discrimination.

The court heard that wheelchair bays on buses were often filled with luggage or buggies and that bus companies sometimes even advertised the space as buggy space.

Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson said she believed the decision would 'drive the changes that are needed to make public transport accessible for all disabled users'.

Similar cases in future 'almost impossible'

The lawyers who secured the court victory for wheelchair users have launched an 'Equal Justice' campaign, warning that disabled people will in future find it almost impossible to bring such cases under the Equality Act. They say that cuts to legal aid and reforms to the way legal costs are dealt with by the courts in civil cases mean that litigants could end up thousands of pounds out of pocket.

Self-employment and learning difficulties

Working4Me CIC is a new social enterprise which aims to develop self-employment opportunities for those with learning disabilities. Membership of W4Me costs £5 per year for an individual and £15 for a group. The membership form can be completed on the website - www.working4me.org.uk - or downloaded and posted back. The site has information and inspiration, and offers advice and information, tools and resources, an online shop and marketplace, free development support for members, plus inspiring stories of people with a learning disability who are working in enterprise.

Course seeks to boost number of people who are skilled to help deaf-blind

There are an estimated 356,000 deaf-blind people nationally - and a great need for skilled people to work with them. That in turn means there is a great need for people who would like to train in understanding dual-sensory loss.

If you would you like to gain a nationally recognised qualification, the Deafblind Communicator-Guide Support Worker Course (QCF DBG2), a five-day course, is designed to meet the needs of support workers and professionals working with deaf-blind people.

The course is coming to Sandwell on 5, 6, 15, 18, 19 November. It costs £615, including exam fees. To book, contact lynn@deafblind-enablement.co.uk or phone 01733 746538/0755 709 2282, or see the website www.deafblind-enablement.co.uk



Council accused of ignoring rural need for broadband

Shropshire Council is being accused of neglecting the needs of very rural areas and the Welsh borderlands in its roll-out of Superfast Broadband across the county.

Speaking on behalf of the South-west Shropshire and Marches Campaign for Better Broadband, Patrick Cosgrove of Bucknell said the council's priority is to upgrade to superfast speeds those who are already well provided for, while very rural areas 'will be left to last and will receive no more than 2Mb'.

But what has this got to do with people who have disabilities? He answers: 'This is an educational issue, a social issue, an economic issue, an environmental issue, and one of access and communication for people with disabilities. With better broadband people who are isolated,

or unable to get out and about for whatever reason will be able to connect with friends and family, and also access a growing number of on-line services.'

In the summer the group set up an electronic petition with Shropshire Council. It can be found at: <http://petitions.shropshire.gov.uk/petitions.ti/betterruralbroadband>

If the petition reaches 1,000 signatures the subject has to be debated at full council. Some 270 people signed up in the first few days.

But, Mr Cosgrove continues, these are mostly from the 10% rural fringe of the population, adding 'It will now become harder.'

He asks 'if this is something your membership would be interested in.' Let's hope the answer is Yes and that SDN members and supporters do their bit and sign the e-petition,

perhaps adding a full-blooded letter to their own MP as a sequel!

What this group is campaigning about – inclusion for minorities and those on the fringe – is not a new subject for the disabled in other areas of life. As far as broadband is concerned, it applies all along the England-Wales border and in some places deeper into Shropshire.

SDN's management committee would like to know your thoughts but feels strongly enough to endorse the campaign on your behalf. As one of our senior officers says 'It is a national disgrace'

He pointed out that when the Government talks about investing £20m for broadband in remote rural areas it is actually boasting about the same money it was boasting about more than three years ago.

Party political conferences are times when sanity is often suspended in the interests of getting a good headline, and so it was at the Tory conference this year. George Osborne and Iain Duncan Smith announced a grand plan for the long-term unemployed - they must attend their local job centre for 35 hours a week in exchange for their benefits.

Those claiming employment and support allowance will be exempt, but those on jobseeker's allowance will not.

The announcement was accompanied by the usual rhetoric about beating the 'welfare dependency' culture (as though people with disabilities had chosen that as a life option to avoid working).

They announced two pilot schemes, one for those who have been through the two years of the coal-

Jobless must spend 35 hours a week at job centres ... or that's the plan!

tion's Work Programme and are still out of work, and the other for claimants thought likely to benefit from an 'intensive regime'.

Many of those taking part will have to attend their local job centre for 35 hours a week, for up to six months, to search for jobs 'under supervision'. Others will have to carry out work in the community or receive intensive support for problems such as drug addiction or illiteracy.

Failure to participate without a good reason will lead to a loss of benefits. If the plan goes ahead, the two pilot programmes should be running from autumn next year, and each of them is expected to have about 3,000 participants. But it must be a big 'if'

Liz Sayce, of Disability Rights UK, called the scheme 'unworkable and unethical.'

But it was Linda Burnip, co-founder of Disabled People Against Cuts, who asked the obvious question: 'Where is the space in jobcentres for all these people to be accommodated?'

She followed that with another: 'What about rural areas where there is no or very little public transport? How are people there expected to get to the jobcentres?'

We await the answers with interest.



Disabled 'still losing out' over transport

The Government must work harder to improve accessibility for disabled people across the nation's transport networks, warns the House of Commons Transport Committee in a wide-ranging report.

Launching the report, Louise Ellman, chair of the committee, said: 'In the UK some 11.5m people already live with a recognised disability and more than a fifth of them experience some difficulty when using transport networks. So it's essential that the Department for Transport delivers an ambitious Accessibility Action Plan.'

Changes before the Paralympic Games improved access for disabled people to more parts of the public transport network for the first time and highlighted the immense value of such improvements.

Yet now 'further key accessibility improvements ... are being watered-down or abandoned.'

On buses: The Government's decision not to require all drivers to have

basic training in disability awareness is unacceptable.'

MPs called for a national public awareness campaign to ensure all bus users respect space intended for wheelchair users, plus financial incentives for bus and coach companies to bring forward the capital investment required to deliver a fully accessible vehicle fleet.

On trains: Disabled travellers should not have to book organised assistance in advance - this requirement should be phased out.

The DfT must ensure the needs of the disabled are central to prioritising and developing schemes for the next wave of Access for All railway improvements. 'Making physical improvements to stations also doesn't take away from the importance of having staffed stations to help all travellers make safe and secure journeys.'

The MPs heard evidence of low awareness among disabled people of Transport Direct, the DfT's jour-

ney-planning web portal, which has recently been upgraded to enable the planning of accessible journeys.

The committee welcomed the DfT's support for disabled travel training, but was concerned at the lack of funding available for the set-up of such schemes, which are often self-financing following an initial investment by a local authority. The report calls for local authorities to include such schemes in future bids to the Local Sustainable Travel Fund.

Taxis: On taxis and private hire MPs called for financial incentives to encourage investment in a fully accessible vehicles by operators, with a target to deliver a fully accessible taxi and private hire fleet within 10 years. They also recommended the DfT work with licensing authorities and the taxi trade to develop and implement without delay a nationwide programme of disability awareness training for taxis and private hire vehicle drivers.

Air travel: The committee called for a change to EU rules so that airlines are required to allow carers to travel free when the airline judges a disabled person incapable of travelling independently (as is the case in the US). They also called for the European Commission to reform the rules governing compensation paid by airlines when mobility equipment is damaged in transit.

The Transport Committee goes further. It wants the Cabinet Office to convene a working group of ministers and officials to improve cross-government working on accessibility in order to secure the full benefits to be gained from widening disabled people's access to employment and training, healthcare, and wider participation in all parts of society. The MPs also emphasised the urgency for closer working between the DfT, local government and the new Disability Action Alliance to promote the development of successful local accessibility schemes.

Medical records 'can be used without permission'

It seems that our personal medical records are no longer confidential. Unless you take action, identifiable information can be uploaded from your GP-held records to central systems from where it may be passed on to others including commissioning bodies, researchers and private companies.

Under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, the Government has the power to override patient confidentiality if it can make a reasonable case for it, for example, for research. If you do not want confidential, identifiable information from your medical records to be uploaded and passed on for purposes other than your

medical care you can opt out by telling your doctor. You can do this directly or you can send a letter. There is a link to a letter in Word and PDF formats that you can fill in and send to your GP at <http://tinyurl.com/lr7b8s2>. [Source: Medconfidential Website <http://tinyurl.com/ojut369>]



Giving deaf pupils some helping hands ...

Helping Hands is a new project run by the National Deaf Children's Society which will set up peer support schemes for deaf youngsters aged 10 -18 at schools in the Midlands, the North East and London.

In a peer support scheme children are trained to act as 'peer buddies' who give help and support to other pupils. This can include helping new pupils to settle in at school, listening to other children's experiences and having a chat, or giving support on practical things such as managing schoolwork.

The aim is to create a supportive environment where young people can tackle issues in a positive and productive way. It is not about counselling or telling people what to do.

Peer support is particularly important for deaf children and young people because they are four times more likely to experience mental health problems than other children, and are vulnerable to isolation, bullying and poor self-esteem without the right support.

Peer support can also have a positive impact on the school environment.

All participating schools will be given support so that they can run their own peer support schemes in future. For more information about the Helping Hands project or the work of the NDCS email cyp@ndcs.org.uk

Hate crime will get onto statute books - Labour

This year's autumn Labour Party conference was told that, if it wins the next election, the party will introduce a specific criminal charge of disability hate crime.

This comes amid growing evidence that victims are being let down.

The Home Office estimates that 65,000 disability hate crimes occur each year. But disability charities say it could be as many as 100,000, which they say is largely driven by 'benefit scrounger' rhetoric fed by the media and the Government.

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, the Crown Prosecution Service and the National Probation Service reported earlier this year that victims of disability hate crime were being let down by the criminal justice system, with attacks not being properly recorded.

The three organisations also acknowledged there was no 'clear and uncomplicated definition' of what constitutes disability hate crime. Michael Fuller, the chief inspector of the CPS, said the Law Commission had been asked to consider whether there should be a specific offence of disability hate crime.

Figures published by the Association of Chief Police Officers show a rapid increase in the number of reported disability hate crimes since records began. In 2009 – the first full calendar year for which the data exists – 1211 crimes were reported. This rose by 24.8% in 2010, and a further 18.3% the following year.

It is unclear whether these rises were caused primarily by an increase in the number of disability hate crimes that are committed or higher rates of reporting.

Lords vote wins protection for disabled in private homes

A disabled peer has secured protection under the Human Rights Act for disabled and older people in private sector and charity-run residential homes.

Colin Low's amendment to the Care Bill corrects what was seen as a loophole in human rights law, which previously meant that service-users in voluntary and private homes had no protection, for example if they suffered abuse or neglect.

Although the loophole was closed by legislation in 2008, Lord Low said the Care Bill could reopen it.

His amendment makes it clear that all organisations regulated by the Care Quality Commission are 'exercising a public function' under the Human Rights Act. It also provides protection for those who are eligible for care but have to pay for it themselves because of means-testing. [Source: Disability News Service]

Personal health budgets will become a right next year

From next April people receiving NHS Continuing Healthcare will have the right to ask for a personal health budget, and from next October this will become a right to have a personal health budget. The full text of the announcement is available at: <http://sn.im/27zi6cx>



Dementia carers miss out on vital support

A new report from Carers Trust has found that carers of people with dementia are not getting the support and advice they often desperately need.

Only 51% of carers questioned for 'A road less rocky – supporting people with dementia' said they were given an opportunity to talk separately about their needs and how much care they felt able to provide.

There are 800,000 people with dementia in the UK and this number is set to grow to more than a million by 2025. The financial cost is £23 billion each year and growing.

In the survey 56% of carers said they had not received information about managing the medication of those they cared for, while 52% said that they had been given no information on how to cope with incontinence.

Other key findings included:

- 52% reported difficulties in obtaining a diagnosis for dementia for the person they cared for
- 55% had not been given information on legal issues and managing money. Many had learned about Lasting Power of Attorney too late
- Many carers, particularly those caring for someone in the later stages of the illness, felt ill-equipped to deal with more agitated behaviour that might develop. And 68% said they had not received training or advice on this issue
- 82% said caring had adversely affected their ability to work

The report found that there were a number of critical points along a carer's journey where they would most value information and support. But advice, if it is given at all, is often too late. These critical points include:

- When dementia is diagnosed
- When the capacity of the person with dementia declines
- When the carer needs emotional support and/or a break from caring

- When the person with dementia loses their mobility
- When the carer has to cope with behaviour problems
- When the carer's own circumstances change
- When the person with dementia becomes incontinent

Carers Trust chief executive, Thea Stein, said: 'The evidence from this report has highlighted the fact that all professionals will need to check that carers have the information and advice appropriate for the challenges they are currently experiencing and that they know where to go for further information and advice.'

'Carers should be aware that there is support available to them. Local carer support services can guide carers through this journey, help them source vital information when they need it and provide much-needed emotional support and respite breaks.'

[Carers Trust 17.09.2013]

PIP email plan

The DWP has piloted a service to provide an email address for anyone wanting to request a paper PIP claim form. The pilot, in October, was designed to find what demand was for this service. The email address is intended for claimants who are unable to use the phone or text-phone.

Council's IT grant

Shropshire Council has launched the Shropshire Community IT Grant, to help community groups offer IT access and training. It can be used for a wide range of purposes. Visit: www.shropshirebroadplaces.org.uk [Source: VCSA]

Universities 'still failing the disabled'

Universities are still failing disabled students, according to new research carried out by young campaigners.

Four years on from a study that exposed access problems at universities, the report by the Trailblazers group – part of the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign – reveals that many disabled students are still unable to use vital facilities on campus.

Among the findings of University Challenge 2013, 30% of recent graduates said they felt limited in what they could study because of concerns about their care packages, while 60% said there was not enough information about accommodation on university websites. Just over half of the universities said

disabled students had full access to all of their teaching rooms, study rooms and libraries; while 30% said their graduation ceremony had taken place in an inaccessible or non-inclusive location.

Only one in five had an accessible toilet with a hoist in every building.

Among the report's recommendations, it calls for accessible and inclusive graduation ceremonies; a recognition of the additional care and support disabled students will need when living independently; better access to student union facilities; and extra support and information for disabled students on work placements and internships. [Source: The Fed, 04.10.2013]



Why the DWP is losing appeal

As appeals against the bedroom tax began going to tribunals, the results could scarcely have been worse for the Department for Work and Pensions. Not only did it lose four out of five initial appeals but the reasons for the decisions are legally well-constructed and likely to be argued in other cases too.

For instance, in one appeal, the judge held that if under-occupation was to be prevented, then over-crowding must also be avoided. So, if a room was too small to be legally treated as a bedroom for an adult under the Housing Act 1985, then it could not lawfully be treated as a bedroom for benefits purposes.

First-tier tribunal decisions are not binding on other tribunals but if the DWP appeals against those decisions to the upper tribunal and loses again, then it will become binding.

In the meantime, the same arguments can be used by any other claimants to whom they apply.

UN inspector wants end to benefit cap and bedroom tax

Attempts by Tory Party chairman Grant Shapps to bully a UN special rapporteur into withdrawing her call to end the bedroom tax appear to have backfired spectacularly.

Raquel Rolnik visited the UK to look into housing policy and recommended that both the benefit cap and the bedroom tax be abolished.

An enraged Shapps claimed that she had not been invited here and had not spoken to government ministers. Both claims have since been proved to be untrue.

(See Guardian at <http://tinyurl.com/o3zx4hm>)

Shapps called for an investigation into Rolnik's conduct and demanded

she issue an apology.

Far from backing off, however, Rolnik has now asked for British claimants to contact her with evidence about the effects of other welfare reforms, including the WCA, on their lives.

[Source: Shropshire ME Group Newsletter, Oct 2013]

See page 6

Look after yourself - for the sake of others!

The theme of this year's BackCare Awareness Week, held in October, was 'Caring for Carers'. According to the national back pain charity BackCare, more than 70% of the UK's unpaid carers now suffer from back pain, and risk developing chronic pain, which is highly disabling in a third of cases and life-long for the majority.

Among the events it organised during the week, BackCare ran live interviews to reach four million radio listeners through regional and national stations, and distributed a campaign pack of educational and awareness materials.

The British Chiropractic Association has developed a set of simple tips

for carers to remember when helping others:

- Think ahead: assess each situation and look for the best and easiest way to achieve the desired result, this may mean using any available equipment whether it be for specialist lifting or a simple sack barrow for moving boxes of supplies
- Follow the weight: always try to face the direction in which you want to carry any weight - your body is strongest when you are square on to the weight
- Take care when lifting: never lift while twisting from the waist. Bend your knees, try to have a relaxed, straight back and if possible, brace your abdominal muscles. For added stability make sure that your feet are about a shoulder width or more apart

before lifting

- Ask for training: whether you are caring in a formal setting or helping someone at home, make sure you have been properly trained in how to use any equipment
- Supportive shoes are essential: wear good, soft-soled shoes that are supportive and have a good grip on the ground
- Take regular breaks: if doing a repetitive task, take a break every 20 minutes and do some simple stretches to relax your muscles.

Back Care has also developed a simple programme of exercises, called Straighten Up UK, to help people get more active, as well as preventing back pain in both adults and children. [Source: Carers Trust]

**MS open day
- and a plea
for help!**

MS National Centre in London is hosting an open day on 5 November for all MS Society volunteers. Full details are available on the volunteer website or contact the volunteering team on 020 8438 0944 or at volunteering@mssociety.org.uk. Meanwhile, the Shrewsbury MS branch is in need of more help, particularly from people experienced in fundraising, IT and support. To find out more contact Peter Cornell at cornellp@gmail.com or by leaving your details on the helpline 01743 718641



Crackdown on care services lacking registered managers

One in eight adult social care services does not have a registered manager in place, the Care Quality Commission has revealed as it launched a crackdown on the issue.

The regulator said that in total, 3935 health or social care services did not have a registered manager, a quarter of which had not had one in place for at least two years.

CQC chief executive David Behan said this was unacceptable and that

analysis of inspection findings had shown that adult care services without a registered manager were more likely to be failing to meet essential standards than those with one in place.

To date, the CQC has served just one warning notice. But Behan said it needed to take 'more effective and robust action' on the issue.

Under the Health and Social Care Act 2008, not having a registered manager is an offence that the CQC

can take criminal action against, including issuing a caution or a fixed penalty notice of up to £4,000, or prosecuting the provider.

Behan said it would write to providers who have not had a registered manager for at least two years at any of their services to say that they face being fined from now onwards.

It will then tackle services that have not had an RM in place for at least a year. [Source: Community Care]

'Failure to address' concerns

Around two-thirds of social workers who have raised concerns about unmanageable caseloads say their managers fail to properly address the issue.

Of 650 social workers who responded to a survey, 56% felt their caseload was unmanageable. Almost 90% of those had raised their concerns with their managers. However, 64% of those respondents said their concerns had been dealt with 'quite poorly' or 'very poorly'.

Managers often recognised their concerns, but were unable to take decisive action due to constraints from senior management, lack of resources, or strict targets.

"We are told they know we are over-worked but extra staff can't be funded," said one respondent.

Others said: "You're informed that everyone is in the same position or that others have more cases than you and are not complaining."

'I was told I needed to be more organised; it felt like a personal failing and has made me reluctant to raise this again.'

Bridget Robb, chief executive of the British Association of Social Workers, said: 'There is a clear need for managers to be more supportive, but they too can face top-down pressures from policies imposed on them by central and local government.' [Source: Community Care 03.09.2013]

Council questions on home care

Concerns have been raised about councils' ability to monitor the quality of home care after research found one in six had at least 50 providers on its books.

Research published by the trade union Unison found nine councils had more than 100 providers with whom they were prepared to do business, while 31 had at least 50. A Freedom of Information request by Unison was answered by 196 of the 212 councils or health and social care trusts that have social services responsibilities.

The union warned that doing business with so many providers undermined councils' ability to effectively monitor quality. 'Councils no longer have proper insight into how home care services are run,' said Unison.

'Privatisation, huge budget cuts, a proliferation of providers, and a situation where councils can commission care from hundreds of different organisations has been synonymous with drastically declining standards. This all adds up to putting elderly and vulnerable people at risk.'

Patient reviews sought

A website is seeking to harness the experiences of patients to improve healthcare.

iWantGreatCare, which describes itself as the 'TripAdvisor of health', wants patients to rate and review their care in order to help others with similar conditions.

iWantGreatCare is also asking charities to tell their supporters about the site, encouraging them to add reviews. Every time a review is linked with a specific charity, iWantGreatCare will make a donation to that organisation. Charities will also have access to a database of national (anonymised) patient experience which may support lobbying and research. To find out more or to express an interest contact Jenny Heelis on 01993 869232 [Source: Health Information News 09. 2013]



Advocacy and advice agencies join hands

A4U and OSCA Citizen Advocacy are developing an informal working partnership which will allow them to incorporate long-term citizen advocacy into a comprehensive information and advice service.

They also recognise that in the future most charities will have to provide evidence of working together in order to secure funds and believe this informal arrangement will enable OSCA and A4U to build a positive reputation and track record of partnership working.

OSCA Citizen Advocacy is a major provider of independent advocacy across Shropshire and A4U provides information and advice to people with disabilities in the same area.

Peter Cornell, chair of both A4U and OSCA Citizen Advocacy, said the partnership 'will allow us to share information and build the services we offer. As resources, both finan-

cial and time wise, are limited in the present economic climate, this arrangement will allow us to share resources and to deliver joint projects. Both organisations are also keen to develop partnerships with other organisations which they can work with synergistically.'

Gill Edmunds, co-ordination manager for OSCA Citizen Advocacy, said it is 'a great opportunity for OSCA and A4U to develop the excellent independent services they offer at present into a seamless and comprehensive service for the clients. It's a very exciting development for both organisations.'

And Marion Youens, chief executive officer of A4U, said: 'We are delighted that we will be working together and have already demonstrated the value of using citizen advocacy to support our clients to better understand the information and advice we give them to make

choices and better manage their affairs.'

For further details contact:

A4U, Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HB; 01743 256218; advice@a4u.org.uk www.a4u.org.uk
OSCA, Roy Fletcher Centre, 12-17 Cross Hill, Shrewsbury, SY1 1JE; 01743 368370; info@oscacitizenadvocacy.org.uk www.oscacitizenadvocacy.org.uk



Volunteer co-ordinators with Osca, Fraser McEwan and Tash Gilmore, on duty at the organisation's stand at the recent Market Place event in Shirehall (see page 1)

Patient information 'inaccurate and confusing'

A doctor has taken the NHS to task for its 'inaccurate, inconsistent, and confusing' patient information leaflets.

Writing on the British Medical Journal website bmj.com. GP Margaret McCartney says the NHS is awash with patient information. With many trusts commissioning leaflets from external companies and others writing their own, it is difficult to know how efficient and effective these leaflets are, she says

Previous studies have shown that some leaflets are providing patients with inconsistent guidance and others are giving conflicting advice.

For instance, a study of one set of leaflets for the removal of kidney stones found they did not consistently mention common complications and had a wide variation of

information on drugs and pain-killers.

Sir Muir Gray, co-chair of the executive council of the Information Standard, a scheme for organisations producing evidence-based healthcare information for the public, said 'It's a stupid system, a waste of money, and, without rigorous standards... the information is biased and misleading.'

Dr McCartney says the problem of varying leaflets is not new: a BMJ investigation in 1998 found inaccuracies and outdated information in leaflets given out by GPs. A researcher at Oxford University says the problem is that the NHS still fails to take this seriously - at present, there is no one who has responsibility for patient information leaflets in most NHS trusts.

NHS England says it is launching a project to standardise information.

Pedal power!

Martin Carruthers, a member of Shrewsbury and District MS Society, reports proudly on Facebook that he has set a personal best: passing the 1000 mile barrier on his pedal trike in just 12 years!

Christmas card shop

The charity Christmas card shop in St Mary's Church, Shrewsbury, is open until Saturday 23 November. It is open daily (not Sundays) from 10.15-4.15.



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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 (see under R)

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>

Landau - supported employment services for people with disabilities, 5 Landau Court, Tan Bank, Wellington. TF1 1HE, 01952 245 015,

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

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

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

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

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

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; sightlossshropshire@shropshire.gov.uk

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

Voluntary Association for the Blind (see Sight Loss Shropshire)

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 457810 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

All SDN members and supporters - and anyone who wants to criticise us - 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

Social media advice events in Shrewsbury

The Shrewsbury Social Media Surgery is a free advice session for staff, trustees and volunteers of Shropshire's voluntary and community groups and Social Enterprises

It is informal and relaxed, covering all aspects of using computer technology for communication. Bring your laptop and use the wifi supplied to hook up to the internet (with assistance if required). If you don't have a laptop, don't worry - there will be kit to use. Learn from people who understand good ways to use the internet and who can show you useful free tools. Have a chat over a cup of coffee or tea.

The next surgery is on Thursday 14 November from 5.30-7.00pm at the restaurant in Dobbies Garden World, Bayston Hill Nurseries, Shrewsbury, SY3 0DA

It is a drop-in session but if you book the organisers will know how many volunteers are needed. It is important to arrive by 6.15pm at the latest. Book at <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/event/8759372519>
[Source: Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership]

Phone support line aims to help carers and others

Omega, a Shrewsbury-based national charity, offers a free, confidential telephone support service for carers, former carers, the bereaved, and those who live alone or find it difficult to keep in touch with family and friends, or who cannot attend support groups.

An Omega volunteer befriender will phone, offering not only a listening ear but also a chance to find out about local services and help to find information and support. To use 'Chatterbox', or to find out more about how to become a volunteer befriender, contact Omega in any of these ways - 0845 259 3163, carers@omega.uk.net, or write to Freepost RSGB-CYBY-HSCX, Omega, London House, Town Walls, Shrewsbury, SY1 1TX. The Omega website is www.omega.uk.net.

Actor backs mental health app

Stephen Fry has lent his support, both as an entertainer and as a sufferer of mental health problems, to the launch of 'Doc Ready', a digital tool that helps young people get the most out of their GP when they make an appointment to talk about mental health.

The Doc Ready app is the first of a suite of digital products from the Innovation Labs programme, all designed to help young people to manage their mental health. The programme will launch six more products in the next 12 months.



Words can be cruel, but perhaps never more so than when **jargon replaces language**

My son Steven is 23. He has autism and other learning difficulties. And the language of the social care system seems to make his life sound even less 'normal' than it is. The adult social care world is about many things, but one thing that I feel it's not about is care.

The language seems to mislead you right from the start. Processes seem to come before people in a system of impenetrable management where money is the biggest consideration.

Day centres are closed down. Although you may have considered them a helpful lifeline, this closure is not a negative thing because it's been done to 'promote independence'.

'Service user choice' is also a fabulous phrase until you find it results in being given a sum of money to 'purchase your own care provider' - but no one provides care at the rates which are calculated for you by a 'fairer charging policy'. Which also sounds good but isn't.

Steven was 'transitioned' into adult services six years ago. Soon after, he was taken into a care unit against all our wishes which resulted in a well-documented court case in 2011. One of the unit's ideas was that he should have a 'person-centred plan'. He had to create a wish list, and came up with six things:

- Live at home with Dad
- Go on holiday to Somerset
- Have Christmas presents at home
- See Toy Story 3 at the cinema
- Have breakfast in the bacon shop
- Go swimming at Hampton pool

All six wishes were refused because they were not considered to be in his best interests. To me, that's not a person-centred plan, that's a system-

This is a shortened version of an item about the destructive effects of the jargon surrounding disability, published on the BBC 'Ouch' website. It clearly struck a nerve because almost 500 comments were posted soon afterwards. It is a father writing...

centred plan. A service user, like Steven, is a 'case' and every piece of minutiae from his life must be recorded and analysed...

A manager explained to me once that everything learning disabled people do must have a 'value' - not too bad until you realise that someone else is setting the value and its parameters are very narrow. Who on high decreed that everything we do must have some value?

I write a lot about the language of the social care world. I love it when I read stuff like 'transparency' because the reality seems to be the opposite. I therefore tend to work on the principle that the opposite of what is being presented is probably closer to the reality. But the thing that really gets my goat is when a person's entire life, everything they do, is jargonised.

I was recently comparing with a friend the way I present the everyday norms of my own life with the way the social care world presents Steven's life. We were having the conversation in a pub. If Steven

were to go to that pub, or to a gym or swimming pool, for instance, he might be described as 'accessing the community'.

Here are 10 jargon phrases I jotted down on the back of a beer mat, the kind of things which make Steven's life sound even less 'normal':

1. I live in my home. Steven's 'current placement is in the family home'
2. When I make a pizza, I'm making a pizza. When Steven makes a pizza, he's 'increasing his independence skills' (as overseen by an occupational therapist).
3. If I cry, I'm sad about something. If Steven cries, it is logged and analysed by the psychologist and 'positive behaviour team'.
4. If I shout or swear, I'm angry about something. If Steven shouts or swears, it is 'challenging behaviour' and new behaviour management plans need to be drawn up.
5. If I choose between steak or fish for my tea, I'm making a choice. If Steven chooses either steak or fish for his tea, he is being 'empowered'.
6. I have friends. Steven has a 'circle of support and influence'.
7. If I'm asked what I want to do with my free time, I'm planning my hobbies. If Steven is asked what he wants to do with his free time, it's his 'person-centred plan'.
8. If I make an unwise choice, I've messed up. If Steven makes an unwise choice he may be 'lacking mental capacity'.
9. If I sort my CDs into alphabetical order, I'm being a bit anal. If Steven sorts his Mr Bean DVDs into colour order, he is being 'inappropriately obsessive'.
10. If I eat two Mars bars, I'm being a pig. If Steven eats two Mars bars, he is 'challenging boundaries'.

[Source: Mark Neary's Love, Belief and Balls blog - <http://markneary1dotcom1.wordpress.com/>]