

FORWARD MIDLOTHIAN DISABLED PEOPLE



Disability Living Allowance -- After the Budget

Out of the **Blue** and **Yellow**.

The Chancellor, George Osborne, made a fresh attack on benefits for disabled people in his budget announcement. From 2013 a new medical assessment for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) will be applied to new and existing claimants. The government estimate that this change will save £1.4bn over 2 years; 2013 to 2015. As this benefit will not be reduced it suggests that many claims (existing as well as new) will be rejected.

This planned new assessment seems to mirror the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) used to determine whether someone is eligible, or not, for Employment Support Allowance (ESA). This raises a number of serious concerns. The WCA replaced the Personal Capability Assessment which was thought to be the most rigorous, harsh and inflexible assessment for disability benefits in Western Europe. Since the WCA was introduced 5% of people claiming for ESA were judged to be 'unable' to work and 36% have been placed on Job Seekers Allowance.

There are approximately 8000 appeal hearings against these decisions every month. Where claimants are represented at these hearings by the Citizens Advice Bureau, 70% win. People with conditions like Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, terminal cancer, bi-polar, heart failure, strokes, severe depression, have been deemed 'fit for work'. Home Office Minister

Lynne Featherstone questioned the government's new assessment, "The previous Labour government tried to get people off such allowances and my experience as a local MP is that the reassessment of people claiming has been variable at best. We need to be sure that there is no perverse incentive to determine that someone can work when they cannot." There are concerns that the new medical test for DLA will be detrimental; for assessment and appeals, resulting in increased costs. The government plans more frequent medical assessments for the 2.6 million people currently on ESA/IB and wants to triple the number of tests from 10,000 to 30,000 per week to identify those it believes are fit to work. Of course, we mustn't ignore the stress and anxiety these changes will bring to people claiming any of these benefits.

Along with the tougher test for Disability Living Allowance, ESA and the closure of Independent Living Fund monies to new applicants, we await the Chancellor's spending review on the 20th of October which is widely expected to result in massive spending cuts to social services. The services that many disabled people rely on.

Messrs **Cameron** and **Clegg** say of the hard times ahead, "We are all in this together." "It will hurt us all." Somehow, it is difficult to believe that these two multi-millionaires will have their very basic rights to an independent life threatened.

Forward Mid August meeting; August 12th, 2-4pm, British Red Cross, Dalkeith

- Midlothian Council Single Equalities Scheme. There is to be a three month public consultation, August – October.
- Direct Payments and Self Directed Support. How can we best raise awareness of this for Disabled People in Midlothian. More Choice and control in their lives.
- The consultation period. Forward Mid role in supporting disabled people's views.
- Margaret Petrie. Equalities Engagement Officer, Midlothian Council. As a guest at the August meeting, we will learn more about her role and also think how we can work in partnership in the coming year.

If you would like to join us or want to know more, ring Eric on 0131 663 9471

Human Rights: Beyond the courtroom.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Human Rights Act.

The right to participate in public life.

Disabled man denied support to attend gay pub.

A physical disabilities team at a local authority had a policy of providing support to service users who wanted to participate in social activities. A gay man asked if a support worker could accompany him to a gay pub. His request was denied even though other heterosexual service users were regularly supported to attend pubs and clubs of their choice. During a BIHR training session, the man's advocate realised that the man could invoke his right to respect for private life and his right not to be discriminated against on the grounds of sexual orientation to challenge this decision.

The main reasons for the existence of this act are to strengthen the ability of everyone to secure the best possible standard of service by public authorities and the right to be treated with respect, dignity, equality and fairness

Too often the Human Rights Act is associated with technical legal arguments or perceived to be limited to high-profile claims by criminals. However, the following case studies (courtesy of the British Institute of Human Rights) show how people going about their day to day lives are benefiting from the law, without resorting to the law.

Married women denied a double bed.

Source: Disability Now

A disabled woman was told by occupational therapy that she needed a special ('profile')

bed. She was unable to leave her bed and this new arrangement would allow carers to give her bed baths. She requested a double bed so that she could continue to sleep next to her husband. That authority refused her request, even though she offered to pay the difference in cost between a single and double bed. A stalemate ensued for 18 months until the woman was advised by the Disability Law Centre to invoke her right to respect for private and family life. Within 3 hours of putting this argument to their authority it found enough money to buy the whole of her double profile bed.

These case studies show how human rights change lives and that the language and ideas of human rights can have a real and substantial impact for many people in a wide range of everyday situations.

Many public authorities are embracing the Human Rights Act and endeavouring to ensure their services meet the standards and principles it sets out but, there is still a long way to go.

There have been calls to scrap the Human Rights Act, mainly due to the high-profile cases we be read about in the newspapers and see on the television. But, if the Act was to be scrapped many people would lose their protection and empowerment to speak out against poor treatment.

If you want to know more about the Human Rights Act visit the British Institute of Human Rights website at: www.bihar.org.uk.

Only in America

The blind community is one step closer to hitting the roads thanks to a team of Virginia Tech students who have created a “buggy for the blind,” a small vehicle equipped with tools that create a nonvisual “map” drivers use to navigate.

Virginia tech developed the vehicle in 2009 that will allow even the visually impaired or blind to take control of the steering wheel. The retrofitted dirt-buggy uses a number of technologies to assist its driver, an on-board computer provides sensory information that can be used to handle the steering wheel, accelerate, or stop the vehicle. At the heart of the system is a laser range finder that serves as the “eyes” for the driver.

A non-visual interface includes a combination of voice commands and a vibrating vest to provide feedback on the speed. The car also includes a click

counter steering wheel with audio cues, voice commands and a tactile map that uses compressed air to provide information on the road conditions and the obstacles near the vehicle. Wes Majerus, of Baltimore was the first blind person to drive the buggy in course inside the Virginia tech university, and he enjoyed the experience.



Watch the video at <http://videos.disabled-world.com/video/287/car-for-blind>

Alzheimer Scotland

Services provided by Alzheimer Scotland

- Day Care (except Saturday). 9/10 clients per session - stimulation, orientation, craft activities and fun and laughter
- [Day Opportunities Service](#)
- Private Purchase
- [Carer Support](#)
- Information and Advice
- [Information and Advice on Benefits & Adults with Incapacity Act 2000](#)
- Carer education
- [Dementia Café \(includes Carer Support Group\)](#) - Held the second Tuesday of every month , 12 noon to 3pm in Baptist Church, North Wynd, Dalkeith (the lane between Nationwide and Halifax Bank of Scotland, off High Street). Lunch at 12 noon, cost £2.00

Alzheimer Scotland

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Lets Connect

The Lets Connect group went on a 2 hour barge trip on 8th June. It was an overcast day with lots of rain but the group did not let it dampen their spirits. Waterproofs were the order of the day when they went out on 2 barges manned by the Seagull Trust Volunteers who went out of their way to ensure everyone had a magic, relaxing trip on the barges.

They supplied us with lots of tea, coffee and biscuits on our trip which was most appreciated.

The canal wildlife were so close to the barges that we could almost reach out and touch them. They enjoyed the bread thrown to them but seemed to have a preference for the brown bread thrown from the other barge and swam alongside us to the delight of the passengers.

We had a sing song on the route which was very amusing and enjoyed by all.

The 2 hour trip passed by so quickly and we were back in the mini buses heading back home before we knew it.

We decided that we will go on another barge trip in August but this time we are going to do a 3 hour trip.

We would recommend a barge trip on the union canal with the Seagull trust volunteers.

The Seagull Trust provides free canal cruises for groups of children and adults



who are disabled, elderly or disadvantaged.

They can be contacted on 0131-335-3318 for information and bookings.

Thanks to Mary Dempster for this article

Lives after a stroke 28th June until August 1 Edinburgh Filmhouse, Home Street

A glimpse into the lives of people living with the impact of stroke and disability through words and images by artists attending the Edinburgh Community Stroke Service at Firrhill Centre.

The effects of stroke can be more than just loss of movement in a hand or leg. Many suffer loss in many forms. Loss of role or status. Loss of self esteem and confidence. Sometimes loss of

independence and control in their lives. Some may lose the ability to communicate in words, or the ability to see and interpret their world as before.

If you are interested in purchasing any of the artworks features in the exhibition or would like further information please email alex.lodge@edinburgh.gov.uk

Alternative Publications

The editions of the Forward MID newsletters are available in large print or at www.forwardmid.org.uk
For alternative publication please E-mail to eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk or call Eric Johnstone on 0131-663-9471 or write to him at MVA 4-6 White Hart Street, Dalkeith EH22 1AE with your request.