

Newsletter issue 33 -May 2011

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

# FORWARD MIDLOTHIAN DISABLED PEOPLE



## View from the Chair



Discussing the content of future Forward Mid newsletters at our last meeting it was decided that we would now include a column written by the group's Chair; me, Jeff Adamson. This piece would give my opinion, on a current issue which had grabbed my attention; something I felt strongly enough about to warrant me putting pen to paper to share with our readers. Not being one to hold back on my opinions how could I resist this opportunity - at last, a licence to publicly rant, or to compliment (but more likely to rant). At this stage I have to stress that the "View from the Chair" is my view not necessarily that of other Forward Mid members.

In this newsletter my view is not only an angry rant but a rant of disappointment at a missed opportunity. I refer to something recently witnessed by 7.2 million people -- an episode of Emmerdale. I confess to being a fan of this 'continuous drama' ever since it was a 'soap' called Emmerdale Farm. For years I've watched all the village's goings-on and, unlike some devotees, do accept it's not real life, greeting each new storyline with amusement and a generous pinch of salt. However, a current plot has shocked me not only with its content but also with the possible consequences.



The chair in deep contemplation.

The storyline revolves around a young man, Jackson and his partner. One stormy evening, after the couple row Jackson drives off in his van, stalls it on a railway line and is hit by a train. So far, standard Emmerdale stuff. Jackson survives and is next seen in hospital where he is diagnosed as having a spinal cord injury which leaves him tetraplegic. Being tetraplegic myself, also after a spinal cord injury, I was naturally keen to see where this story was going. Reading the comments on this storyline I was pleased to see that the program makers had spent months researching with Spinal Injury charities and Spinal Injury Units "making

sure the storyline was handled sensitively and in a realistic manner." At last I thought, a TV programme that will show a disabled person in a positive way. How naive I was to think this.

After around a month in a general hospital Jackson, who, understandably, was more than a little depressed was discharged and returned to his newly adapted house in Emmerdale complete with a carer in situ. As the time goes on Jackson becomes more and more depressed about his circumstances and his thoughts soon turn to suicide. (Strangely, the writers chose to ignore Jackson's obvious depression; no mention of psychotherapists, medication or support groups.)

His partner and mother find out what's on Jackson's mind and try, for a couple of weeks anyway, to talk to him out of this but without success. They soon agree to assist him with his suicide. This only 5 months after his accident. They sack the carer who reports this to his manager and lo and behold we have our first sight of someone from social services; in fact, the first sight of anyone from any support agency. The social worker is easily fobbed off with a flimsy excuse never to be seen again. Jackson's mother buys some non-prescribed drugs which his partner helps him take resulting in Jackson's death.

What angers me is that, once again, disabled people are presented with a negative portrayal by the media. I'm tired of us being shown as suffering, pitiful creatures for which death would be a blessing.

Emmerdale said that it was "having an adult debate about the issues it raised".

Certainly, it raised the issue but there was no debate, the writers gave the viewer a specific answer.

I'm disappointed that the makers of this program chose to focus on Jackson's physical limitations rather than take the opportunity to show that becoming disabled is not the end of a life [Jackson and his mother's view] but the beginning of a different life. I'm not pretending that the lives of many disabled people are without their problems but we can still live full, active lives. Jackson was introduced to a tetraplegic young man who was leading such a life but he instantly dismissed the idea that he could follow suit.

Aspire, a spinal injuries charity who were consulted by Emmerdale, accused the show of taking the route of "sensational misrepresentation". Their spokesman continued: "Our suggestions that they move away from the suicide storyline fell on deaf ears. Perhaps ratings count for more than reality." "I sincerely hope that the 1,200 people who will be paralysed by spinal cord injuries this year, and their families, do not find themselves believing that Jackson's story represents their future."

An Emmerdale spokesman said "99% of the response we have had from viewers has been overwhelmingly positive. We're very proud of the way we have tackled this story."

Now I really know what it's really like to be 'in the minority'.

Until next time.

Jeff

The Chair and his mentor discuss matters of significant importance.



## Forward Mid Current Priorities

- A second issue directory for disabled people in Midlothian 2011 version (this should be launched in August)
- Disability access visit to Dalhousie Medical practice in Bonnyrigg.
- Recruitment, recruitment! We are actively seeking new people to be involved in a wide variety of ways. Get in touch if you want to be part of the success of Forward MID phone: 0131-663-9471.
- New logo? We are thinking about whether we need to update our logo. You will receive a separate mini newsletter in two weeks asking for your opinion.
- A strategy for disabled people in Midlothian. Forward Mid are actively involved in developing a new strategy 2011/2013. If you want have a voice in shaping what the real issues for disabled people are in Midlothian. Your voice will heard and acted upon.

## Joint Physical Disability Planning Group

What was discussed at the last meeting.;

- Evaluating the 2008-2011 strategy, what was achieved, what wasn't achieved and what can we learn.
- Changes in the Blue Badge scheme in Scotland
- The strategy's vision -- that disabled people and those who care for them should live full and active lives based on personal choice and aspiration.
- Strengthening membership, how to ensure that health and social care partners attend regularly with enthusiasm and commitment.
- Developing a new strategy for disabled people 2011-13
- Local Area Coordination in Midlothian-update

## From Midlothian Local Area Co-ordination desk

Midlothian Local Area Co-ordination recently facilitated a course to raise awareness of mental health issues. The six week course, held in the British Red Cross meeting room, Dalkeith was aimed at adults with learning disability. The purpose was to produce an accessible process for individuals to follow should they be concerned about their own or family's mental health. The focus areas were depression and dementia. Funded by Equally Well, training was provided by Health in Mind and Alzheimer's Scotland.

The participants rated the learning experience highly, with the added benefit of the opportunity to develop new friendships.

Stuart Campbell, Training and Development Manager, Health in Mind stated that "This was one of the most rewarding pieces of training that either myself or my colleague, Alan Burnett, had delivered."



## Midlothian is KICcing out

Midlothian Council has awarded KICC a small grant to start exercise classes in the Dalkeith/ Penicuik area. KICC is a voluntary organisation of people living with long-term conditions and who want to participate in appropriate exercise. KICC stands for Keeping Fit with a Chronic Condition and classes are open to people with any long-term condition such as arthritis, M.E., asthma, COPD, hypertension, MS.

The classes include movements to encourage stretching to prevent muscles from contracting and shortening. Exercises are designed to manage body balance helping to maintain good posture with breathing exercises to assist relaxation and sleep. Regular attendance can build up confidence, stamina and flexibility.



KICC Classes have been running in East Lothian for three years. Heather has been a regular attender. She said, '...the physio had recommended that I exercise at home. I knew what I was to do but I am not disciplined enough to exercise on my own. The class encourages me to commit to regular participation, and I feel the benefit over time. I also enjoy meeting friends for a chat and a coffee.'

Tam goes to the Port Seton Class on a Friday. '...I worked as a roofer until I fell in 2009 and broke my back. I wasn't happy with my speed of recovery and further tests indicated MS lesions. I was used to being active. The change in my health knocked the stuffing out of me at first. But I am finding my way through this. The exercises have helped with tight muscles, my sleep has improved and I feel bad if I miss a class.'

A Tuesday morning class started in Newtongrange Leisure Centre in early April and eight to ten people meet there each week. Anyone who wishes to join us in Newtongrange will be made most welcome. Is Newtongrange too far for you to travel? This article is intended to determine interest and uptake for classes in other villages in Midlothian. We want to know WHERE you would like classes to be and we will try to bring a class to YOUR area. Please let KICC know your views. Classes cost £30.00 for a block of six and to arrange times please call Janice Thomson on 01875 619 805 or email [kicc\\_merams@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:kicc_merams@yahoo.co.uk)



### Newbyres Medical Group

Tel: 01875 820405 | Fax: 01875 820269



The Gorebridge medical group have launched their web site, after registration with the Newbyres Medical Group website you can request prescriptions through the website or change your address. New Patients can also fill an application on line to request to join. There is a lot of useful information.

The website can also translate into many languages to make Newbyres Medical Group accessible to as many people as possible.

For more information please visit the web site [www.newbyresmedicalgroup.co.uk](http://www.newbyresmedicalgroup.co.uk)



## Is your driver **HAPPY TO HELP?**

Do you know any Lothian Buses drivers who go the extra mile and offer the help when it's need most?

Ecas is an Edinburgh based voluntary organisation dedicated to giving friendly and practical help to physically disabled people. To achieve this Ecas does everything from running classes through to providing individual grants for holidays and equipment and supporting initiatives to bring greater freedom to physically disabled people.

They know that many bus drivers **GO THE EXTRA MILE** to help those who need a little bit of additional assistance and feel such efforts should be recognised.

With this in mind, Ecas are proud to announce their "HAPPY TO HELP" award, where you can nominate your favourite driver or bus service.

Help award now by letting ECAS know at:

E-mail [info@ecas-edinburgh.org](mailto:info@ecas-edinburgh.org)

Web: [www.ecas-edinburgh.org](http://www.ecas-edinburgh.org)

Post: Ecas, Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH7 5QY



Closing Date: 31st July 2011

## The European Disability Forum

EDF believes that a European Mobility card would be a handy tool to facilitate travelling to another EU country for person with disabilities.

Within a country, being recognized as having a disability may open the door to a number of concessions, such as better access to transport, cultural facilities and events. Often, these concessions or benefits are received upon the presentation of a card. However, when the person crosses the national borders in Europe, these cards are no longer valid, which means that a visitor with a disability does not have access to the concessions offered to residents with disabilities in that country. This hampers cross-national mobility of persons with disabilities, because it puts non-residents with disabilities at a disadvantage.

EDF believes that this specific barrier can easily be overcome with a European Mobility card. Thanks to the harmonized design of the card, this will allow service providers in all EU Member States to easily verify that a card holder is entitled to the proposed service, thus avoiding discrimination based on Nationality and facilitating freedom of movement for persons with disabilities.



## UK Government Welfare Reform DLA Changing to Personal Independence Payment

As many of you may know the UK Government intend to replace the Disability Living Allowance benefit with the Personal Independence Payment. The Government have released a draft of the Assessment Regulations that will outline the way people will be assessed for the new payment. I have attached our briefing on the draft Regulations to this email. It contains a summary of some of the main features of the new Regulations.

You can access more information from the Department of Work and Pensions website by following this link:

[www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/welfare-reform/legislation-and-key-documents/welfare-reform-bill-2011/personal-independence-payment-briefing/](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/welfare-reform/legislation-and-key-documents/welfare-reform-bill-2011/personal-independence-payment-briefing/)

We feel that it is extremely important to inform you about these proposals and to seek your views. Many of the new features of the Personal Independence Payment are quite different from Disability Living Allowance. There will be a pilot of the new Assessment Regulations over the summer with an opportunity to submit responses at the start of August. It is vital your views, opinions and ideas are heard; please let us know your thoughts to help us prepare our response on this subject.

To respond you can do one of many things:

- You can complete our online survey. This survey uses the questions contained in the briefing I have attached to this email. You can access the survey by following this link: [www.surveymonkey.com/s/JJGWYSL](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JJGWYSL)
- You can reply to this email or contact Susan ([susan.grasekamp@sdef.org.uk](mailto:susan.grasekamp@sdef.org.uk)) with any feedback you would like to share.
- You can send us your views by post to:

Scottish Disability Equality Forum  
12 Enterprise House  
Springkerse Business Park  
Stirling FK7 7UF

I look forward to hearing from you.

Euan McDougall, Policy Officer  
Scottish Disability Equality Forum  
01786 446559



This is how I see the conversation. By  
Iain Tait

David "How about we call it El Muerte  
Assistance?"

Nick "So that's what EMA really stands for."

David "The people claiming disability  
benefits will be dying to get on it, he used to  
be the sole trader"



## LETTERS PAGE

### Feeling Hopeful.....And now Disappointed!

I have attended a number of events hosted by Forward Mid, NHS and Midlothian Social Work Services held in the Mining Museum, Gorebridge and Loanhead Miners Club. I found these days interesting and was left feeling hopeful of a real commitment to joint work between these services and service users.

I write to find out what has happened to move forward the agreed areas of work to be addressed, since these events were held. The days felt really positive and further days were suggested when people like myself would be invited to concentrate on future action and feedback regarding the progression of this joint commitment.

My understanding was that we would be kept informed of developments. I am rather disappointed that this does not seem to have happened. I know nothing of what the outcome was/has been.

I have attended quite a number of consultations, information gathering events and I'm disappointed that having made a point of mentioning that I and many others were tired of being invited to or attending such events only to be left wondering how the information gathered was used and acted upon. It would be useful to know how and when we are going to see evidence of the developments promised at these consultations.

Name and address withheld.



Dear reader

You raise important points in this letter. The events you speak of were public consultation events with Midlothian Council and Midlothian Community Health Partnership, designed to allow the great public of Midlothian the chance to inspire and influence the Midlothian Joint Physical Disability Strategy. ( This is the main strategy document that will define and shape health and social care services for Disabled people in Midlothian)

“My understanding was that we would be kept informed of developments. I am rather disappointed that this has not come to fruition. I know nothing of what the outcome was/has been.”

Yes. ....This was indeed the plan, but unfortunately, as can happen with such events, communication following the energy and commitment on the day, is not carried forward effectively. You may wish to know that Forward Mid have two representatives who attend the Joint Physical Disability Planning Group, this is the group who meet every six weeks, to develop and monitor the Strategy for Disabled people in Midlothian. So, Forward Mid have a seat at the table, so to speak. The current Strategy 2008-2011 is currently coming to an end and Forward Mid are involved in enquiring why some of the outcomes from the Action plan seem not to have been delivered. We have received a positive response from Colin Anderson, Director Communities and Well Being and Eibhlin Mchugh, Head of Community Care in working together to strengthen the work of this planning group to deliver a robust strategy and I would expect some events to reinvolve the public will be coming up. There will be new opportunities in developing a new strategy, but as you say, let's make sure it's not just about a few public consultation days and then no news of very much for a year or two. If you would like to become actively involved in any of this please get in touch with either Eric at [eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk](mailto:eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk) Or Marlene at [marlene838@btinternet.com](mailto:marlene838@btinternet.com).

There is a part time Physical Disability Planning Officer coming in to post with Midlothian Council around August this year, Forward Mid are certainly hoping that this new appointment will bring a new energy and commitment to planning of services for Disabled People, and effectively keep open and alive the channels of communication you speak about.-Ed.

## Disabled persons Blue Badge reform

The Disabled blue badge improvement service (BBIS) is being introduced on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012. This is being introduced to prevent fraud, people who are eligible will be able to apply on line or by phone, there is to be a single supplier of the Blue badge and details will be stored on a computer for quick checking and enforcement. It is anticipated that the BBIS will result in quicker, easier renewals as reminders can be distributed centrally. More information can be found at [www.transportscotland.gov.uk/road/blue-badge-scheme/review](http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/road/blue-badge-scheme/review) Forums are being set up for special interest groups for online using web based communications to apply please to join contact [BBES@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:BBES@dft.gsi.gov.uk).

Fancy  
a Cuppa?



Free coffee and chat  
Tuesday 2nd August , 1–3pm  
Loanhead Miners Club

**MS**

**Multiple Sclerosis Society  
Scotland**

We're keen to develop the support and social activities available to people living with MS in Midlothian.

The MS Society would like to invite you to join Area Development Officer, Cat Myles and Clare Dorrell, an occupational therapist based in Midlothian for a free coffee and chat on Tuesday 2nd August any time between 1–3pm at the Loanhead Miners Club, 74 The Loan, Loanhead, EH20 9AQ.

Drop in any time to meet Cat and Clare and feel free to share your ideas about how you'd like to participate and see activities develop in Midlothian. Just meeting other locals living with MS and sharing your experiences can make a huge difference. We're hoping to host more meetings in future if there's enough interest.

Contact Cat Myles on [cmyles@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:cmyles@mssociety.org.uk) or 07590 965 464 to express your interest or share your ideas even if you can't make the coffee meeting

### Alternative Publications

The editions of the Forward MID newsletters are available in large print or at [www.forwardmid.org.uk](http://www.forwardmid.org.uk)  
For alternative publication please E-mail to [eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk](mailto: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.