

Are you affected by Welfare Reform? Maybe struggling to get any support?

Would it help to talk to someone else who is in the same situation?

MIDLOTHIAN Welfare Reform PEER SUPPORT GROUP

For people affected by Welfare Reform.

Forward Mid, a local disabled people's organisation in Midlothian, Midlothian Council and Grapevine are joining forces to bring together disabled people and others living in Midlothian who are affected by the changes to benefits for a peer support group.

The group will focus on the impacts of Welfare Reform, and offer a confidential space for people to share experiences, pick up tips from each other and discuss aspects of Welfare Reform which they are concerned about so they can get support from each other.

We may even try to set up some sort of "buddy" arrangement where people can continue to support each other, between meetings, maybe with the occasional Telephone call.

The first meeting is taking place next year:

Date: Thursday, 30th January 2014 **Where:** Dalkeith Welfare Hall, St Andrews St (next to GP surgery) **Time:** 11.00am -1.00pm

To find out more and let us know you are coming along please call :

Eric Johnstone of Forward Mid on 0131 663 9471 or Kirstie at Grapevine on 0131 475 2370.



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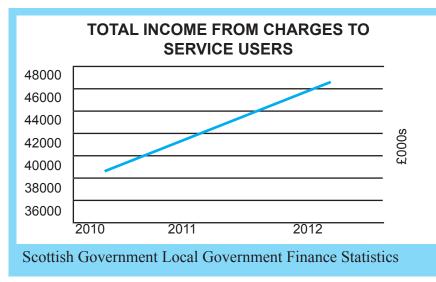
Launch of Scotland Against The Care Tax Campaign

On 31 October Scotland Against the Care Tax (SACT) launched a national campaign to abolish charging for social care (the 'Care Tax') following news that cash strapped councils across Scotland are balancing their books by raising the amount that thousands of disabled and older people pay in care charges for help to live in the community.



Figures show that over the last three years, care charges have risen on average by 12% with increases in some councils far more than that. Aberdeen City has more than doubled its charging income from disabled people in the last 2 years, while West Dunbartonshire Council has more than trebled their income from the Care Tax.

The Scottish Government already have the power to set the level of the Care Tax but they currently allow councils to choose if and what to charge. Getting up and going to bed, eating and drinking, and seeing family and friends are not issues that should be left to 'discretion'. Nearly every local authority in Scotland charges disabled people for the care they receive, forcing them into a cycle of poverty few can ever hope to escape.



There is no upper limit on what councils can charge for care. This means some disabled people are charged 100% of their own, already severely limited, income for the care they are entitled to.

Whilst the Care Tax contributes 3% (or approx. £42.6m) to the cost of social care in Scotland, this 3% can be as much as 100% of their income after basic housing costs. It can cost up to

12%

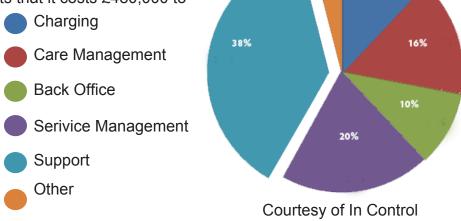
40% of the money raised to collect these charges and only about half of the money collected goes back into social care.

Local Authorities defend charges by saying that they are an essential source of revenue. However, as the diagram below shows only 38% of the charges taken are put back into frontline position.

What happens to charges when they are collected?

Not only is the current system deeply confusing it is also expensive. Figures from one authority suggests that it costs £480,000 to

collect £21 million in charges. When this is put alongside the other infrastructure costs for social care this means that only 38% fraction of a "Charged Pound" actually ends up being turned into a useful service. This makes charging a rather inefficient form of taxation.



The Care Tax League

Premier league

Those who can take more than half your money

Division One

Those who can take half your money

Council	How much of your 'spare' income could they take?				
Aberdeenshire	100%				
Moray	100%				
Perth & Kinross	100%				
Clackmannanshire	100%				
Falkirk	100%				
Stirling	75%				
Argyll & Bute	75%				
Renfrewshire	75%				
Midlothian	70%				
Aberdeen City	67%				
Angus	66%				
Dundee City	65%				
West Lothian	65%				
East Renfrewshire	60%				
Dumfries & Galloway	55%				

Division Two

Orkney Islands

Those who can take Less Than Half Your Money

15%

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Council	How much of your 'spare' income could they take?
East Ayrshire	50%
East Dunbartonshire	50%
Edinburgh City	50%
Eilearn Siar	50%
Glasgow City	50%
Highland	50%
North Ayrshire	50%
South Lanarkshire	50%
West Dunbartonshire	50%
South Lanarkshire	50%

Not Playing

Those who make no charge for home care

Council	How much of your 'spare' income could they take?	Council	How much of your 'spare' income could they take?
East Lothian	45%	Fife	0%
North Lanarkshire	40%	Shetland islands	0%
Inverclyde	25%		
South Ayrshire	25%		
Scottish Borders	23.5%		

Figures taken from Local Authorities charging policies

Scotland Against the Care Tax (SACT) is launching the first national campaign to call on the Scottish Government and local authorities to abolish charging, and at a stroke lift tens of thousands of disabled people out of absolute poverty.

Eileen Dinning, Chair of Scotland Against the Care Tax said, "The Care Tax is a hidden tax on disabled and older people; only they (as users of care and support services) pay it. It can be as much as 100% of the money disabled and older people are left with after they are means tested." She continued, "Almost half of disabled people live in poverty – they cannot afford to pay for this crisis alone. Disabled and older people don't have the broadest shoulders yet they are under attack – from everywhere – paying additional taxes on bedrooms and now going to the toilet too, things that others take for granted."

At a time when we are designing the blueprint for Scotland's future the time is now to put this issue on our agenda, to lead the way in Europe and to end this unfair and unjust tax on disabled and older people.

For further information on the Care Tax Campaign; the issues and how the care tax works visit the SACT website at: www.scotlandagainstthecaretax.org

Only the best ... for carers in Midlothian! VOCAL Midlothian Carer Centre launched on 24 October 2013

The launch of the brand new Carers Centre at Hardengreen Estate, Eskbank, on Thursday 24 October 2013 brought Midlothian's carer promises to life and marked the tenth anniversary of dedicated carer support in the county.

VOCAL Board member Jane Cuthbert is a carer and chairs Carers Action Midlothian: "Our Midlothian strategy 'Caring Together' sets out a vision for carers to be **valued as equal partners, supported to manage their caring role and able to have a life outside of caring.** Our new Centre for Carers will be the platform and a hub of carer events and individual support to bring these promises to life!"

The opening of the Carer Centre is the culmination of a ten year journey to improve support for unpaid carers in Midlothian. The Centre will allow VOCAL (Voice of Carers Across Lothian) and partner agencies to provide a wider range of support to more carers than ever before. The Centre will offer carers training, counselling, access to short breaks, expert advice, advocacy and one to one support.

The VOCAL Midlothian Team

The latest Census figures show that around 1 in 10 of the population in Midlothian care without pay for a family member, relative or friend.

VOCAL chief executive Sebastian Fischer commented:

"The 2011 Census figures bear witness to the need of more carer support in Midlothian. The number of carers increased by 8.7% from 7,581 to 8,238. Even more alarming is the increase in the intensity of caring: the number of people caring for 20-50 hours a week shot up by 45% over the last ten years and those caring for 50 or more hours a week increased by 18.7%. These are the carers who most urgently need information, support and breaks from caring to sustain their caring role with confidence and in good health!"

Carers consistently highlight concerns about their own health, financial support and the need to have regular breaks from caring as their main priorities. The Centre will provide courses such as 'Looking after yourself', and one to one counselling to support carers to maintain their physical and emotional health. Access to expert advice on welfare rights and Power of Attorney will be offered through surgeries at the Centre. The new Centre will also be home to '**Wee Breaks Midlothian'** which will support carers to explore and create breaks from their caring role that allow them to recharge their batteries and pursue other interests.

Jan Barnett is in charge of the new Centre. **"This Carers Centre will be a hub for carers in** Midlothian, where they can come, be welcomed, be supported and belong."

If you would like to know more about the new Carers Centre and what it can offer you then please Telephone: 0131-663 6869.



More Dates coming up for LCiL's

Access to Work

Project's series of

Information

Workshops for

Disabled People and

Parents/Carers

Have now been confirmed!

Venue: Norton Park in the Training Suite contact:

Amanda

on 0131 475 2350/2510

To book a place!

Access to Work Officers will be contributing to the programme at each event! Access to Work Information Workshops are coming your way!

As part of our Access to Work project, LCiL are holding further workshops in December for parents/carers of Disabled People who want to find out more about AtW and what it actually means for disabled people in real terms.

The dates are:

Venue: the training suite at Norton Park 14th January 2014

Workshop for young people with additional support needs

(16 - 25 year olds) Time: 6 pm - 8.30 pm

At these workshops:

You can find out what Access to Work is and get up to date with all the changes that are happening within the service.

It will be useful for those who may be thinking of going into new employment or are already in employment and require additional support to remain in their work!

Travel costs can be met on request!

Light refreshments such as: teas; coffees; juices and cakes will be available. A great chance to find out more, in a comfortable small group setting.

email: amanda.beech@lothiancil.org.uk

Telephone: 0131 475 2350/2510



Rights & Choices for Disabled people, people with long term conditions and older people in Edinburgh and Lothian LCiL 57 Albion Road Edinburgh EH7 5QY



LCiL welcomes the decision by the Court of Appeal to overturn the government's decision to abolish the Independent Living Fund

Five disabled people who took the case to the court have had appeal judges back their case by claiming it has breached equality duty by failing to properly assess the impact of abolishing the fund.

The fund at present provides essential money to disabled people with very severe impairments so they can live an ordinary life – for example, money to cover the cost of overnight carers for those who have care needs around the clock; for social activity; and for people to remain or become involved in their local community, which 'critical and substantial' social care provision from local authorities does not cover.

This comes a week after the Scottish Government have closed their own consultation on what to do with the ILF money after it closes in 2015. LCiL have consulted many disabled people in Edinburgh and the Lothians and have submitted two responses to the consultation, one on behalf of disabled people who discussed the issues at an event and another on behalf of the organisation. Both can be read in full on our E-library at: www.lothiancil.org.uk/lcil-response-to-independent-living-fund-consultation/

One disabled person said this about the ILF money they receive:

'Quite frankly, I would die. I'm ventilated 24/7. I need the support. Although, I shouldn't really have to receive ILF. The LA or health authority should fund this type of care. To be less dramatic, I would have to go into residential care if I didn't have ILF.'

Since 2012 the fund has been closed to new applications meaning that many disabled people have had no access to support towards living more independent lives such as non-disabled people can.

LCiL works with disabled people so they can have choice and control over how support/care is provided to them in their communities and in order for them to gain independence in their own lives. To see the range of services we offer, visit our website at: www.lothiancil.org.uk

Now that this development has come about we await eagerly to hear what next steps are announced.

Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living (LCiL): LCiL has been working with disabled people across Lothian for the last 20 years, to support them to take control of their lives and live independently in the community. As a user-led charity all our services respond to needs identified by disabled people and offer a range of practical and emotional support to promote their equal participation in all aspects of society, including:



Independent Living Support: Providing you with information and one-to-one support to manage your own self-directed package.



Grapevine Disability Information: Free, confidential disability information and advice to people in Edinburgh, East Lothian or Midlothian.



Payroll Service: Wages processing and administration if you employ your own personal assistants (PAs). Enhanced support to help you budget and plan, make payments and manage paperwork.



Training Services: For individuals' and organisations, on topics such as Disability Equality and Self-Directed Support. Skills training for disabled employers and PAs.



Access to Work: Information and advice to individuals and employers on Access to Work.



Living and Work Choices: Free courses to help you explore options for the future, and gain practical skills for independent living if you're a disabled adult in the Lothians.

For more information on LCiL services, our values and aims please visit our website at: www. lothiancil.org.uk

Email: LCiL@lothiancil.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Lothian-Centre-for-Inclusive-Living/

Twitter: https://twitter.com/LothianCIL

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Kirstie Henderson Information & Communications Coordinator Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living (LCiL) email: kirstie.henderson@lothiancil.org.uk Telephone: 0131 475 2350 Telephone/Minicom 0131 475 2350 Fax 0131 475 2392 Grapevine Disability Information Service: Telephone: 0131 475 2370 grapevine@lothiancil.org.uk Address: Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh, EH7 5QY

"Helen's Hot Shops"

Here I am back at the Fort for my weekly retail therapy; well that's what I like to call it! As you know, before I hit the shops I have to have my caffeine and it comes in the shape of a skinny latte. Once I've had that and a muffin (well I need my strength for shopping) I head to New Look. If you need to park near the shop or you are arriving in a taxi there are 4 disabled parking bays at the front. It's no problem getting into New Look with my wheelchair as it has automatic doors. The shop is on 2 levels but lucky for me Ladies is on the ground floor however, shoes are up the stairs.

For you men wanting to shop you need to go up to the first floor. There's an accessible lift at the back of the shop near the bags and scarves. The shop is well laid out which is especially helpful if you are in a wheelchair as you can get around no problem. There are rails in the middle of the shop which are easy to get to but the rest of the clothes are at the side of the shop on hangers which can make it difficult to reach from my wheelchair. However, the staff are really helpful and there is always someone near to lend a helping hand, either to reach up for you or bring an item down for you to look at. If you want to try something on a staff member will take it to the changing room for you. There are a couple of changing rooms which are bigger than the others giving you more room to move around in. If you need to try



on another size than your original choice, again the staff are happy to go and get it for you. What I also found very helpful was that some staff have been able to advise me on what to wear when I was going on a night out and what accessories I might want to complete my outfit. Once you know what you want to buy, a staff member will take it to the till for you.

It's a bit worrying when you pick up a top and the girl at the till tells you that you bought that top last week! Think I need another coffee before I go home; better make it de-caffeinated this time.....

Below is an extract from a letter from the Chief Executive of Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living which was published in a Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations newsletter earlier this year. Unfortunately we have been unable to print this until now because of editorial restraints. However, we believe that the content and message this letter contains is one that everyone should be made aware of.

The story of a let down – the end of a Scottish success story

On 30 June 2013, after five and a half years of operation, the Your Call National Telephone and Email Peer Counselling Service for disabled people and their families and carers closed due to lack of funding. The service, based within the Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living (LCiL), closed with a number of individuals still waiting to be supported.

Your Call counsellors were professionally trained volunteer disabled people or people with long term conditions who greatly valued the opportunity to play such an important role while managing low energy levels and/or the symptoms of long term conditions.

LCIL

rights & choices

Clients of the service were mostly people who could not access other counselling services and couldn't be reached by NHS services. They came from Shetland and Stranraer and all points in between.

Throughout the years of continual fundraising activities, and continuing reluctance from statutory bodies to fund the core costs of Your Call, there was never a chance to improve the long term funding stability of the service. This of course created a lot of anxiety for counsellors and clients who, on several occasions, had to be told that the service may be stopped in three months' time due to lack of funding. It is interesting to note that in the last 11 years of the service (including Your Call and its predecessor, a face-to-face service), the Co-ordinator was given a redundancy notice five times; on the first four occasions last minute funding meant that he stayed in post. This precarious funding situation, although well known to so many services provided by voluntary organisations, is particularly detrimental to counselling services which work with individuals who have often experienced significant losses in their lives and rely on the security and consistency of



their relationship with a counsellor to move on with their lives.

With the closure of this unique service in Scotland the proven and successful use of the peer support model (i.e. the opportunity to work with another disabled person who is also a trained counsellor), is lost. This is despite the fact that time and time again, Your Call annual evaluations demonstrated that the service made a difference to the lives of people, as well as being free and easy to access.

We live in a time when disabled people and people with long term conditions are disproportionally affected by the Welfare Reforms, are continuously told as a group that they cost too much to the public purse and therefore that as a society we cannot afford to maintain the level of support necessary for them to live independent lives. At the same time, institutions and the media recognise that they are the target of disproportionate bullying and abuse. Despite this there are now no national psychological and emotional support services aimed at disabled people or people with long term conditions in Scotland. There are no services which work specifically with people in chronic pain, or people who cannot leave their home because of the pain and energy implications of their illnesses to attend psychological or counselling appointments.

In April 2013 the Scottish Government, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (on behalf of local authorities), the disabled people's Scottish Independent Living Coalition, and the National Health Service Scotland jointly signed 'Our Shared Vision for Independent Living in Scotland'. This set out an agreed vision, based on the core principle that disabled people across Scotland

will have equality of opportunity, and the means to be full and active citizens. It says "We will work in collaboration to deliver our strategic approach to independent living, with a cross sector plan of activity, which will support independent living for all disabled people in Scotland."

Perhaps learning the lessons of how a valuable, award winning national service, which worked towards making the vision a reality, can disappear, and acting effectively on those lessons, would be a start.

It may ensure that disabled people, people with long term conditions and the communities as a whole can believe 'Our Shared Vision for Independent Living in Scotland' is a genuine attempt to change for the better.

Florence Garabedian

Chief Executive

Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living

ATOS to Sponsor Commonwealth Games 2014

Next year's Commonwealth Games in Glasgow will also stage the more successful Para-Sport program with the highest ever number of medal events across most sports. One of the main sponsors is Atos.

Could there possibly be anything wrong with that? Below are a number of reasons why it is wrong.

53 The number of independent sovereign states in the Commonwealth of Nations. Atos (Societas europaea) have their headquarters in Bezons, France. Nothing against France or its people but it is not a Commonwealth Nation. **Source The Commonwealth and Atos**

Should countries outwith the Commonwealth sponsor these Games?

£3 billion The worth of the UK government contracts Atos holds. This includes; a £25 million contract with the Ministry of Defence; a £140 million deal for IT provision at the UK Nuclear Decommissioning Authority; a £300 million contract with NHS Scotland and £100 million contract with the Home Office. **Source Atos uk.atos.net**

£6.6 billion The amount Atos received from public sector contracts in 2012. This is approximately 1 ½ times the annual bill for the main unemployment benefit Jobseekers Allowance. **Source Atos uk.atos.net**

£100 million The amount Atos is being paid per year by the Coalition Government to reassess benefit claims, facilitating the cuts by forcing sick and disabled people back to work. **Source the Independent**

£0 The amount Atos pays in UK Corporation Tax. **Source the Telegraph**

0.3% The current benefits system fraud rate. Source U.K. Government National Statistics

35,357 The number of successful appeals against Atos's Employee Support Allowance decisions. **Source Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS)**

43% The success rate of those appealing against Atos Employee Support Allowance decisions. **Source Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS)**

1,000 + The number of people in Britain who have already died after losing benefit payments and being deemed 'fit for work' by Atos. Source The Express

From the pens of Jeff Adamson and Iain Tait

View from the Chair



If you're a wheelchair user going for a night out to a restaurant, a bar or the cinema it is often not a straightforward exercise. Unless you have been to a place before you really need to do your homework to make sure you can access the venue and sit comfortably, safely and with a good view of things. Telephoning the venue can be a hit or a miss. Some people's views of accessibility are, all too often, well wide of the mark. "Yes, our cinema is fully wheelchair accessible." No mention that the spaces reserved for wheelchair users are in the first row - literally, a pain in the neck. "Yes, our restaurant is fully wheelchair accessible." That's if you don't mind facing a wall, being constantly bumped into and can give 10 minutes notice of when you need to visit the accessible loo. I could go on and on and on about the bad experiences I and other wheelchair users have had when venturing out to enjoy ourselves.

However, I do have a couple of tales to tell that show that some people are willing to go that extra mile to make an evening of entertainment really accessible. Earlier this year I met a friend of mine in the National Portrait Gallery; now fully accessible since they got rid of the tiny little lift they had and installed something that is akin to a vertically moving room. Over a coffee we discussed this year's Edinburgh Fringe - what we had seen, what we wished we had seen as well as our annual moan - the number of non-accessible venues. Then he told me this story.

A friend of his had wanted to see the comedian Mark Steel (pictured right) who was performing at the Fringe. Unfortunately the venue he was playing was not accessible for wheelchair users such as her. Disappointed, she wrote to Mr Steel telling him of her frustration at not being able to see his show because of the lack of accessibility. Finishing her letter off she added, tongue in cheek, that if he was struggling to find an accessible venue he could perform his show in her living room.

I'm guessing you've probably worked out the end to this story. Yes, Mark Steel replied to her, turned up at her house and performed in front of her and a group of her friends. Now that's what I call an accessible entertainment provider! I'll maybe take a leaf out of her book next year and contact all the Fringe performers who are playing in inaccessible venues and offer them my living room as a place to do their stuff. Worth a try don't you think?

My next access tale also concerns an entertainment provider going the extra mile. In October this year, the Traverse Theatre staged a world premiere of a play called "Couldn't Care Less". The play, inspired by the experiences of carers, is described as a "dark, surreal, funny and moving story of two women whose lives are disappearing". It tells the story of a woman who has Alzheimer's and her daughter who embark on a "journey of frustration, humour and ultimately love". Recognising that this play would be of particular interest



to carers and disabled people and that many of them, for obvious reasons, would be unable to physically attend the theatre to see this show, the Traverse transmitted one night's performance live online. What a fantastic idea which definitely deserves a standing ovation or a sitting ovation if



you're a wheelchair user! Wouldn't it be great if this caught on with the rest of the arts and entertainment industry? How about an inaccessible art gallery loaning a disabled person or carer who can't get in to see an exhibition a painting to hang in their own home for a week or two? Think about it. The sky's the limit - a symphony in your garden or a ballet in your bedroom. Anything's possible if the willing is there. I'll finish off now with a photo of me at an accessible boxing match venue. Until next time, Jeff Adamson, Chair Forward Mid.

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Midlothian Health and Social Care Shadow Board

The Scottish Government is in the process of finalising a Bill requiring Health Authorities and Social Work Departments to work more closely together. In Midlothian it was agreed earlier this year to establish a Health and Social Care Partnership with a Joint Board, which will be responsible for overseeing the delivery of all health and social care services for adults and older people. A new Board has been created which will be the main decision-making body. It does not yet have formal powers but is working to create the most effective arrangements for joint working and is initially operating as a Shadow Board.

The membership of this Board is made up of elected members from the Council (4), an NHS Staff Side Partnership Representative, Non-Executive members of NHS Lothian (2) and a local Clinician. The first meeting of the Shadow Board was dedicated to discussions with representatives of local user and carer networks. As a result of these discussions, agreement was reached to include a Public and Unpaid Carer Member on the Board and Jane Cuthbert (Carer) and Jean Foster (Public) with Marlene Gill (Depute Public Member) were appointed to the Shadow Board in September, the Depute Carer is still to be appointed.

Membership of the Shadow Board:

- Peter Johnston - NHSL Chair
- Catherine Johnstone - Council Vice Chair
- Patsy Eccles NHSL Staff Representative
- Carol Levstein Clinical Representative
- Julie McDowell NHSL Non-Executive Member
- Derek Milligan Council
- Brian Pottinger Council
- Bob Constable Council
- <u>~~~~</u> Jean Foster – Public Member
- Jane Cuthbert Unpaid Carer
- Marlene Gill Depute Public Member
- Hamish Reid – Clinical Director
- Alison MacDonald – Chief Nurse NHSL
- Eibhlin McHugh – Joint Health and Social Care Director
- Rob Packham – Head of Health
- Tom Welsh - Integration Manager
 - A Third Sector member is being arranged.

This is an exciting and important opportunity to help to shape health and social care services in the future - to ensure the people who use services and the people who care for them are at the heart of all decisions.

The key milestones in the establishment of the Partnership are to develop an Integration Plan and a Strategic Commissioning Plan. These will be compiled over the coming four months with a view to consultation between May and July 2014. Thereafter they will be submitted for approval to both the Council and NHSL; following that the Integration Plan will be submitted to Scottish Government in November/December 2014. The Board will then be fully established in December 2014/ January 2015. Work is underway to ensure that the Board is informed and advised by Public and Carer interests; by the views of professional front line staff; and by Third Sector and Independent Providers. In relation to User and Carer engagement work is underway with the Scottish Health Council to explore ways in which this can be strengthened.

A GET FIT AND STAY FIT CLASS

Do you or a relative or someone you work with like to exercise at a slower pace, or have difficulty following instructions in a big group of people?

Would you/they like to do something different?



Be a bit more energetic?

WHERE?

Mayfield Leisure Centre

WHEN? Thursdays 12 noon —1p.m.

PRICE £2.50 (Reduced rate for friend or support worker £1.50)

If you need more information, please contact Sue Healy on 07786 246144.

Christmas gift suggestions:

To your enemy, forgiveness. To an opponent, tolerance. To a friend, your heart. To a customer, service. To all, charity. To every child, a good example. To yourself, respect.

Have a Merry Christmas from all at Forward Mid!



Alternative Publications

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

Edited by Iain Tait for FORWARD MID