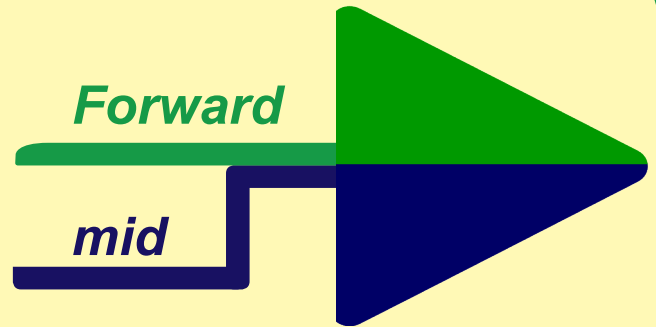


**FORWARD
MIDLOTHIAN
DISABLED PEOPLE**



Equality - Diversity - Inclusion

Can Forward Mid ask for your help?

Forward Mid are launching a questionnaire to discover what amenities disabled people use in their local community. We are asking what you use; this is to build a bigger picture of what is available in Midlothian and what is accessible.

This will enable Forward Mid to work better and harder to meet the needs of disabled people across Midlothian.

The survey is also available online at socialsurvey.netai.net/

To show our gratitude we have secured two gift vouchers as prizes:-

1st Prize £20 Tesco voucher

2nd Prize £10 Morrison Voucher

Once the questionnaire has been completed please ensure you put your contact details on the last question, this will be used in the draw to select the winner of both prizes.



Watch for the questionnaire in your mail or alternatively pick up a copy from the MVA office in Dalkeith. If you wish an additional paper copy Tel: 0131 663 9471 and leave your details.

Midlothian Benefit Cuts Support Group

The Midlothian Benefit Cuts Support Group met on 8 September in Dalkeith. The meeting was attended by around 17 people including members of the public, a few professionals and Colin Beattie MSP. The meeting had a range of interesting views exchanged in relation to how the group

Contents

Streets for all?.....	Page 2	rights of disabled people in Midlothian
Stronger Voice: Engagement Events.....	Page 3	to challenge the negative impact of
Helen's Handy Hints.....	Page 4	Welfare Reform. There was also very
Café Connect.....	Page 4	direct exchange and dialogue between
Tax Discs Disappearing.....	Page 5	members of the group and Colin Beattie
Benefit Cuts Support Group Meeting.....	Page 6	MSP. You can find the meeting report
Pilot Project in Gorebridge Library.....	Page 8	inside page 6, read it, hear what went
Disabled Access Day Campaign.....	Page 9	on!
Training for Personal Assistants course.....	Page 10	You may want to join us at our next
Essential PA Employer Skills Course! – FREE.....	Page 10	meeting in December.
Independent Living and Work Choices Service.....	Page 11	
New Forward Mid Library Hubs in Midlothian!.....	Page 12	Get in touch Tel: 0131 663 9471

Streets for all?

This report was prepared by Living Streets member David Hunter of Not for Profit Planning, an independent consultant specialising in disability equality and voluntary sector development.

An analysis of the statutory Equality Objectives of Scottish local councils.

Introduction

Since April 2013, Scottish Councils have had a number of statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duties associated with the 2010 Equality Act. Amongst these obligations are specific duties requiring local authorities to publish equality outcomes and report progress, to report on main-streaming the equality duty and to assess and review policies and practices.

This report presents an analysis of the published equality outcomes of all Scottish Councils in order to find out which have included statements aimed at making their streets and public spaces more accessible to disabled people and others with mobility difficulties. Cities, towns and villages need to be places where everyone can visit, participate in and enjoy.

Accessible and inclusive public spaces benefit not only disabled people, but everyone, including children, older people and anyone with luggage or shopping. Encouraging people to walk safely and securely in public spaces is not only a matter of promoting pedestrian interests, it has wider economic, health and community safety benefits too, and as such contributes to many of the “cross-cutting” outcomes which councils and their partner organisations aspire to. Living Streets would hope that councils would take the opportunity of the statutory requirement to mainstream equalities to commit to making their community environments inclusive.



Methodology

The published equality outcome statements of all 32 Scottish councils were accessed in January 2014. A link to the published report can be found at www.forwardmid.org.uk/pdf/2014_LivingStreetsEqualityReport.pdf. In this document, all formal “outcomes” referring to making streets accessible are quoted, along with target dates and the department with the lead responsibility where stated. In addition relevant statements that are not part of an actual “outcome”, for example as part of a “context” section, are included where they are particularly relevant. Most councils have committed to some general outcomes aspiring to equal access to services, but unless they make a specific reference to the pedestrian or public environment, they are not recorded in this analysis.

Findings

Only ten councils made positive statements about aiming to make their pavements, streets and spaces more accessible. Unfortunately Midlothian was not one of them.

Typically, these statements focus on footway maintenance, for example “the condition of roads and pavements do not prevent older people and those with mobility impairment from accessing shops, services and transport”.

Some councils focus on the need to minimise obstructions to pedestrians; for example “take action to ensure advertising boards and other street furniture does not restrict access to town centres”.

Edinburgh Council appears to be alone in linking “walkability” to reducing traffic speeds, in addition to the design, maintenance and policing of footways: “Create „walkable” and “cyclable” neighbourhoods through construction of a minimum of four 20mph zones”.

Conclusions

From this evidence, it is clear that most Scottish Councils have not made any link between their new equality duties and their policy with respect to public spaces. There are however some examples of imaginative use of the Public Sector Equality Duties, where Councils state in their statutory Equality Outcomes a commitment to making streets that are accessible and inclusive for disabled people.

There is an opportunity for these examples of good practice to be more widely adopted by councils throughout Scotland. All Councils are required to review and revise their statutory outcome statements, develop their approach to main-streaming equalities into routine services and report on their progress. Councils which have not yet made the link between their equality outcomes and the provision of accessible public spaces and pavements have an opportunity to “mainstream” such activity into their policies and programmes for planning, street maintenance and so on.

Contact details -

www.nfpplanning.com, Email:  nfpplan@gmail.com Tel:  07810-444-080

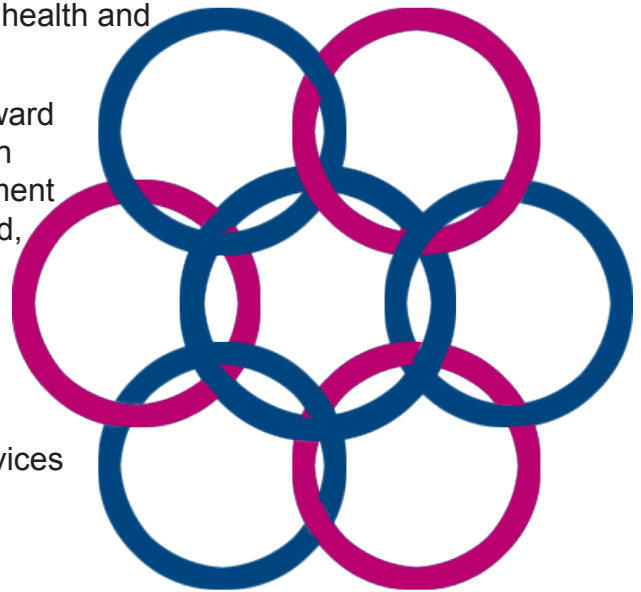
Stronger Voice: Engagement Events



At this year's NHS Scotland Event, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, Alex Neil MSP announced that a new system will be developed to ensure NHS Scotland and the Scottish Government “truly hear the voice” of people who use health and social care support and services.



This important policy development is being taken forward by Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the Scottish Health Council working closely with Scottish Government Officials, the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland, people who use support and services and members of the public.

The Scottish Health Council, in collaboration with these partners, is holding a series of engagement events to gather views on what a stronger system for hearing the voice of people who use support and services in Scotland could look like.

- Crowne Plaza, Glasgow, Wednesday 1 October
- Glasgow Concert Halls, Thursday 2 October
- Discovery Point Dundee, Thursday 9 October
- COSLA Conference Centre, Edinburgh, Friday 10 October



Registration for these events is now available online at www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/scottish-health-council-1748720955?iru=NGPNZWN2G7
Alternatively, please contact Linda Young on Tel:  0141 225 5557 or via Email:  linda.young@scottishhealthcouncil.org for more information.

Linda White
Communications Manager
Integration and Reshaping Care
Directorate for Health and Social Care Integration
3 East Rear
St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
Tel.  0131 244 5640
Mob: 07799-444-945
Email.  linda.white@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Helen's Handy Hints

Exercise can be fun!

Thinking you can't join an exercise class because you have a disability. Well think again! I started going on a Friday morning in February to the seated pilates class at Pulse Pilates and Fitness Studio, 30/3 Hardengreen Industrial Estate. Telephone number: ☎ 0131 660 9144 or have a wee look at their website for more information on all the classes they offer there. www.ppfstudio.co.uk. I know it's hard to motivate yourself to go along to a class for the first time but it's definitely worth the effort especially as the first class is free!



I first found out about this class by going along to Cafe Connect which runs on the last Tuesday of the month from 2-4pm at The Welfare Hall in Dalkeith. The café is a good place for people to have a coffee or a tea and a chocolate biscuit, but it's just nice to go along and talk to others and find out about things that are going on in your area.

The class I attend is small and friendly and as I am in a wheelchair I choose to transfer to an ordinary chair, however, you could just as easy do pilates from a wheelchair. Everyone in the class has different disabilities, and as the exercises are all about your core muscles, this really helps with your posture and core strength. Ha I'm sounding as if I know what I'm talking about, but let's just say it makes you feel better physically and at the same time you are meeting other people as well. The instructor Fiona is a nice girl but after my fourth class I was getting a bit worried as she looked as if she was putting on weight and one of the reasons I went along to the class in the first place was to lose weight or firm up parts of my body(I won't say which parts!). I then started to think that maybe this isn't the class for me after all. It was then that she told us that she was pregnant, wasn't I glad! I really enjoy the class and I'm pleased for pushing myself to do it in the first place. The class, for me, is a social outing as well as an exercise class and all this makes me feel better about myself.

Why don't you give it a go? You'll not regret. I Hope to see you there!

Helen

Oh and by the way, Kat Anderson runs indulgence beauty therapy at the studio, if you fancy a pampering session after you have done your class; her contact is Tel: ☎ 07739-865-780

Café Connect

Café Connect have to announce a change of date for the October meeting of the Café, The hall is unavailable to the Café on the 28th October and has been brought forward 7 days.

New date for October is Now the 21st October 2014
Dalkeith Welfare Hall
St Andrew Street
Dalkeith



It will still have the chat with free tea and coffee.

Please make sure you change the date in your diary so as not to miss the banter, and biscuits. We look forward to giving you a Café Connect welcome on this one date change.



Tax Discs Disappearing

You may have heard that from 1 October 2014, the DVLA will no longer be issuing tax discs. Instead the DVLA will have an electronic record of the tax status of your car and class 3 scooters.

Taxing your car

As part of your Motability lease, they will arrange for your car to be taxed each year for the whole of your lease.

No-more-tax-discs

From 1 October 2014, a tax disc will no longer need to be displayed on the windscreen of your car as the DVLA, police and parking inspectors can rely on the DVLA's electronic vehicle register to check if a car is taxed. Vehicle tax will still need to be arranged, even if your car is exempt from a fee, and we will organise this as part of your worry-free package.

They'll send you a letter at least a week before the tax on your car is due to expire to let you know they've arranged it for another year. If you do not hear from us, or you are sent a Vehicle Registration Document (V5c) or Vehicle Licence Application (V11) from the DVLA, please call their Customer Services team on 0300 456 4566 as soon as possible as this is a good indication that they haven't been able to tax your car.

Checking your car is taxed

You can check your car's details online at gov.uk/check-vehicle-tax . Click on 'check now' and enter the registration number and make of your car. Alternatively you can call the DVLA on Tel: ☎ 0300 790 6802.

Have you changed address?

So that Motability can let you know that your vehicle has been successfully taxed each year, it's essential that they have your up to date address. If you move, please let them know by filling out the online form at motability.co.uk/updatedetails , or by calling their Customer Services team on Tel: ☎ 0300 456 4566.

Customers living in Northern Ireland

If you live in Northern Ireland, you are currently responsible for renewing the vehicle tax each year of your agreement. However, from 1 October 2014, Motability will arrange your vehicle tax for you as they do for their customers in Great Britain.

Customers living in the Isle of Man

If you live in the Isle of Man you are responsible for renewing the vehicle tax each year of your agreement. As a recipient of the higher rate mobility allowance, your Motability car will automatically receive the benefit of a Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) exemption, however your Certificate of Entitlement must be valid.



Benefit Cuts Support Group Meeting

Meeting Report.

The Midlothian Benefit Cuts Support Group were delighted to welcome a guest to its meeting on the 9th September at the Welfare Hall, Dalkeith. Mr Colin Beattie of the Scottish National Party - MSP for Midlothian North and Musselburgh.

This gave the group's members a very welcome opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues surrounding Welfare Reform (and these affect the disabled in Midlothian) with a member of the party that, with Scotland returning a NO vote at the referendum, have responsibility for policy in the future.



Introductions were made and Mr Beattie was welcomed to the meeting expressing his own interest in Welfare Reforms as a 'big thing' for him. A summary of the main points discussed during the meeting are below:-

- Mr Beattie last tabled a question with regard to Welfare Reform in April 2012 (see below) Question S4O-00916: Colin Beattie, Midlothian North and Musselburgh, Scottish National Party, Date Lodged: 18/04/2012 "To ask the Scottish Executive what recent discussions it has had with the UK Government on Welfare Reform and what impact this will have on people in Scotland".

The group questioned Mr Beattie if in the intervening two and half years he had tabled any other questions or motions with regard to Welfare Reform or in regard to ATOS Healthcare / Work Capability Assessments / or Personal Independence Payments. Regrettably Mr Beattie was unable to tell the group of any more recent activity.

- The group discussed the SNP's approach to the 'Bedroom Tax'

Mr John Swinney's (Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth) speech regards welfare reform stated:

"We go the extra mile to pick up the pieces from bad Westminster decisions: Never has that been more the case than on the Welfare Reform programme"

"We are doing everything we have the power to do to mitigate the Bedroom Tax and of course we want to do more. We need the powers of independence to stop dreadful policies like the Bedroom Tax".

Mr Beattie was asked about the vote on legislation put forward by Labour and the Liberal Democrats which included measures specifically aimed at helping disabled people with the Bedroom Tax. This was only supported by 2 of the 6 SNP MP's in Westminster. Mr Beattie informed us that in fact 3 MP's had attended but as the group pointed out, only 2 had actually voted.

- The Group discussed the SNP's pledge in their campaigning for Independence to design a radically different welfare system in an independent Scotland.

The group questioned if this was actually the case given that the Scottish Government report that it would take up to 2020 to set up an autonomous welfare system in Scotland and that the downside of having to share these services in the interim meant that an independent Scotland could find itself "unable to implement some of its early priorities for change to the benefit system".

The Group asked how a different welfare system would be possible when the SNP leadership favoured a 'UK-wide benefit administrative set up' if Scotland gained independence particularly

as expert advice suggested it simply would not be practical for Scotland to implement different policies in those circumstances. In the absence of convincing arguments to the contrary the Group's feeling that while the Bedroom tax was being addressed other aspects of Welfare Reform which were impacting on the disabled were not being adequately addressed.

- › The Group questioned why the Scottish Government were planning to provide ATOS Healthcare £3 Million in public funds towards the construction of new offices (embarrassingly no one attending the meeting could remember where these were at the time but it was Moray) but unfortunately Mr Beattie did not have any information on this matter.

The point was made that ATOS's behaviour had impacted hugely on the disabled and it was pointed out that an Early Day Motion in Westminster (Hansard 295) had highlighted that 1,100 people passed fit for Work Related Activity by ATOS had died in one year alone. Further that ATOS had been criticised by the Public Accounts Committee for having a history of failure and that their tender document for undertaking PIP Assessments was a work of fiction. The Group felt that the SNP's position was inconsistent with its public pledges in regards to Welfare Reform.

The Group asked why, given the huge volumes of best practice in procurement available this did not appear to have been followed, and asked had the Scottish Governments Audit Committee (of which Mr Beattie is a member) considered commissioning an audit of their performance. Mr Beattie explained that this had not been considered but that ATOS had lost the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) contract.

The Group's feeling however was that this was simply political manoeuvring and pointed out that ATOS had not been financially penalised and instead had been awarded a more lucrative contract for PIP assessments. The same staff would simply be moved to this given the 8 month backlog.

- › The Group discussed political activism in the disabled community but that this was difficult as many were now simply just trying to survive and avoid being sanctioned under the Welfare Reforms introduced. The provision of new soup kitchens in the Lothians was discussed (and welcomed) as were the difficulties faced by the disabled in accessing food banks. The group felt that whilst necessary and welcome this did not address the underlying problems.
- › The group felt that political parties and many politicians were simply paying lip service to making real changes that would actually improve the situation for the disabled and discussed the group's possible role in getting the Lothian Disabled Community to come together and use their votes to push for changes. There was certainly a memorable quote from one of the members, "If we are not kicking butt right now - we should at least be polishing our shoes in preparation".

Colin Small replied in writing to Colin Beattie

This a letter to Colin Beattie MSP from Colin Small which can be viewed on the Forward Mid Website.

www.forwardmid.org.uk/pdf/2014_LetterFromColinSmallToMrColinBeattieMSPSeptember2014.pdf

If Mr Colin Beattie wishes to reply he is welcome to have his say on the Forward Mid Website or In the Newsletter or both.

If you would like more information about Midlothian Benefit Support group please contact Eric Johnstone:

Email:  eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk

Tel:  0131 663 9471



Pilot Project in Gorebridge Library

The Scottish Government launched a £700,000 fund earlier this year which aims to mitigate some of the worst effects of the UK Government's Welfare Reforms and to build resilience within local authority services.

Here in Midlothian, the Council and Midlothian Financial Inclusion Network (MFIN) have been awarded funding for a pilot project in Gorebridge Library. The 'Digital Hub' pilot will offer support and guidance to people who require help with computer-based tasks, from setting up an email address, to searching and applying for jobs online. Furthermore, we aim to improve privacy and implement more effective signposting systems to ensure that anyone needing help with especially complex tasks (such as benefit claim forms) will be able to get the help they need locally.

A key element of the project is to increase accessibility for library computer users with support needs. In August, a disability sub-group – consisting of members of Forward Mid, Enable and MIDDAP – was set up to guide the project with disabled people in mind. The sub-group visited Gorebridge Library in September to test accessibility and, as a result of the visit, a number of improvements will be made for disabled users:



- New assistive software and hardware to ensure that nobody is excluded from using the internet;
- Clearer, clutter-free information displays;
- Comfortable furniture for longer library stays.

The 'Digital Hub' will open at Gorebridge Library from January 2015. Further information will be circulated this winter, but if you feel that you will benefit from the service and would be willing to provide feedback on your experience, please contact Jonathan Coward (WRRF Project Officer) at:


MVA,

4/6 White Hart Street,

Dalkeith,

Midlothian

EH22 1AE

Tel:  0131 663 9471

Email:  jonathan.coward@outlook.com

Disabled Access Day Campaign Announces 2015 Launch Date

The organiser of Disabled Access Day, an initiative that aims to get disabled people and their friends and families to explore somewhere new together, has announced today that it will launch on Saturday 17 January 2015.

Disabled Access Day, sponsored by lead partner EuansGuide.com, is about getting out and discovering new places, people and activities.

The campaign is asking the 11.6 million disabled people in the UK and their friends, families and carers to visit somewhere that they have never been before.

This can range from local places such as coffee shops and cinemas, to somewhere further afield; for example famous British tourist attractions.

The campaign will be looking to partner with well-known venues, retailers, third sector organisations, and corporate businesses, in order to motivate as many people as possible to get involved.

Through partnering with organisations, Disabled Access Day aims to highlight the best accessible businesses in Britain for disabled people, and showcase the commercial value that can be yielded from the custom of millions of disabled people in this country.

Kiki MacDonald, Co-Founder at EuansGuide.com, commented: "We're very proud to be the lead sponsors for Disabled Access Day. Promoting good disabled access is at the core of what we do, so this campaign is close to our hearts".

We hope many people get involved with the initiative, and feel inspired to see a part of the country they've never seen, or engage in activities that they don't typically do.

Interested parties should email takepart@disabledaccessday.com to find out about getting involved.

How Euan's Guide works

First become a member or log in using Facebook, write a genuine, honest review that you will give to Euan's Guide and that they will take and post on the web site. By doing so you lose the intellectual property of the document to Euan's Guide. www.euansguide.com/

If the content is wrong Euan's Guide takes no responsibility. Any post that announces the accessibility is only verified by other users. The concept is exceptionally good.

The verification of accessible venues is something that requires to be addressed to give confidence to the users.



Training for Personal Assistants course

Thinking about becoming a Personal Assistant

or

Want to brush up on your Personal Assistant skills?

This 2 day Training for Personal Assistants course, which has proved so successful since returning, is being run again on the **18th and 19th November, 2014**. It could enhance your prospects of employment as a PA or, if you are already a PA, help you to be more effective in your role.

Topics covered include:

- **Disability and Equality** - Cultural representation of disabled people and barriers faced by disabled people;
- **Social Model of Disability** – and how to apply the principles in your PA role;
- **Understanding the importance of appropriate language;**
- **Exploring roles and relationships;**
- **Knowing the relationship boundaries;**
- **Exploring potential dilemmas;**
- **Responding to your employer's needs;**



The cost for the whole course is £195. This may be met with ILF funding if you are eligible.

To book your place call Amanda Beech on Tel:  0131 475 2510

Email:  training@lothiancil.org.uk

Website: www.lothiancil.org.uk/events/training-for-personal-assistants-course/

Essential PA Employer Skills Course! – FREE

Are you a disabled person or a person with long-term condition?

Thinking about employing Personal Assistant(s) to support you?

or,

If you are already a PA employer, want to refresh your employer skills?

The Essential Employer Skills is a 3 day course that provides disabled employers of Personal Assistants with an understanding of the essential responsibilities and roles required of a good employer.

When: 1st, 6th & 8th October 2014! 10.30am – 3.30pm

(Lunch is provided and transport can be arranged if required)

The course will enable participants:

- To gain an overall understanding of the key responsibilities of an employer;
- To better understand what is involved in recruitment of a Personal Assistant (optional for



- existing PA employers);
- To gain skills in effective PA management;
- To determine boundaries to promote good employer/employee relationships;
- Gain more independence and control;
- To increase self confidence;

To register your interest or for an informal chat to find out more about the course, please contact LCiL on Tel: 📞 0131 475 2350

Email: ✉ elspeth.ferguson@lothiancil.org.uk

Email: ✉ kelly.jack@lothiancil.org.uk

Independent Living and Work Choices Service

Are you a disabled person or a person with long term conditions living in the Lothians area and interested in:

- Living a more independent life;
- Accessing employment or further education or training ;
- Developing your own action plan and achieving your goals with one to one support;
- Then this is for you!

Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living is running a five year BIG Lottery Project which aims to support disabled people and people with long-term conditions to maximise their potential and participation in community life.



LOTTERY FUNDED

How does it work?

- You contact them;
- One of their project staff will arrange to meet with you to welcome you ;
- You attend our FREE four day course covering confidence, disability equality, Self Directed Support and a working life. (Lunch is provided and transport can be arranged if required);
- Project staff will offer you one to one follow up support to help you achieve your goals;

When? 30th October 2014 and 4th, 6th and 11th November 2014 10:30am until 3:30 PM

To register your interest or for an informal chat to find out more about the course, please contact LCiL on Tel: 📞 0131 475 2350

Email: ✉ elspeth.ferguson@lothiancil.org.uk

Email: ✉ kelly.jack@lothiancil.org.uk

All the courses run by Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living are in their offices at

Norton Park

57 Albion Road

Edinburgh

EH7 5QY

www.lothiancil.org.uk/

New Forward Mid Library Hubs in Midlothian!

Forward Mid have installed an information hub for people with disabilities in five libraries :

- **Dalkeith;**
- **Gorebridge;**
- **Loanhead;**
- **Newtongrange;**
- **Penicuik;**

Forward Mid plan on future roll outs to cover all library locations by the end of the year.

The hubs are physical display stands filled with a wide range of up to date first class information of relevance to disabled people to enable them to live good lives in and beyond their local communities.

This includes information about:

- **Education;**
- **Support;**
- **Employment;**
- **Travel;**
- **Benefits;**
- **Directory;**
- **Advocacy;**
- **Café Connect/ local activities;**
- **Welfare reform;**
- **Accessible transport;**
- **Forward Mid/ other local support groups;**
- **Self- Directed Support....**

If need can be identified **Forward Mid** may organise some drop in information sessions, of a peer support type model, perhaps working in partnership with Local Area Co-ordinators and other relevant Health/Social Care staff.

Forward Mid and partnership organisations anticipate the information contained in the hubs will benefit disabled people living in Midlothian.

A positive development for **Forward Mid** working in partnership with Library of the Year!

Best wishes and I look forward to your response/proposals for information to be included in our Community Hubs.

Eric



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