

Forward

Midlothian

Disabled People

www.forwardmid.org.uk



Equality - Diversity - Inclusion

Midlothian Disabled Peoples Assembly 2026

The 2026 Assembly and launch of the 2026 Forward Mid Directory for Disabled People took place on the 19th of May at St John's and Kings Park Church, Dalkeith.

With 24 Guest Organisations providing support, advice and information and around 150 people in attendance bringing a vibrant spirit of community, conversation and people learning about resources to help support a better life for Disabled People in Midlothian.



The welcome speech from Sheree Muir, Chair of Forward Mid.

Hello Everyone, Thank you all for being here today.

For those of you that don't know me, my name is Sheree and this Ted and I am chairperson of Forward Mid. We are a small team of people living with different disabilities and long-term health conditions and today means a great deal to all of us as we launch our updated directory.

What brings us together is our shared understanding of the challenges people can face when trying to access support services, information and sometimes simply knowing where to turn.

The directory is something we are incredibly proud of. It is created to be a practical accessible source of information for our disabled community. We update it twice a year because we know how important it is for people to have up-to date to information. From our own experience we know how overwhelming it can feel searching for help, especially when dealing with illness, disability or isolation. Our hope is always that our directory makes that journey a little easier.

Today is not only about launching our directory but also about connection and collaboration. We are so happy to have to have so many organisations and groups here with us today. Our event is about creating opportunities to network, share knowledge and information and strengthen the support available within our community.

I would also like to be honest for a moment about why Forward Mid and my team means so much to me personally.



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Living with a long term disability affects every part of your life- physically, emotionally and mentally. There are days where pain, exhaustion and isolation can become so overwhelming. Many people see the physical side of the disability, but they don't always see the battles we hide behind closed doors.

Last year I went through one of the darkest periods of my life and I hit a point where I could not see me continuing with life and I felt completely lost and I could not see any other answer.

What helped me through those darkest days was knowing I was not completely alone. Forward Mid gave me purpose when I struggled to find any. The people around me reminded me that support, understanding and kindness still exist even when life felt so heavy. This is one of those reasons this directory and the work we do matter so much to me and the team. Its not just pages of information- it represents hope, connection and support and living my own experiences and learning from them that drive me more so, that even if we help just one person we have done what our mission has always been.

Forward Mid remind me that disabled people are not alone and that community matters and I know many people here today will understand how important that can be.

I would also like to take a moment to recognise the hard work and dedication the team put in and thank them for this. Despite our own health conditions and disabilities, everyone involved have worked so hard to get here today at our event.

I am extremely proud of what we achieve together.

Finally thank you again to everyone here today and all that support Forward Mid. It shows the importance of community, inclusion and working together to support disabled people within our community. Together we can help people feel seen, supported and less alone.

We hope you enjoy the event, make valuable connections and just talk!!

Thank you

Some of the feedback we received from the event

"It was wonderful to connect with so many individuals, all united in supporting one another and raising awareness of the services and information available within the community."

"It was an incredible burst of activity which was like a whirlwind of information overload."

"Such a valuable event, and such good connecting comes from it. I always get some new ideas and meet interesting, and inspiring people during it. "

Was fab yesterday we did such a good job.
I'll write to team later, unfortunately two meetings this morning - wish I just had a space
You deserve a rest Dear Shez

"Such a valuable event, and such good connecting comes from it. I always get some new ideas and meet interesting, and inspiring people during it. "

**So well done
You're amazing Sheree and you
were amazing yesterday.**

"Despite the difficulties that many people are going through just now there was an overall feeling of community, hope and real friendship. Everyone was very warm and accommodating. Many positive connections were made."

"It was a fantastic event, a culmination of a lot of work behind the scenes to make it run smoothly and I'm really looking forward to the next one."

**Really beautiful and so moving Sheree
Some tears there as I read it through**



Images by
Tamzin McDonald
And Iain Tait

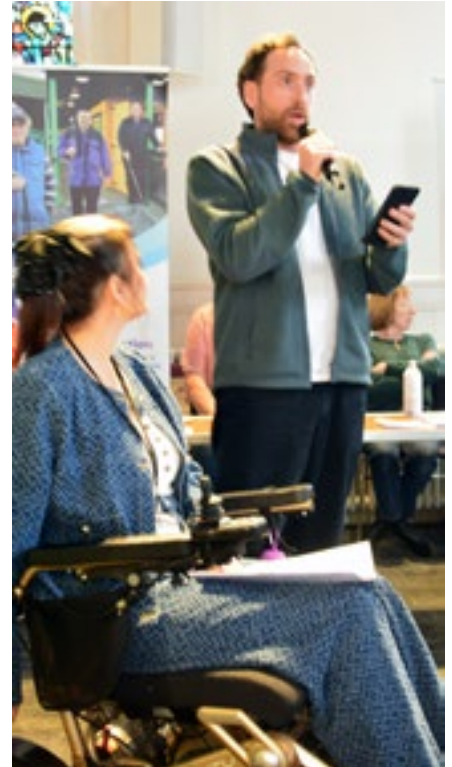
Guest Speaker, Callum

Callum Madge from Edinburgh International Festival is the Access Manager and this role was created in 2023.

This is when Callum got in touch with Forward Mid to see what work we could do together to promote the work Callum and his team do make the Festival more accessible for the disabled community and trying to reduce those barriers. The way they do this is by working with organisations like Forward Mid to get the word out there.

It is so important to come to events like this and work with organisations and coming and talking to people. Callum is very passionate about reducing and removing barriers for the disabled community can experience the same level of performance and events. By doing this it covers a wider community.

For the last three years I have worked with Sheree and together we have promoted the good work and what is on offer and this has had a significance of people signing up for the Access Pass.



How they remove barriers for the Festival:

- 50% off full price tickets for the disabled community,
- Free tickets for Essential Companions,
- Detailed venue access information,
- A range of performances,
- Join our free Access Pass, so we can support your access requirements,
- Access Guide.

 : eif.co.uk/access

 : access@eif.co.uk

If you would like a copy of the access guide or would like some posters and brochures please get in touch with Sheree Muir

 : sheree.muir@btinternet.com

New Bus service to Edinburgh Royal infirmary

Midlothian Council has secured £245,000 to improve bus links to key employment opportunities, including Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, making it easier for residents to get to work and training.

The funding, awarded by the South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran), will support new and improved bus services until 31 March 2027.

New Journeys

As part of the plans, Lothian Buses will introduce two new early morning and evening routes and add an extra journey to an existing service will be extended:

- New service (Service 37A): Penicuik – Roslin – Loanhead – Royal Infirmary, Two morning journeys and one return journey in the evening, seven days a week

- New service (Service 39A): Rosewell – Bonnyrigg – Dalkeith – Royal Infirmary, Two morning journeys and one return journey in the evening, seven days a week
- Improved service (Service 48): Gorebridge – Newtongrange – Mayfield – Dalkeith – Royal Infirmary – Fort Kinnaird – Musselburgh One morning journey, Monday to Saturday

The new journeys are set to be introduced in **Autumn 2026**.

Supporting employability

These changes will improve access to jobs, training and the wider public transport network, particularly in areas where options are currently limited. The services are aimed at supporting residents who face barriers to travel, including cost and availability, and will help parents and jobseekers reach new opportunities.



Improved links to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, a major regional employer, will also support NHS recruitment and retention. The funding runs until 31 March 2027, with the aim of establishing services that can become financially self-sustaining in future.

Benefits community and local economy

Councillor Colin Cassidy, Midlothian Council Cabinet Member for Transport, said: “We know that limited public transport options can make getting to work, especially for early or late shifts, more difficult for some residents.

“Therefore, I’m delighted that Midlothian Council has secured funding to deliver two new bus services and an extra journey on an existing service.

“These new and improved bus services to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary will make journeys more reliable and affordable, helping residents access jobs, training and vital services. Just as importantly, they support families to increase their incomes and opportunities for the future. “This is a practical step that helps to connect our communities, encourages more people to use public transport and supports our local economy too.”

Improving access

Ben Ritchie, Commercial Manager, Lothian said: “We are delighted to be working with Midlothian Council to introduce these journeys, benefiting employees at the Royal Infirmary at key shift times as well as the wider local community. This funding enables us to operate these journeys alongside our existing network, strengthening connectivity and improving access for those who rely on public transport.”

Opening up opportunities

Brian Butler, Partnership Director at SEStran, said: “Transport plays a vital role in tackling child poverty. When parents and carers cannot afford or access reliable transport, it can prevent them from taking up work, training or education, even when opportunities exist. This can reduce household income, increase living costs and keep families trapped in poverty. “By funding services like this, we are helping more people in Midlothian access employment opportunities while also improving connections to essential healthcare. These new routes will make it easier for residents to get to work, training and appointments at the Royal Infirmary, opening up opportunities and improving access to essential services.”

Midlothian Wheelchair Accessible Housing

Get ready to give us your views

Midlothian Council will shortly start working to set wheelchair accessible housing targets for 2027/28 to 2031/32 and will need to hear ideas and suggestions from local residents.

The wheelchair accessible targets will set a number or percentage of homes for wheelchair users in both social housing and privately built developments.



Midlothian Council can choose::

- To have a single target, setting out the requirement for housing across all tenures (e.g. have the same target for social housing and private developers)
- Or can distinguish requirements by tenure (e.g. different targets for social housing and private housing)
- And / or sub area (e.g. separate targets for Midlothian West and Midlothian East).

Furthermore:

- The target(s) can be expressed as a number to be delivered over a period of time
- Or as a % requirement of either the existing housing or as a % of all new housing provision.

Current targets

Midlothian's currently has a wheelchair accessible housing target of 20 per year; 10 should be social housing delivered by Midlothian Council/Registered Social Landlord partners and 10 should be provided by private sector developers.

The Wheelchair Accessible Housing Target 2022/23 – 2026/27 Report can be found

 : www.midlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/4680/wheelchair_accessible_housing_targets_202223_-_202627

Consultation

Midlothian Council will be holding online consultation sessions to discuss the wheelchair accessible targets on these dates:

- Tuesday 20 October 2026, 10:00 hrs. -11:00 hrs.
- Wednesday 21 October 2026, 12:30 hrs. -13:30 hrs.
- Thursday 22 October 2026, 16:00 hrs. -17:00 hrs.
- Friday 23 October 2026, 10:00 hrs. -11:00 hrs.
- Tuesday 27 October 2026, 12:30 hrs.-13:30 hrs.
- Wednesday 28 October 2026, 16:00 hrs.-17:00 hrs.

If you wish to attend a session, please email  : lesley.connell@midlothian.gov.uk with your preferred date. All sessions will be via Microsoft Teams. An online survey will be running throughout October 2026 and all interested Midlothian residents will be invited to take part. A link to the survey will be available from Thursday 1st October 2026 via the Midlothian Council website.

All comments and suggestions will be added to a final report before it is submitted to your elected members for consideration in winter 2026/27.

If you require any further information about the wheelchair accessible housing target consultation, please phone Lesley Connell on  : 07808 903454.



Drop In

Free of Charge

Linking Loanhead

Loanhead Library



- **Wednesday 15/07/26 & 29/07/2026 - 14.00hrs to 16.00hrs,**
- **Wednesday 26/08/26 14.00hrs to 16.00hrs,**

CAFÉ CONNECT

Dalkeith Arts Centre

- **Thurs 02/07/26 - 14.00hrs to 15.30hrs,**
- **Thurs 06/08/26 - 14.00hrs to 15.30hrs,**
- **Thurs 03/09/26 - 14.00hrs to 15.30hrs,**

All Welcome
- Inclusive for
everyone.

We focus on what
can do not what
they can't do.
Plan together.

Meet or make
friends and share a
blether, take part
in a quiz or board
games.
Find out what's
available with LAC.

Link in with Local Area
Co-ordination, Enable
Communities, Based on a
vision of a society where
disabled people are valued
as full and equal members
of the community



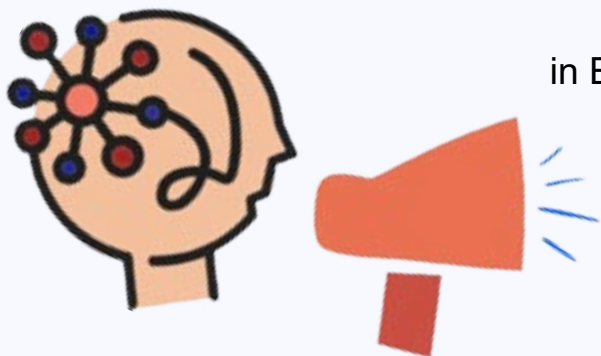
Collective Advocacy For people with Neurological Conditions

This Collective Advocacy project will help you to:

- Express your views, wishes and lived Experience,
- Influence and improve social care services for people with neurological conditions,
- Increase your awareness and understanding of your rights and options.



People who participate in Collective Advocacy at CAPS value the **sense of community and purpose** it creates and how it helps to **reduce isolation**. By getting involved you will meet with others who have neurological conditions in East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian or City of Edinburgh, in-person or online, whichever suits you best.



If you have a neurological conditions and live in Edinburgh or the Lothian's or access Social Care services there please get in touch!

Contact

✉ : neuro@capsadvocacy.org

or text or call Steve on 📞 : **07929 751 911**

CAPS Independent Advocacy is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation Scottish Charity number: SC021772

Alternative Publications

Please like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/forwardmid/

Forward Mid newsletters are available in large print on request from Eric Johnstone ☎ : 0131-663-9471 or ✉ Eric.Johnstone@MCA.scot write to him at MCA, 4-6 White Hart Street, Dalkeith, EH22 1AE with your request. Electronic copies can be found on www.forwardmid.org.uk. The latest Firefox browser has the reader symbol 📖 in the address bar, click and select narrate from left menu. The latest Safari Browser has the reader symbol **Reader** but does not read aloud. These only work on websites without errors. If you require help please contact Forward Mid and we will arrange to help you.

Edited by Iain Tait, Sheree Muir and Tamzin McDonald for Forward Mid