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Scope DIAL UK news

The future of DIAL UK

Tony Rucinski, Director of Knowledge and Learning and new national lead for DIAL UK, shares Scope's vision of the future for DIAL UK and how Scope can work alongside the DIAL network.

Now, more than ever, organisations working with disabled people need to become allies, share resources and support each other's specific goals to bring about the social change we all want to see.

The internal changes happening within Scope, I believe, will enable DIAL groups and Scope, each as independent organisations, to work in partnership rather than in competition. We want to reassure you that we are completely committed to the

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independence of DIAL groups and to working with you to develop the power of your network. We've all got finite resources and at Scope, we don't believe we can accomplish our goals alone, nor do we believe we're always the best organisation to do everything.

Listening to some of the questions asked by DIAL groups at the conference calls last week, it's clear that we have a lot of work to do to improve the DIAL UK service so you get maximum value for money from everything you spend. For this reason, we've decided not to charge membership fees until the majority of DIAL groups are confident in the benefits that membership to the network provides.

Over the next six months, I'm prioritising the DIAL network and would like to invite DIAL groups to be part of a national advisory group which will review the role and purpose of DIAL UK.

I'm passionate about delivering fantastic services for disabled people and their families and I hope that we can continue to work together. We're looking forward to hearing your thoughts, ideas and questions. Please contact me tony.rucinski@scope.org.uk, 020 7619 7389, 07768 865 323 if you would like to be part of the advisory group and if you have anything you would like us to consider.

The full summary, questions and answers discussed at the DIAL update conference calls can be found on our dedicated webpages www.scope.org.uk/dialupdate

We'd also like to thank the four members of staff and the volunteers who have brought the DIAL network to this stage. Over the next few months, the new regional information and support service managers will be in touch with DIAL groups in their area as they start their new roles.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Tony Rucinski

Director of Knowledge and Learning

Tony Rucinski, Director of Knowledge and Learning

Tony has recently been appointed by Scope to deliver a significant improvement in our information and advice services and he is the dedicated strategic lead for the DIAL UK network.



He is registered blind and joins Scope with a background as a Chief Information Officer and is currently a Trustee of RNIB, on the Inclusive Reading, TV and Technology Programme Board and has held several government advisory roles.

Tony is committed to improving the disability advice sector and passionate about supporting Scope and DPOs to deliver high quality advice and information services for disabled people and their families.

Members news

New Website for Disability Cambridgeshire

Have a quick look at Disability Cambridgeshire's re-vamped website. It's clear to use and easy to navigate, thanks to the team at Analytic Art.

Disability Cambridgeshire welcome your feedback.

Visit www.disability-cambridgeshire.org.uk

Legal update

Charity launches criminal record disclosure website

The House of Lords recently hosted the launch of a new website designed by UNLOCK, the National Association of Reformed Offenders, to help reformed offenders into work.

In a letter sent to the Financial Times earlier this month, top British business leaders, including Sir Richard Branson and James Timpson, called for more employers to hire reformed offenders. More than 8 million people in England and Wales have a criminal conviction according to a Government database and recruiters are increasingly asking about criminal records, leaving many reformed offenders stuck on benefits.

Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, many older and more minor convictions become 'spent' and do not need to be disclosed and cannot be considered by employers. For example, a fine does not have to be disclosed for most jobs after five years. However, both job seekers and employers are unaware or are confused about their legal rights and find it difficult to interpret the complex legislation.

Obtaining insurance with a criminal record can also be very difficult, both for the individual and for the families they live with. Spent convictions do not need to be disclosed when purchasing insurance and insurers can be prosecuted for taking them into account.

The new website, disclosurecalculator.org.uk, which has been sponsored by specialist online insurers homeprotect.co.uk, is able to instantly calculate which convictions are 'spent' under the Act, and which ones still need to be disclosed.

"Understanding how to disclose a criminal record is crucial when applying for jobs and insurance," says Christopher Stacey, Head of Projects and Services at UNLOCK. "The Calculator will make it easier for job seekers, employers and insurers to avoid costly mistakes and provide a boost to the economy."

Peter Cooper, the web programmer who volunteered to build the tool, said: "Most laws are open to interpretation so you can't turn them into a computer programme. This one is actually quite specific, so thanks to UNLOCK's legal expertise I was able to create a tool that produces accurate results."

UNLOCK hopes that employers and specialist employment organisations will sign up to use the calculator. The money raised will help fund the charity's efforts to reduce the economic and social exclusion of reformed offenders.

Please visit the new website for further details, or see the flyer enclosed in this month's mailing.

Visit www.disclosurecalculator.org.uk

Source CPAG Welfare Rights Bulletin 223 – August 2011

Employment

Rights of agency temps?

From 1 October 2011, when the Agency Workers Regulations 2010 come into effect, agency workers (often referred to as temps) in England, Wales and Scotland who are placed on assignment by a temporary work agency (TWA) are entitled to the same basic employment rights as a comparable employee or worker (the comparator) directly employed by the receiving organisation (the hirer).

To be a comparator, the directly employed employee or worker must be working for and under the supervision and direction of the same hirer as the agency worker; and the employee or worker must be engaged in the same or broadly similar work as the agency worker, taking into account, where relevant, whether they have a similar level of qualification and skills.

The directly employed employee or worker and agency worker must both work or be based at the same workplace, but if there is no employee or worker meeting the above criteria at that workplace, the comparator can be an employee or worker meeting the criteria who is based at another of the hirer's workplaces.

A person whose employment has ceased cannot be a comparator.

If there is no comparator, there is no entitlement to agency worker rights except for the right to paid time off for ante-natal appointments and for pregnancy- and

maternity-related adjustments. Agency workers are, of course, entitled to the statutory rights that all employees and workers have such as national minimum wage, working time rights, and rights to protection under the Equality Act.

For further information, please visit the website of Sandy Adirondack.

Source www.sandy-a.co.uk

Minimum wage update

From 1 October 2011 the national minimum wage went up from £5.93 per hour to £6.08 for workers aged 21 and over, from £4.92 to £4.98 for 18-20 year olds, and from £3.64 to £3.68 for 16 and 17 year olds who are above school leaving age and are not apprentices.

The accommodation offset rate (the amount that can be taken into account for living accommodation) increased from £4.61 per day (£32.27 per week) to £4.73 per day (£33.11 per week). From 1 October 2011, the accommodation offset will not apply to students in full-time higher education and further education who are employed by the institution at which they are students.

The apprentice minimum wage of £2.50 per hour goes up to £2.60 for apprentices aged under 19, or over 19 and in the first year of their apprenticeship. This applies to apprentices on traditional contracts of apprenticeship, and employed apprentices on government-supported level 2 and 3 schemes. The apprentice minimum wage came into effect on 1 October 2010, replacing the £95 per week minimum rate of pay for apprentices.

From 1 January 2011, payments made by employers into travel and subsistence tax relief schemes no longer count towards minimum wage. Also from 1 January 2011 the names of employers who do not comply with minimum wage legislation are being made public.

For further information, please visit the website of Sandy Adirondack.

Source www.sandy-a.co.uk

Policy and Campaigns

Scope responds to Children's Society research

The Children's Society has published new research that shows that four in ten disabled children in the UK - a staggering 320,000 - are living in poverty.

This is supported by recent research from Scope which found that families with disabled children are set to lose £65million in 2011 as government spending decisions take effect.

Commenting on the Children Society's new research, Richard Hawkes, Chief Executive of the disability charity Scope (11.10.11) said:

"This is the tip of the iceberg. Families with disabled children are much more likely to break up. They have higher living costs and are considerably worse off this year.

"The Government pledged to protect vulnerable families, yet the combined impact of losing a local service, a wage freeze or seeing their benefits adjusted is pushing families of disabled children over the edge.

"There are several proposals within the Welfare Reform Bill, currently being debated in the House of Lords, that could heap further misery on the lives of thousands of families.

"We urge the government to listen to disabled people and their families about the effects these changes will have on their ability to live independent lives and play an active role in their local community."

Visit www.scope.org.uk/news

Visit: www.childrensociety.org.uk

Items of Interest

DoH engaging on priorities for social care reform

On 15 September, the Department of Health launched 'Caring for our future: shared ambitions for care and support'.

Running until 2 December, this is a period of engagement with people who use care and support services, carers, local councils, care providers and the voluntary sector.

It will be followed up by a White Paper in spring 2012, alongside a progress report on funding reform, with a view to legislating at the earliest opportunity.

The DoH has identified six areas it believes contain the biggest potential to make improvements. These include the quality of care and support; ensuring personalisation; creating a responsive and vibrant care market; prevention and early intervention, and improving integration between the NHS and other care services.

A website has been set up to enable people to respond with their comments. It contains discussion materials and a feedback form, so that people can hold their own discussions with their local communities on these crucial issues, and give their feedback to the Department.

Visit www.caringforourfuture.dh.gov.uk

NCIL, RADAR and Disability Alliance members approve merger

Three of the country's leading disability organisations have agreed to merge within months.

Members of the National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL), RADAR and Disability Alliance (DA) backed the merger at separate annual general meetings held recently.

The new charity – Disability Rights UK – will be a disabled people's organisation (DPO), will be led by a disabled person, and will be run and controlled by disabled people, with disabled people making up at least three-quarters of its board members. The final approval for the merger came with 11 votes in favour and just one abstention.

Disability Alliance members had voted unanimously in favour at their AGM, while just one RADAR member voted against the plans.

Mike Smith, NCIL's chair, assured his members that achieving "meaningful" independent living for disabled people would be one of the new organisation's four core "tenets".

Disability Rights UK will also focus on promoting disabled people's leadership and control, breaking the link between disability and poverty, and campaigning for disability equality and human rights.

The new organisation will be based in RADAR's current central London headquarters, which are to undergo a major refit, and is likely to begin work on 1 January 2012, although an official launch is not likely until the spring.

Smith said NCIL had been facing an "uncertain financial future", while members had a "greater chance of achieving our objectives because of the greater size and scale" of the new organisation, which would ensure that the independent living movement "thrives and not just survives".

Sue Bott, NCIL's director, said the merger would create a "powerful and a stronger voice" and would allow NCIL to move away from its current "over-reliance on government funds".

Liz Sayce, the chief executive of RADAR, will lead the new organisation, with Bott its director of development, leading on areas such as co-production, working with DPOs, independent living, and developing leaders within the disability movement.

Disabled individuals and DPOs will be able to become voting members, while "ally" organisations that are not run by disabled people will be able to join, but will not have voting rights.

Tara Flood, director of the Alliance for Inclusive Education and treasurer of the UK Disabled People's Council (UKDPC), told the AGM that Disability Rights UK must

recognise the importance of having a “diversity of voices” in the disability movement.

Last year, UKDPC “politely declined” an invitation to join the merged organisation, but pledged to work alongside it.

It also warned last year of the danger of the new organisation setting itself up as the only voice of disabled people, a concern echoed today by Flood.

Bott said: “We are not putting forward Disability Rights UK as the [only] voice of disabled people. That it could never be.”

Sayce said afterwards that she wanted the two organisations to “work in a collaborative and positive way together”, and believed there was room for both UKDPC and Disability Rights UK.

She pointed to UKDPC’s important work on disability hate crime and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Sayce said: “It is fantastic news that three organisations have now voted overwhelmingly in favour of coming together to create an even stronger national organisation led by disabled people, that will enable many more disabled people to have a voice.”

But she said it was too early to say if there would be any redundancies as a result of the merger.

Richard Gutch, interim chief executive of DA, said he felt “excitement” but also “relief” at the vote by NCIL’s members, following nearly three years of negotiations between the three organisations.

Visit www.disabilityalliance.org

Source www.disabilitynewsservice.com

Tabloid Motability story leads to fresh watchdog complaints

Disabled people and disability charities have complained to the press watchdog after a national newspaper suggested there was widespread abuse of the Motability Car Scheme.

The Mail on Sunday (MoS) claimed that more than 3,000 families of people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) – which it called “naughty child syndrome” – were “abusing” the benefits system by receiving “free” cars through the scheme.

The Motability Scheme allows disabled people claiming the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to use that benefit to lease an accessible vehicle.

The Mail on Sunday's sister paper, The Daily Mail, has run a series of stories over the last year alleging widespread fraud and abuse of disability benefits, at least four of which have led to complaints to the Press Complaints Commission (PCC).

The PCC has received at least 34 complaints about the new MoS story, including one from Disability Alliance (DA), which described the article as "misleading and inaccurate".

DA said the paper had exaggerated the number of people with ADHD using the Motability scheme, and accused it of a "potentially discriminatory" use of language.

DA said it was "very concerned that a leading national newspaper has used misleading and inaccurate figures on what, for many disabled people and their families, is essential support".

The charity added: "DLA does not cover the full, higher costs of living disabled people and their families experience but makes a significant contribution – often described as a 'lifeline' by recipients."

The PCC said the article was now being assessed against clauses one and 12 of its code of practice, those relating to accuracy and discrimination.

So far this year, the PCC has found that the Mail did not breach the code with three articles about disability benefits, while a fourth complaint – from Neil Coyle, director of policy for DA – was "resolved" when the paper published a letter from DA and other organisations detailing why the paper's story was "misleading".

The Full Fact website, which promotes "accuracy in public debate", analysed the figures used by the Mail on Sunday and discovered that just 100 people for whom ADHD (or hyperkinetic syndrome) was their "main disabling condition" claimed the higher mobility rate of DLA.

It believes that the MoS then added this to the 3,100 people whose main disabling condition was a "behavioural disorder".

But Full Fact points out that even this total figure of 3,200 would be misleading, as only 30 per cent of those who are eligible actually lease a car from Motability.

The MoS also claimed that disabled people who need "guidance or supervision most of the time from another person when walking out of doors in unfamiliar places" can obtain a Motability vehicle, when in fact this is the criteria for claiming DLA lower rate mobility.

The Mail on Sunday declined to comment.

Source www.disabilitynewsservice.com

Fury over sensitive benefits forms opened by Royal Mail staff

Disabled people have expressed outrage after learning that benefits claim forms containing confidential and highly personal information are being opened by Royal Mail staff in a south London sorting office.

Following a series of Freedom of Information Act (FIA) requests by disabled activists, they say the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has admitted that “ESA 50” claim forms for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) are diverted to Royal Mail.

Royal Mail staff open the envelopes and bundle up the “limited capability for work questionnaires” before forwarding them to the company that assesses the eligibility of claimants, Atos Healthcare.

Most people have to fill in an ESA 50 form if claiming ESA, the new replacement for incapacity benefit.

Disabled people had assumed that the forms were opened by employees of Atos, which is paid by the DWP to assess the eligibility of claimants using the controversial work capability assessment.

Campaigners say the use of Royal Mail staff raises serious questions over the confidentiality of their claim forms, which can include highly personal details about their health condition.

They have also questioned whether the use of Royal Mail by the government could be breaching the Data Protection Act.

Disabled activist Sue Marsh, who wrote about the FIA requests on her blog this week, said she believed that “no-one should see these forms but the person who wrote them and the decision maker who will consider them”.

She said: “I don’t care if it’s legal, it certainly isn’t moral. It’s shocking.

“People like me and the people I write for have spent our whole lives being told we can’t see our medical notes. They protect this data so strongly in every walk of your life.”

One of the disabled people who commented on Marsh’s blog said she felt as if she had been “punched” when she read how the forms were being opened and sorted by Royal Mail.

She was forced to declare on her ESA form how she had been raped – because it affected her mental health – as well as including her address, telephone number and the information that she lives alone.

She added: “I already feel desperately frightened of life and vulnerable as hell. This makes me feel even worse.”

Another described how the form asks for information such as medication, hospital visits, any problems with drugs or alcohol, communication difficulties, incontinence, any mental health conditions, blackouts, and anxiety or panic attacks.

They added: "Why do they not put anything on the form to tell us that this is what will happen? Surely that is against the rules?"

"Whether 'illegal' or not, it is morally and ethically wrong. It is frightening and humiliating and degrading."

A Royal Mail spokesman refused to comment. He said: "We would never talk about individual customers to third parties."

The Department for Work and Pensions was also unable to comment.

Source: www.disabilitynewsservice.com

Anti-stigma campaign secures £20 million

The mental health anti-stigma campaign 'Time to Change' has secured £20 million in funding over the next four years.

The campaign, run by the charities 'Mind' and 'Rethink', has been awarded £16 million by the government, in addition to £4 million from Comic Relief, which has been funding Time to Change since 2007.

Among its new projects is a £2.7 million fund that will provide grants to 75 local grassroots organisations to tackle stigma in their own communities.

Some of the new funding will be used to support user-led groups to run community events and activities, with training in event organisation provided to people with mental health conditions with "unfulfilled leadership potential".

'Time to Change' will also continue to train and support people to disclose their impairment "safely", and to challenge stigma at a local level, for instance by setting up new user-led groups.

The campaign believes the funding will allow it to reach 29 million members of the public and increase the confidence of 100,000 people with mental health conditions to challenge stigma and discrimination.

There will be a particular focus on the stigma faced by children and young people, and those from black and minority ethnic communities, which will start by targeting the African Caribbean community.

A survey carried out last month found that more than 40 per cent of people with mental health conditions who were in touch with the campaign, were experiencing stigma and discrimination on at least a monthly basis.

But the Institute of Psychiatry has measured a four per cent reduction in the discrimination reported by people with mental health conditions as a result of 'Time to Change'.

Alastair Campbell, the former Downing Street communications director, who has spoken publicly about his own mental health condition, helped the campaign with its appeal to Comic Relief for funding.

He wrote on his blog that he and Sue Baker, director of 'Time to Change', had argued that mental health was "an area where the stigma and discrimination were often worse than the symptoms, and that the campaign was focused on one of the hardest things of all – changing attitudes".

He added: "Mental illness is perhaps the last great taboo, and we need to break it down."

Baker said: "We have worked hard over the last four years to secure the beginnings of change in society, and have seen robust evidence of a reduction in discrimination. But it takes more than four years to overturn decades of prejudice – this is the work of a generation."

Paul Burstow MP, the Liberal Democrat care services minister, said: "Coping with a mental health condition is difficult enough without the added burden of overcoming discrimination too.

"That's why I am committing up to £16 million over the next three and a half years to Time to Change to help fight the negative attitudes people have towards mental health conditions."

Visit: www.time-to-change.org.uk

Source www.disabilitynewsservice.com

Demand for Paralympic tickets is 'unprecedented'

Demand for tickets for next year's Paralympics in London has reached "unprecedented" levels, according to the 2012 organising committee.

Between 9 and 26 September, 116,000 people applied for tickets to next summer's games, applying for a total of 1.14 million tickets.

Out of 300 ticketed sessions, 126 are now over-subscribed in at least one of the price categories and so will need to have their tickets allocated via a ballot – the first time any Paralympic games has had to take such a step.

There are only three sports – road cycling, sitting volleyball and powerlifting – in which there are no oversubscribed sessions in at least one price category.

Although it is the first time any organising committee has put tickets on sale so far in advance – and not on a "first come, first served" basis – a spokesman for the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) said that "we never have seen demand like this". He said: "To have applications for 1.14 million tickets after a three-week ticket window is phenomenal."

In 2008, the Beijing organising committee eventually sold 1.82 million tickets at full price, while the government bought another 1.64 million and distributed them to

community groups, schools, and other organisations. Athens sold just 850,000 tickets for the 2004 Paralympics, while Sydney sold 1.2 million in 2000.

But the figures for the past three Paralympics are for final ticket sales, while there is nearly a year to go until the 2012 games open.

Sir Philip Craven, the IPC's president, said: "To have over a million tickets applied for 11 months out from the games is unprecedented and underlines the growing excitement for what will be a tremendous sporting event.

"This will be the first time ballots have been held for a number of sports, and I could not be more thrilled."

Payment for tickets will be taken by 31 October, with notification of whether applications have been successful sent by 18 November. More Paralympic tickets will be put on sale in December, with a final batch to be made available next spring.

Source www.disabilitynewsservice.com

Visit: www.tickets.london2012.com

Mobility aids firms are using 'unfair sales tactics'

Some companies that sell mobility aids are targeting disabled and older people with "unfair sales practices", particularly when visiting them at home, according to a new report.

The market study into mobility aids by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) says some disabled and older people are paying too much for their mobility aids.

It accuses a "small minority" of firms of subjecting disabled and older people to unfair practices, such as high pressure and "misleading" sales practices.

Consumer Direct, the OFT's advice service, has received more than 4,000 complaints about mobility aids sales in each of the last three years.

The OFT has launched investigations into two national mobility aids companies, one over unfair doorstep selling practices, and one over the company's "terms and conditions" and the quality of its service.

It is also investigating other "similar behaviour" which it said could lead to further action, including the possible removal of credit licences from "a number" of companies.

But despite the concerns, the OFT has "provisionally" concluded that it is not necessary to refer the entire mobility aids market to the Competition Commission, although it is now seeking views on this decision, with responses needed by 20 October.

The new report says as many as half of consumers could be paying too much for their equipment because they are failing to "shop around" – often due to poor

mobility, lack of access to the internet or time pressure – with the price of one mobility scooter varying by as much as £3,000.

About half of the websites and adverts the OFT checked failed to quote any prices.

The OFT has launched a “doorstep selling consumer awareness campaign”, which provides “practical tips” and advice on rights.

It is also supporting trading standards departments to target firms suspected of engaging in unfair sales practices.

And it has secured an agreement from the British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) to update its code of practice so all of its members display price information on their marketing material and websites.

Alan Norton, chief executive of Assist UK, which leads the national network of Disabled Living Centres – which provide free, impartial advice on independent living equipment – welcomed the measures proposed by the OFT.

Assist UK worked with the OFT on its investigation and passed on reports from its mystery shopping project, which has been carried out by disabled people over the last three years.

Norton said that assistive technology equipment “can be an essential tool in gaining independence and it is important that these products are available at a fair and reasonable price for all”.

He added: “We will be monitoring the developments and will report any trading irregularities to the OFT and the BHTA to take the appropriate action.”

Chris Shaw, chief executive of the Disabled Living Foundation, also welcomed the report. She said: “What we are all after is people making informed choices and the right choices for them. We completely endorse the need for high quality and accurate information and for all suppliers to provide that as a matter of course to their consumers.”

Meanwhile, the OFT has published new guidance for businesses considering granting credit to disabled people who might not have the “mental capacity” to make “informed borrowing decisions”.

It sets out the steps consumer credit companies should take to identify such borrowers, help them understand credit agreements, and reduce the risk of them securing “unaffordable or clearly unsuitable credit”.

David Fisher, director of the OFT’s consumer credit group, said: “It is important to balance the right of a person to make a decision, with their right to safety and protection when they can’t make decisions to protect themselves.”

Visit: www.oft.gov.uk

Source www.disabilitynewsservice.com

Labour conference: Disabled activist shames 'flustered' Miliband

A prominent disabled activist has launched a highly critical attack on Labour leader Ed Miliband during a televised question and answer session over his failure to speak out on the government's hated "fitness for work" tests.

The session took place at the Labour conference, but the audience included members of the public who were not party members.

One was Kaliya Franklin, the disabled blogger and activist who co-founded The Broken of Britain, who accused Miliband – to loud applause from the audience – of failing to speak out for disabled people because of hostile media attacks that have labelled benefits claimants as "scroungers".

She told him that the issue of disabled people being the "hardest hit" by the cuts had been "airbrushed almost entirely from the conference".

Miliband claimed he was not afraid to use the word "disability" and was "determined to say that disabled people need support and help and compassion", but that "you have got to separate out ill-health and disability from worklessness and the decision not to work".

He claimed he was not "trying to sweep this under the carpet".

But Franklin accused him – again, to loud applause – of "reinforcing the destructive rhetoric that is coming from the coalition government at a time when sick and disabled people desperately need a champion to stand up for us".

Miliband accepted he should have said in his main conference speech that "you have to defend people with disability and ill-health and say that they shouldn't be under attack", but said he "genuinely" didn't think that "saying you are tough on abuse of the benefit system is a non-Labour thing to do".

Franklin, who blogs at Benefit Scrounging Scum, said: "We got the reaction we expected. He didn't know what to say. He was completely flustered and lost the plot.

"He didn't really have an answer. I had a go at him and said he was part of the problem because he had used part of this rhetoric himself."

In a speech in June, Miliband horrified disabled activists by accusing some Incapacity Benefit (IB) claimants of failing to "take responsibility" and of "shirking their duties".

Franklin said: "It was clearly one of the questions he didn't want to deal with. I told him we have had enough of this, that he was not talking about us or supporting us, and he is complicit in this when he knows fraud levels [for IB] are negligible. When I hammered him about the fraud rates he didn't roll his eyes and say, 'oh, for God's sake, will you go away,' but for a moment the mask slipped and that was his expression. I just don't think he cares. It's not something that is one of his particular passions and he wants it to go away."

But she added: “We had a forthright discussion and he did actually have to come out and say for the first time that he should have said in his speech that sick and disabled people needed protection.”

And she welcomed the Labour leader’s pledge to meet with her to discuss her concerns in more depth. After her exchange on Wednesday evening, Franklin was swamped by members of the media intent on interviewing her about her concerns, but almost nothing has yet been written or broadcast about her exchange with Miliband.

Source www.disabilitynewsservice.com

Labour conference: Shadow minister calls for action on harassment

A shadow minister has backed calls by disabled activists for new measures to tackle the harassment of disabled people.

Fiona Mactaggart MP, Labour’s shadow equalities minister, spoke out following the publication of the Equality and Human Rights Commission’s (EHRC) major report into disability-related harassment.

She told Disability News Service that addressing the problem of “bullying and harassment” had to be a key priority for her party, so that disabled people could “feel on equal terms in society”.

She said: “It is so unacceptable and we need to find ways of more effectively punishing perpetrators. If you are scared of being a victim it stops you playing an equal part in society. Fear limits your capacity to do things, or your willingness to attempt to do things.”

Mactaggart said she believed that the report showed there was probably a need for a new offence of incitement to commit a crime on the basis of disability-related hostility, as there is for incitement on the basis of racial or religious hatred.

The shadow minister said she believed that trying to change society – as campaigners did to tackle sexism – would not be enough.

She said: “We have got to have something stronger. You can’t just do it through social action.” She said many police forces did not appear to have a strategy for effectively prosecuting the perpetrators of disability-related harassment.

She added: “At the moment, the police strategy [in some forces] is ‘cross your fingers and hope it will go away’.”

Mactaggart said there was a need for a new specialist unit within police forces that would focus on disability-related harassment and disability hate crime, which would liaise with disabled people’s groups, educate frontline police officers and have a “strategic attitude” to prosecuting such offences.

She added: “The EHRC report really does show that where there is some of this expertise and working in partnership, these issues are much more effectively dealt with than in places where there is not.”

Visit: www.equalityhumanrights.com

Labour conference: Legal aid cuts will ‘decimate’ social welfare legal system

Government cuts to the legal aid budget will lead to the “decimation” of the civil law system and cause huge problems for disabled people, Labour party members have heard.

The cuts are part of the government’s legal aid, sentencing and punishment of offenders bill, which is currently at its committee stage in the Commons.

Steve Hynes, director of the charity Legal Action Group, which promotes equal access to justice, said one of the areas campaigners were particularly concerned about was social welfare law.

He said the cuts would have a particularly damaging impact at a time when the government was introducing radical reforms of the benefits system.

He said: “If you change the benefits system in that way, that creates a need for advice and legal advice in our communities.”

The concerns were raised at a fringe meeting at the Labour party conference, organised by the Law Society and the campaign coalition Justice for All, whose members include RADAR, Disability Alliance and Disability Law Service.

Lord Bach, the former Labour legal aid minister, told the meeting: “I insisted right to the end that social welfare needed to have more money spent on it, not just because it was a time of recession but because it was the right thing to do.

“This type of law, the law that the government, including Liberal Democrats, are determined to abolish is the most crucial part of legal aid.”

He said the cuts would “clog up the courts” with “helpless cases”, and added: “On a practical level, it is a complete nonsense. On a financial level it is a complete nonsense.

“It is going to cost the state infinitely more in the end to sort out the problems that arise because social welfare law is effectively abolished.”

He said Labour peers would “do our very best to at least manage the worst effects” of the legislation.

Andy Slaughter, a shadow justice minister, said the benefits system was “in crisis, virtually” with success rates at appeals as high as 80 per cent when the claimant was represented, compared with substantially lower success rates for those without representation.

He said the cuts would also mean disabled people would not be able to secure representation in the higher courts, which he said was “nonsensical”.

Slaughter said he hoped peers would grab the legal aid measures “by the scruff of the neck”.

Lucy Scott-Moncrieff, vice-president of the Law Society, said that plans to introduce a “telephone gateway” as a first point of contact for all those seeking a civil legal aid lawyer would create serious problems for many disabled people, such as residents of care homes who wanted to challenge the standard of care they were receiving.

She said: “Who brings the phone to them? Someone from the care home. Who knows what is going on? Someone from the care home?”

Visit: www.lag.org.uk

Source: www.disabilitynewsservice.com

Activists propose 2012 Paralympics boycott over IPC's Atos links

Furious disabled activists are proposing a boycott of next year's Paralympic games in London, over links between the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and the company that tests disabled people's “fitness to work” for the government.

Campaigners have become increasingly angry at the Paralympic movement's links with Atos, which is a sponsor and IT partner of the Paralympics and is building the IPC's new website.

The ties were strengthened last month when the IPC co-opted the founder and former chair of Atos, Bernard Bourigeaud, onto its governing board.

Atos Healthcare – the branch of the company that carries out Work Capability Assessments (WCA) on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – has been the focus of repeated protest action by disabled activists.

The call for a boycott over IPC's links with Atos has come from Black Triangle, which campaigns against the unfair use of the WCA to reclassify disabled people as “fit to work”.

This call has already been backed by two other campaigning organisations, Disabled People Against Cuts and the DWPExaminations internet forum, which hosts accounts of disabled people's experiences of the WCA.

Disabled activist John McArdle, co-founder of Black Triangle, said he and fellow campaigners would continue to call for a boycott of the Paralympics if Atos did not withdraw from the WCA contract.

He said: "It is quite frankly obscene that they are sponsors of the Paralympics. The government is using them and the Paralympics to make propaganda for their ill-conceived welfare cuts programme."

He said campaigners would also lobby Paralympians to boycott 2012 and "speak out against the plethora of cuts to disabled people's income and other support".

He said: "We are not all supermen and women who are able to participate in the economy and society as the government would have you think.

"If people are to be assessed for their fitness to work it must be done ethically and based on sound scientific and medical judgment and not some flawed 'tick-box' computer assessment administered by Atos that is getting it wrong disastrously on a scale which defies belief."

The IPC insisted that it had "no dealings at all" with Atos Healthcare, and activists were "tarnishing an entire organisation because of what one arm of that organisation is doing".

An IPC spokesman said: "Of course we understand that people have concerns, but we would be very disappointed if people did boycott what will hopefully be the biggest and best Paralympics so far because of this when at the end of the day Atos Healthcare are fulfilling a duty they have been asked to do. Surely it is for the British government to resolve."

He added: "We are aware that some people are unhappy that we have Atos as a partner and the appointment of Bernard Bourigeaud." He said Bourigeaud was appointed because of the IPC's long relationship with Atos, his close relationship with the board, and his experience of working on international projects.

He promised that Paralympic athletes would be able to speak out next summer on equality, discrimination and rights issues, and would be allowed to criticise Atos Healthcare as long as they did it without bringing the IPC or the games into "disrepute". He said: "If they have an issue with Atos, if they want to express it, so be it."

A spokeswoman for ParalympicsGB, which manages Britain's Paralympians, said: "We want as many people as possible to support the British athletes and therefore would be disappointed if such a boycott took place. However we accept that this decision rests with each individual."

She added: "We are aware that Atos's involvement with the DWP is drawing a lot of attention at the moment. We are continuing to monitor the situation closely and are keeping the IPC aware of the feedback we are receiving."

She also promised that team members "would be free to express their own opinions" on "any issues that affect them".

An Atos spokeswoman said Bourigeaud left the company in 2007 and no longer has any connection with it, although she said Atos was aware of the reaction to the IPC co-opting him onto its board.

In a statement, Atos said that it “acknowledges all public debate” and is “committed to working with the IPC to deliver the technology that will help ensure a successful games for athletes and spectators around the world”.

Source www.disabilitynewsservice.com

Welfare reform bill: Anger as Lords debate moves to less accessible venue

Disabled peers have failed to prevent the government moving the next stage of the debate on its hugely controversial welfare reform bill to a less accessible part of the House of Lords.

The government argued that the bill’s lengthy next stage should take place in a committee room – in “grand committee” – rather than in the main Lords chamber.

Negotiations had broken down with Labour peers over splitting the committee stage of the bill between the two venues.

But the government move sparked fury among disabled activists – including blogger Kaliya Franklin, co-founder of The Broken of Britain – who found out about it just hours before it was due to be decided by a Lords vote, and flooded peers and MPs with emails and phone calls.

As well as causing access problems, having the bill discussed in “grand committee” will mean peers will not be able to force votes on key controversial issues until the bill returns to the main chamber for its report stage.

The disabled peer Baroness [Jane] Campbell told the Lords that she felt “compelled” to speak out against the move, even though she would normally be resting at home having attended the lengthy second reading debate the previous day.

She said having the committee stage outside the chamber would make access “tremendously difficult” for both disabled peers and those disabled campaigners following the debate.

And she said that not being able to vote during the committee stage on “one of the most significant pieces of legislation for disabled people in my adult life” was “deeply disturbing”.

She had spoken out the previous day about measures in the bill to replace disability living allowance with a new personal independence payment – cutting spending by a fifth – which she warned could “return disabled people to levels of dependence last seen 30 years ago”.

Her fellow disabled peer, Baroness [Tanni] Grey-Thompson, said the Lords would be doing disabled people a “great disservice” by not having the debate in the main chamber.

But the Liberal Democrat disabled peer Baroness [Celia] Thomas disagreed, saying that taking the debate away from the chamber would mean fewer interruptions from other business.

The Conservative chief whip in the Lords, Baroness Anelay, told peers that a “reasonable” proportion of bills had to be sent to grand committee if peers were to have “reasonable time” to scrutinise them all.

She said she believed the welfare reform bill was the “best candidate” to be sent to grand committee because it would benefit from a more “in-depth, informal and technical approach”.

Peers voted for the move – with the crossbench disabled peer Lord [Colin] Low joining Baroness Thomas in voting in favour – by a majority of 52.

Baroness Wilkins told Disability News Service after the vote that she and other disabled peers had been “very unhappy” with the government’s decision.

She said: “There is better access [in the chamber], both for all the interested peers and also for any disabled people who wanted to access it.

“[Holding the debates in a committee room] means it becomes extremely crowded and difficult and it does mean that the discussion isn’t as open to the whole house as it would be if it was in the chamber.”

Source www.disabilitynewsservice.com

Paralympic torch’s 2012 journey to begin with four national flames

The Paralympic flame for next year’s games in London will be created in a ceremony in Stoke Mandeville, the birthplace of the Paralympic movement, 2012 organisers have announced.

It will be created from four separate flames lit in the capital cities of the UK – London, Belfast, Edinburgh and Cardiff – and then brought to Stoke Mandeville Stadium, the National Centre for Disability Sport, in Buckinghamshire.

Following the ceremony in Stoke Mandeville, a 24-hour relay will take the torch to Stratford in east London for the opening ceremony of the 2012 Paralympics on 29 August 2012.

The 2012 organising committee, LOCOG, said that 580 torchbearers – working in teams of five – would carry the Paralympic flame to the stadium to light the cauldron. Details of how torchbearers will be selected will be announced later.

Martin McElhatton, chief executive of the national wheelchair sports charity WheelPower, which owns Stoke Mandeville Stadium, said: “We are delighted to be welcoming home the Paralympic movement for the Paralympic torch relay.

“The London 2012 games provide us with the wonderful opportunity to celebrate Britain’s proud heritage as the birthplace of Paralympic sport and use the power of the games and the uniting of the flame as a symbol to inspire disabled people throughout the world to transform their lives through sport.”

The programme will begin on Friday 24 August with the first flame lighting event, in London.

Over the bank holiday weekend, Belfast, Edinburgh and Cardiff will host similar events and evening Paralympic Flame Festivals – which will include “flame-themed entertainment” – with a fourth festival taking place in Stoke Mandeville on 28 August.

Each of the four locations will devise its own way of lighting its flame, using “the energy of physical human endeavour”, with the flame then touring community groups and “key locations” in and around the city.

Jeremy Hunt, the secretary of state for culture, Olympics, media and sport, said: “The torch relay will take the Paralympics to each home nation, helping to build excitement for the games and awareness of disability sport. This is our chance to welcome home the Paralympic movement.”

Source www.disabilitynewsservice.com

Care watchdog chiefs ‘will not resign’, despite new criticism

The leaders of England’s care watchdog say they have not considered resigning, despite facing heavy criticism from MPs over their organisation’s performance.

Members of the Commons health committee published a damning report this week, criticising the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for its “distortion of priorities”.

They said inspections of health and adult social care services by CQC fell by an “unacceptable” 70 per cent during the second half of 2010-11, while the commission concentrated on the “administrative” task of registering dentists for the first time, which the committee said was a “distortion of priorities” and led to “increased risk” for service-users.

The committee said CQC’s senior leadership failed in its duty to pass the message about the problems its registration duties were causing to the government “persuasively and persistently”. The committee also criticised the number of long-standing job vacancies at CQC.

The committee said it wanted to “see clear evidence by next year of the CQC leadership openly acknowledging challenges and setting priorities that reflect its core duty to ensure the safety and quality of care”.

In July, CQC defended the failure of its inspectors to uncover evidence of serious abuse at Winterbourne View, a private “hospital” for people with learning difficulties. The previous month, CQC had been heavily criticised for its failure to take action over concerns raised by a whistleblower at Winterbourne View.

The commission had already faced heavy criticism over its plans to reduce inspections of care facilities through its new “risk-based” system of regulation, which focuses on poorer homes while leaving others to submit their own written self-assessments.

Leading care figures, including Dame Philippa Russell, told Disability News Service (DNS) earlier this year of their concerns at the shift towards less intensive and less frequent inspections.

Dame Philippa said she had been told that some care homes might only be inspected every five years.

Concerns about its new system of regulation were also raised in September 2010 by Fiona Mactaggart MP, now a shadow equalities minister but then a member of the Commons health committee when it was taking evidence from Dame Jo Williams, CQC’s chair.

Earlier this year, CQC told DNS there would be a “planned review” of every care home “at least every two years”, and that this “may involve an inspection”.

But the health committee’s new report says it is “difficult to see how the CQC can have confidence in a provider meeting standards if it has not visited the organisation for more than two years, no matter how good its record”.

And it says it welcomes “recent announcements” that CQC now intends to visit every provider at least once every year. It also criticises CQC’s action over the Winterbourne View allegations as “woefully inadequate”.

A CQC spokesman said: “CQC’s chair and chief executive [Dame Jo and Cynthia Bower] have not considered resigning in the light of the health select committee report.

“The committee’s report highlights the major challenges CQC has faced in merging three existing regulators, setting up a new regulatory model, and registering over 39,000 provider locations – including previously unregulated sectors – against aggressive parliamentary deadlines and with a 30 per cent budget reduction.”

He said inspection figures were now “rising rapidly” and CQC had “put a case to the Department of Health for extra funds to further increase the number of inspectors, so that we can carry out an unannounced inspection of every hospital and care home in England once a year from 1 April 2012”.

He said Dame Jo would be “responding formally and in detail to the committee”.

Source www.disabilitynewsservice.com

Government sidelines DPOs in social care ‘engagement exercise’

The government appears to have sidelined disabled people’s organisations from a crucial “engagement” exercise aimed at hearing the views on social care reform of service-users, carers and those working in the care industry.

The Department of Health (DH) has appointed “key leaders” from the “care and support community” to help it lead discussions through the three-month Caring For Our Future engagement exercise.

But three of the seven figures are from charities, two represent local authorities, one is a GP, while the seventh is from the Association of British Insurers. None of them are from a disabled people’s or user-led organisation.

Each of the seven will lead discussions on a certain theme, such as personalisation of care, quality of care, and shaping local care services.

The DH said it wanted to hear the views of service-users, carers, local councils, care providers and the voluntary sector as part of the engagement exercise.

But Sue Bott, director of the National Centre for Independent Living, said she was surprised and concerned by the omission of user-led organisations.

She said: “Obviously there is no service-user representative whatsoever. We will be doing our best to provide opportunities for DH to listen to what we have got to say and what our members have got to say.”

She said she was concerned that there had not yet been any information from DH as to how it would ensure it heard from service-users and carers.

DH plans to publish a social care white paper next spring, alongside a “progress report” on funding reform.

A DH spokesman said the seven care and support leads would be supported by a “reference group team”, whose members will be drawn from across the sector, and that “involving service-users will be a core part of that process”.

He said DH wanted to “work collaboratively” and draw on existing networks and experience.

But details of how the reference groups will be drawn up have yet to be announced and DH was unable to explain why no user-led organisations were represented among the leads and whether service-users would definitely be part of the reference groups.

Asked why no information had been released on how it would ensure it heard from service-users, the DH spokesman said the teams would be attending events, holding meetings, and listening to the views of user-led groups and other organisations on “what the priorities for improving care and support should be”, while the DH website would “contain discussion materials and a feedback form”.

Disability News Service revealed concerns in July that the government appeared to have abandoned plans to include funding reforms in the white paper.

Those concerns followed the publication of the Dilnot report on the funding of care and support, and the Law Commission's report – published in May – on reforming adult social care law.

Meanwhile, the Commons health select committee has announced its own inquiry into the issues facing the government as it prepares its adult social care white paper. The deadline for submitting written evidence to the committee is noon on 26 October.

And the Care Quality Commission has published its annual report on the state of health and social care in England.

Source www.disabilitynewsservice.com

Some councils 'have found ways to protect disabled people from cuts'

Some local authorities are doing far better than others in protecting disabled people from the impact of budget cuts, according to a new report.

Coping With The Cuts – written by the thinktank Demos for the disability charity Scope – ranks councils in England and Wales in order of how well they are dealing with the local government funding crisis.

It says that some councils that have faced drastically reduced budgets have still managed to protect their services for disabled people, while others that have actually seen increased budgets have coped "badly".

Those with the best "coping" figures had introduced "creative" steps, such as involving disabled people in the decision-making process; committing to personalisation; promoting community-based support rather than segregated services; and integrating care, health, housing and leisure services.

Some of the councils that coped best were in the most deprived areas, with "coping scores" mixed across regions, rural and urban areas, and levels of deprivation.

The research also shows that some councils with lower "coping" scores were "using crude calculations" to identify how many disabled people lived in their area, such as a "guesstimate" based on "widely disputed" figures from the Office for National Statistics.

The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) said the report "illustrates that councils can respond with imagination to improve services for people with disability", but also claimed that the report ranks councils using "discredited" criteria.

Peter Hay, president of ADASS, said: “There is nothing new in the claim that care is a broken sector – yet somehow despite all the challenges there are places that are finding unique ways of making a new offer.”

Richard Hawkes, chief executive of Scope, said: “We know that every council has to make cuts and there is no simple way to protect frontline services.

“However, it’s clear that some councils are taking creative steps to attempt to reduce the negative impact of budget cuts on disabled constituents and it is right to commend those councils for taking the initiative to do so.”

Meanwhile, a new report by the National Audit Office (NAO) says the Department of Health (DH) must do more to ensure that the care sector provides a “genuine choice of services” to disabled people and other service-users who use personal budgets. The NAO report also says that most people who use a personal budget report “improved wellbeing”, although a small minority feel worse off.

Amyas Morse, head of the NAO, said: “As the population ages and more pressure is put on social care, [DH] must ensure that its oversight of the care market is robust, that people have access to the information and support that they need and that it has arrangements in place in the event of large providers getting into financial difficulty.”

By March 2011, 340,000 people had a personal budget, allowing them to choose how their care needs were met. The government wants all eligible service-users to have a personal budget by April 2013.

Source www.disabilitynewsservice.com

3 million households in financial difficulty

More than 3 million households are in financial difficulty and a further 3 million are financially vulnerable, according to research for debt charity the Consumer Credit Counselling Service.

Its report, Debt and household incomes, paints a grim picture of the financial difficulties faced by about one tenth of the UK population, including more than 1 million people struggling to pay their mortgage.

It found that 3.2 million households are either three months behind with a debt repayment or are subject to some form of debt action such as insolvency. Another 3 million are finding it hard to make ends meet and are vulnerable to increases in household bills.

Analysis of CCCS data shows that clients who earn up to £13,500 a year have unsecured debts totalling 20% more than their annual income, significantly more than those on incomes between £25,000 and £50,000, whose average debt is equivalent to 95% of annual income. But those receiving benefits have the highest average unsecured debt to income ratio, at 124%.

The household budgets of those in the lowest income band fell by £33 or 6% between 2005 and 2010, leaving the clients with no surplus at the end of the month. Any further reduction in income will push them further into deficit, warns the CCCS. Fuel costs are expected to be a key pressure point, with increases of 14.5% anticipated for electricity bills and 19.7% for gas bills between 2010 and 2015 – a hike of about £209 a year.

But mortgage interest rate rises are likely to have the worst impact on homeowners. Someone with a £100,000 repayment loan on a typical interest rate of 4.5% over 25 years would currently pay £556 a month, according to mortgage broker London & Country. But if the rate rises by just 0.25%, repayments will rise by £14 a month or £168 a year.

More than one third of the CCCS clients earning between £13,500 and £25,000, and a quarter of those earning between £25,000 and £50,000, have no money left at the end of the month to repay unsecured debts.

And fresh analysis of Financial Services Authority figures paints a grimmer picture for more mortgage borrowers than previously believed. The analysis, by the Financial Inclusion Centre, indicates that 760,000 mortgages are subject to some form of forbearance by lenders, where the lender agrees not to exercise its legal right to foreclose on a mortgage when the borrower has failed to make payments. This means the number of homeowners who are either in arrears, going through repossession or benefitting from forbearance now stands at 1.2 million, equating to 11% of total outstanding mortgages in some form of financial distress.

Lord Stevenson, chairman of the CCCS, said: “These figures confirm our fears – that troubled times lie ahead for many people in the UK. This report shows the pain is going to spread wider and affect many more people than many commentators have previously assumed. CCCS was contacted by almost 418,000 people last year, and our data reveals the stark realities faced by many decent, ordinary people who struggle to make ends meet in these difficult economic times. It is important that the complexities of their vulnerability are understood and addressed by government as well as the financial and charitable sectors.”

Gavin Kelly, chief executive of the Resolution Foundation, agreed: “Many people who scraped through the recession are going to find the next few years even harder. It is very likely that there will be a significant rise in the number of households struggling to maintain their debt repayments, which is a major concern both for them and the wider economy.”

Source www.disabilitynow.org.uk

Calendar of events

The British Pain Society and Patient Liaison Committee – Annual Voluntary Seminar

The British Pain Society (BPS) Patient Liaison Committee will again be holding its annual seminar. 'No decisions about me without me' is the centre of healthcare reform. What might this mean in practice? This year, the BPS has been developing a suite of core pathways. This seminar will explore the issues for implementing the pathways from a patient perspective.

The seminar will include presentations of a selection of the pathways and contributions from leaders in the field of patient engagement.

Most importantly, we are allocating quality time for group discussions, leading at the end of the day to an action plan for the BPS to progress. For further information, please visit the website of the British Pain Society.

Venue **Central London**

Date **14 November 2011**

Visit **www.britishpainsociety.org**

Call **020 7269 7840**

Training

Tribunals and Good Practice

This course takes a practical look at the role of tribunals, presenting officers and representatives in the bringing and hearing of appeals.

The areas examined include:

- Bringing an appeal: making an appeal (and late appeals), medical evidence, tribunal submissions (written submissions and use of the law/case law) and good practice, paper and oral hearings and postponements and adjournments.
- At the appeal: role of tribunal, presenting officer and representative. Use of the law and case law, the right to be heard, evidence and standards of evidence and burden of proof, medical evidence, tribunal's own observations powers of tribunals to make adverse decisions and appellant's right to withdraw the appeal.
- Post appeal: what constitutes an error of law and bringing cases to the Upper Tribunal.

The course is aimed at advisers who undertake appeals and/or prepare appeal submissions who wish to improve their knowledge and understanding of the appeals arena. Those undertaking appeals to the Upper Tribunal should also

benefit from this course. This course is CPD (Continuing Professional Development) accredited.

Venue Central London

Date 15 November 2011 (Birmingham City Centre - Ibis Hotel)

Date 2nd December 2011 (London Euston - Premier Inn)

email mpn.training@virgin.net

Visit www.britishpainsociety.org

Call 07725 137973

The-Centre (For Strategy and Communication)

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Publications

Books Beyond Words

Few picture books are available for adults and adolescents who cannot read or who have difficulty reading.

Fewer still provide information and address the emotional aspects of difficult events like the Books Beyond Words series.

Each specially commissioned book actively addresses the problems of understanding that people with learning and communication difficulties experience.

The stories are told through colour pictures that include mime and body language, to communicate simple, explicit messages. These help 'readers' to cope with emotions and events such as going to the doctor, bereavement, sexual abuse and depression.

- People with learning disabilities trial every single picture before publication to ensure they can be readily understood.
- Supporting text and guidelines are given at the back of each book.

- The authors are all experts in their fields.
- Lists of resources and helpful organisations are provided where appropriate.

Visit www.rcpsych.ac.uk/publications/booksbeyondwords.aspx

Useful websites

Wheelchair Laser Tag

Wheelchair Laser Tag is a fully inclusive activity that incorporates the latest Laser Tagging equipment with lightweight sports wheelchairs. It is a fun, fast and exciting activity for people of all ages and abilities. This is not an activity aimed solely for wheelchair users, but is open to all, with or without a disability. Wheelchair Laser Tag has proved to be very popular with children and families alike.

- They offer a full event service including:
- Fully trained and uniformed staff
- A preliminary Site Assessment carried out in advance of the event
- A full Safety briefing to all participants on how to use the equipment
- Brief training on how to use the sports wheelchairs
- State of the art Laser Equipment
- Lightweight Sports Wheelchairs
- Inflatable barricades to create a gaming environment on any size area
- £5 million Public Liability Insurance cover
- Fully Mobile, all the equipment comes to you
- They cater from a little as 10 or up to 100 people on one day
- They run events for 2 – 6 hours

Visit www.wheelchairlasertag.co.uk

Other matters

Please note

We've made every effort in this mailing to use language in keeping with the Social Model of Disability. However, some terms used in this leaflet might not reflect this. Although these are not our preferred terms, some of the materials used are quoted directly from source and used in their original format.