

## New Medical Test for Disability Living Allowance

The new UK government has announced a number of changes to benefits and tax credits including major changes to Disability Living Allowance (DLA). The government has said that from 2013 all claimants of DLA will have to undergo a medical assessment. This will apply to new claimants and people who are already getting DLA.

As we have already seen from the introduction of the new medical tests for Employment Support Allowance, (the benefit which replaced incapacity benefits for new claimants), many people are now failing to qualify for the benefit. The medical assessments for benefits are carried out by doctors employed through a private company, called ATOS, which is contracted by the Department of Work and Pensions. The Citizens Advice Bureau has found wide spread problems with the new medical assessments for Employment Support Allowance. The CAB found that people with terminal illnesses, serious mental health issues or progressive degenerative conditions were failing the medical tests and being found fit for work.



According to some reports the proposals to introduce medical assessments for DLA will save the government £1.4 billion by 2015. Disability Living Allowance is a non-means tested benefit that is given to disabled people who have mobility impairments and/or care needs, to help pay for the additional costs of living as a disabled person. Many disabled people rely on their DLA to pay for essential costs such as taxi fares, a Motability car, their support package and care services, or for specialist equipment and wheelchairs.

The budget announcement to reassess all DLA claimants has been widely criticised. Charities that give out food parcels warned that the prospect of people having to rely on Third World-style food aid, despite Britain being among the richest nations in the world, is a real possibility for the 1.5 million people who will be moved off incapacity benefits (IB). The number of people who are turning to food banks as they can't afford to feed their families has soared, rising from 26,000 in 2008-09 to 41,000 in 2009-10, 37 % of whom were referred to food banks because of delays with their benefits. 'For people to be pushed into poverty and forced to rely on food parcels to eat, something we all think of as a basic human right, is disgusting.' said Neil Coyle, director of policy for the charity the Disability Alliance.



## Blue Badge Fee Introduced in Edinburgh

The Blue Badge Scheme enables disabled people with mobility impairments to park in accessible parking bays and on-street parking for free. Blue Badge holders make savings through the exemption from on-street parking charges. From 1<sup>st</sup> of May this year, the City of Edinburgh Council introduced an administration fee of £20 for the issue of the badge which lasts three years. This means that any new Blue Badges issued from this date, or existing badges expiring after 31st May 2010, will incur the new charge.

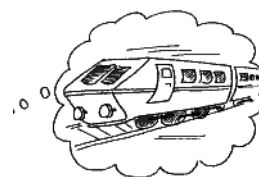
You are eligible to apply for a Blue Badge if you:

- receive the higher rate of the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance, road tax exemption or Motability finance
- receive a War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement
- use a vehicle supplied for disabled people by a government health department
- have a severe disability of both upper limbs, and regularly drive a motor vehicle, but can't turn the steering wheel by hand, even if the wheel is fitted with a turning knob
- are registered blind
- have a permanent and substantial disability causing you to be unable to walk or have very considerable difficulty walking
- have a temporary but substantial disability which is likely to last for a period of at least 12 months but less than three years
- are a child under two with a specific medical condition which requires bulky medical equipment

For more information about applying for a Blue Badge in Edinburgh contact Traveline 0800 23 23 23.

## Important Changes to 50p Rail Concession – Edinburgh

From 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2010 there will be changes to the 50p rail concession on all journeys within Edinburgh for National Entitlement free bus travel cardholders.



The City of Edinburgh Council has announced that the 50p rail concession will no longer be available. However, people who are blind and have a National Entitlement Card, as well as Taxicard holders, will still be able to travel free. You can continue to use your National Entitlement Card as normal to get free bus travel.

If you're a frequent rail user then check out other options for reducing the cost of your rail travel, including Senior Railcards, Disabled Persons Railcards and season tickets. For more information contact Grapevine, Tel 0131 475 2370.

**Newsflash!! Since receiving the letter below, we have now learned that the Independent Living Fund (ILF) is refusing to take any new applications from disabled people during 2010 - 2011.**



## A Letter from the Independent Living Fund (ILF)

Following the announcement to restrict ILF money to disabled people working 16 hours or more, Self Direct Support Scotland (SDSS) wrote to ILF. Here is the reply they received:



'Thank you for your letter concerning the recent changes to the Independent Living Fund. As you may be aware, the primary decision to restrict new applications is a budgetary one. Quite simply the ILF budget for 2010 is insufficient to continue receiving applications at the rate we have been. As a non-departmental public body funded by central government through the Department of Work and Pensions, our budget is capped and as a discretionary trust governed by a trust deed, we have a legal responsibility not to over spend. 93% of our overall budget is already committed to paying our existing 21,000 users.

'The growing demand for ILF support combined with more expensive care packages, means that we have had to take action in order to avoid a situation where we were unable to meet our commitments to existing users. Our trust deed has always carried people in work as a priority (not only because we are funded by DWP, but also because of the link between paid employment and full independence). It was therefore a natural position to restrict new applications to this group – not only from a legal standpoint but because hopefully it would give us a manageable number of new users that could be sustained within budget.

The ILF has a long history of supporting people with high support needs and low income. Yours is one of the many responses we have received that have highlighted the importance of our funding to supporting the independent living aims of disabled people. Our first priority is to ensure existing users continue to receive this support. That being said, we recognise that discussions should take place to help identify realistic and sustainable priorities for the future. For this reason we plan to consult widely with disabled people, local authorities and other stakeholders later in the year.'

For more information on the latest announcement from ILF go to the website:  
[http://www.ilf.org.uk/news/new/ilf\\_protect\\_users\\_awards\\_to\\_manage\\_within\\_funding/index.html](http://www.ilf.org.uk/news/new/ilf_protect_users_awards_to_manage_within_funding/index.html)



## News Update!!



## Self Directed Support Scotland (SDSS) News

In the past few months, the future of independent, user-led self directed support organisations has been threatened:



- **Direct Payments Caledonia (DPC)** - Services were split up and put out to tender by Moray and Aberdeenshire Councils. Peninsula were offered the contract for employment law support; Cornerstone, an unrelated service provider, won the contract for support, and so **DPC was forced to close.**

- **Forth Valley Direct Payments Support Service (FVDPSS)** - Stirling Council withdrew funding for the service and took it 'in-house'. (FVDPSS is still providing services in Clackmannanshire and Falkirk.)

- **Perth and Kinross Direct Payments Support Service** – Perth and Kinross Council withdrew funding, and took the service 'in-house.'

- **South Lanarkshire Disability Forum** - South Lanarkshire Council withdrew funding. The management of the SDS support service itself has been taken over by SPAEN but the Disability Forum has been **forced to close.**

SDSS would encourage your organisation (staff, management committee, service users and partnership organisations) to start planning now for future threats.

For more information contact the SDSS office:

### SDSS

c/o GCIL 117-127 Brook Street Glasgow G40 3AP

Tel: 0141 550 7459 Email: [info@sdsscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@sdsscotland.org.uk)

Website: [www.sdsscotland.org.uk](http://www.sdsscotland.org.uk)

Company registered in Scotland SC371469

## Consultation on a National Strategy for Self Directed Support in Scotland

Earlier this year the Scottish Government carried out a consultation on a new strategy for Self Directed Support in Scotland. Self Directed Support is all about disabled people being in control of and having choices about who provides their care and support. LCiL has written a response to the consultation based on the feedback we received from our service users at a special event we held at the end of April. As a user-led, disabled people's organisation, we are always keen to involve disabled people and to ensure that our service users have their say on the issues affecting them.



You can download a copy of LCiL's response from our website [www.lothiancil.org.uk](http://www.lothiancil.org.uk) (it is currently featured in the Spotlight section of the home page), or you can request a copy in another format either by emailing us at [lcil@lothiancil.org.uk](mailto:lcil@lothiancil.org.uk) or by phoning 0131 475 2350. Also available on the LCiL website is a copy of the questions you asked the Scottish Government about the strategy and their answers.

### **'Moving On' the Your Call Conference on Counselling and other Psychological Support.**

LCiL's national free telephone counselling service for disabled people, Your Call, will be hosting a conference on the **28<sup>th</sup> of October 2010**. The title of the conference is 'Moving On: Psychological and Emotional Support for Disabled People and People with Long-Term Conditions', and it will take place in the John McIntyre Conference Centre at Edinburgh University. The conference is financially supported by the Long Term Conditions Alliance Scotland (LTCAS).



The conference will bring together representatives with different expertise including people from mental health, counselling and disabled people's organisations, and organisations of and for people with learning difficulties. People from all these contexts have an interest in psychological and emotional support, and the conference will give them the opportunity to share experiences. The conference is targeted at NHS professionals, local authority representatives and voluntary sector organisations as well as service users.

The aim of the conference is to highlight current thinking in the area of emotional and psychological support, counselling in particular, to share examples of successful projects, and to encourage cross fertilisation of ideas between people working in different contexts in the statutory and voluntary sectors.

## End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Margo MacDonald MSP's End of Life Assistance Bill is currently being considered by a special committee at the Scottish Parliament. The Bill proposes to make it legal for registered doctors in Scotland to assist someone who wishes to end their life to do so. Only certain people would be eligible for assistance to die including:



- a) Anyone who has been diagnosed as being terminally ill and finds life intolerable, or
- b) Anyone who is 'permanently physically incapacitated to such an extent as not to be able to live independently and finds life intolerable'.

In May the committee requested written responses to the proposals in the Bill. There was a high number of written responses, in total 601 submissions were received. According to the Scottish Parliament, the submissions came from a wide variety of interests. Overall, 521 (86.89%) of respondents were opposed to the Bill, 39 (6.49%) were supportive of the Bill or at least the principle behind it, and 41 (6.82%) had no position on the Bill. Both LCI and Inclusion Scotland provided written responses raising the concerns of disabled people.

The Scottish Parliament said that the written submissions included several key philosophical debates based around issues of 'dignity' and 'personal autonomy'. Opponents to the Bill tended to reflect on what they considered to be an apparent acceptance in the Bill that the only dignified way of dealing with suffering was through ending life. The Scottish Council on Human Bioethics summed up many of the arguments in this regard stating:

'It is incorrect and disturbing to suggest that any person can ever lose his or her human dignity. Though human dignity is not a scientific concept, it is something that everyone should always accept is found in every person to an equal extent. Legalising euthanasia would mean that society would accept that some individuals can actually lose their inherent human dignity and have lives which no longer have any worth, meaning or value. It would give the message that human dignity is only based on subjective choices and decisions and whether a life meets certain quality standards.'

On the issue of personal autonomy, the debate could be summed up in this response: 'One of the specific concerns about this Bill is that sometimes an individual may want to make a choice that is so damaging to the society in which we live that making that choice is wrong. Appeals to autonomy, while superficially seductive, fail to take into account the interconnectedness of communities, and the fact that the concept of a person being a burden to society is inimical to autonomy, as somebody who is truly autonomous by definition cannot be a burden.'

The next stage of the Bill is for the committee to hear oral evidence from various groups and individuals during September 2010. For more information on the progress of the Bill, check out the Scottish Parliament website:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/endLifeAsstBill/index.htm>

## Age UK (formerly Age Concern and Help the Aged)

Age UK is a UK wide charity formed on 25 February 2009, and launched on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009. It combines the operations of the previously separate charities Age Concern and Help the Aged. Age UK now forms the UK's largest charity for older people.

Tom Wright, the new charity's Chief Executive, has stated 'Age Concern and Help the Aged is a single organisation with one clear objective - to make a real difference to the lives of older people. By combining the unique strengths, skills and experience of our two great charities, we have created one united organisation that will be stronger and more influential than ever before.' Age UK's website address is: [www.ageuk.org.uk/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/)

## The Special Needs Information Point (SNIP) has been renamed 'Kindred'.

Kindred - Supporting families of children and young people with additional needs  
Kindred provide information, emotional support and advocacy to families at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children as well as outreach services for families in Edinburgh, Midlothian and Fife.

Kindred have a new website: [www.kindred-scotland.org](http://www.kindred-scotland.org)  
Tel 0131 536 0583 Email [kindred.enquiries@gmail.com](mailto:kindred.enquiries@gmail.com)

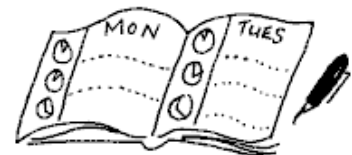
## A message from LCiL's Payroll Service

Following on from the notice we included with your April payroll processing, we would like to remind you that HMRC will be charging penalties for late payments of PAYE and National Insurance contributions. Penalties will be charged between 1% and 5% of the amount due.



In order to avoid penalties we are asking those service users who send in cheques to LCiL to be forwarded on to HMRC to ensure that their **cheques reach LCiL no later than the 12<sup>th</sup> of the month.**

For service users whose payroll is processed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month, this would mean sending your cheques to LCiL no later than the 12<sup>th</sup> of the following month i.e. payroll processed on the 10<sup>th</sup> June, cheques due in to LCiL by 12<sup>th</sup> July.



Further information about the new penalties can be found online at <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/payee/problems-inspections/late-payments.htm#4>  
If you have any queries please contact payroll on 0131 475 2350 or email [payroll.team@lothiancil.org.uk](mailto:payroll.team@lothiancil.org.uk)

## The Mobility Roadshow is coming to Edinburgh!

The Mobility Roadshow, arguably the biggest and best showcase of mobility and lifestyle products and services in the UK is coming to Edinburgh on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> September this year. It will take place at the Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston in the City. It will be open from 10am daily where there will be free admission and parking available.

You will be able to test drive vehicles, wheelchairs, powerchairs and scooters and look at new ideas in relation to equipment and transport. There will also be information relating to home, leisure and much more. There will be experts on hand to provide advice and free seminars.



**The Grapevine, Lothian Disability Information Service** provides free, confidential information and advice on any disability issue to people in Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian.

These are some of the things which people ask us about: Money and Disability Benefits, Social Work Services and Direct Payments, Access to Transport, Housing and Adaptations, Aids and Equipment, Accessible Holidays and Leisure Activities, Education and Employment Opportunities, Access Issues, Disability Equality and the Law.

You can contact us by:

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Website [www.lothiancil.org.uk](http://www.lothiancil.org.uk)

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Our opening hours are Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.00pm. Individual interviews can be arranged on an appointment basis.

This publication is available on request in a range of alternative formats, including Large Print, Audio Tape and Braille.

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