



Wheelchair Users' Group - Folkestone ShopMobility  
Registered Charity Number 1064955

# Newsletter

SPRING 2011

Access, Mobility & ShopMobility

## Higher Charges for Hire Charges

With regret, as from 4<sup>th</sup> April 2011 we are increasing the price for scooter and wheelchair hire; this is because the current economic climate is making it increasingly difficult to raise funds for our service.

Daily powered vehicle hire will be £2 for the first two hours, then £1 per for each additional hour (a maximum £5 per 5 hour day) so we hope this is still affordable.

Holiday hire will be £6 per day (£16 per week) for manual wheelchairs and £10 per day (£50 per week) for mobility scooters + £10 for delivery and collection to the hotel.

Emergency hire of wheelchairs is also available subject to availability. (Holiday rates apply)

There will be no increase in membership fees; currently £10 (on benefit or retired) or £14 for those in work, a family or group. NB: You don't have to join up to use the service...



Wheelchair Users' Group  
(WUG) & ShopMobility

Shop 21 - 2nd Floor  
Bouverie Place  
Shopping Centre  
Alexandra Gardens  
Folkestone Kent CT20 1AU

☎ / Fax: **01303 226500**

Email:

**wchairuser@aol.com**

## NHS Wheelchair Service

The NHS Wheelchair Assessment Centre which covers the Shepway, Ashford, Deal and Dover area has recently moved & the new contact details are:

New Aylesham  
Health Centre  
Queen's Road

Aylesham Kent CT3 3BB

☎ 01304 843 777

Fax: 01304 843 778

Open from 8.30am until 4.30pm Monday to Friday; home visits can be made, but obviously demand for these is high.

If you can get to Aylesham you may be seen sooner, and transport can be arranged by them.

## Useful Items

ShopMobility has a few useful (disability related) items for sale, such as walking sticks, RADAR toilet keys, wheat bags and other accessories. Pop in, telephone or email for further information...



### Your Journey through Self-Directed Support

KASS (Kent Adult Social Services) have a wide array of factsheets on their website but have recently produced this; it is only two pages and illustrates the process as briefly as possible.

Basically, there are 8 steps to the process, which are:

- 1 \* - Contact KASS for help; they will either signpost other services or do a community care assessment. This establishes what support is needed to live independently.
- 2 \* - KASS will give you a copy of your assessment and the help they may offer may include:
  - Information and guidance on other services
  - Equipment or adaptations to your home
  - A short-term intensive service, "enablement", usually for people coming out of hospital
  - A personal budget to purchase ongoing care and support
- 3 \* - A financial assessment then takes into account your ability to pay for your support; whether KASS will contribute and also if there's any other state benefits you may be entitled to.
- 4 \* - If eligible for support from KASS, they give a personal budget; until the support plan is completed this will be estimated.
- 5 \* - The support plan maps out your targets & how to reach them, showing the actual support, how the budget will pay for it and how it will be managed. You can either work this out yourself, with family and/or friends or with KASS or another organisation.
- 6 - The actual personal budget is then agreed; depending on financial circumstances, this may be a combination of KASS finances and your own.
- 7 - If eligible for KASS funding and arranging your own support, you will receive the funding and can then do this as specified in your support plan. If you prefer, KASS can arrange this instead.
- 8 - Reviewing the support: after 6 weeks KASS will contact you to check its progress; or you can contact KASS yourself at any time. If you have ongoing support, KASS will contact you annually to review this and confirm your financial situation.

NB: The first 5 steps above (marked \*) have their own, more detailed factsheet. These are available from the KASS website, [kent.gov.uk/adultsocialservices](http://kent.gov.uk/adultsocialservices) or by phoning 08458 247 100, or textphone 08458 247 905.

Oliver Mills, the current managing director of KASS, retires on 31st March, as does Pat Huntingford, who is the lead on the transforming social care agenda. Also, from April 2011, KASS will be known as "Families and Social Care Services" as they are going through (yet another) reorganisation. As yet it is unclear how these changes will affect disabled people but WUG is already receiving reports of people having their direct payments hours slashed; we would therefore welcome any feedback as it emerges...



### Proposed Disability Benefit Changes

The government is reviewing the eligibility criteria for DLA, aiming to save £1 billion. This has received much opposition from disability organisations for attacking vulnerable people and being an entirely financial led exercise. They aim to reduce the overall number of claimants by at least one-fifth and will do this by reducing the care component to only two categories of need. Therefore many people currently at the lower rate will be no longer eligible. They also intend to combine 6 different benefits into one “universal credit” (or Personal Independence Payment / PIP).



It's reported that although some people will be better off, 1.7 million people will be worse off. In October 2012 they also intend to completely remove the mobility component from people in residential care who are funded by the local authority; this is estimated to affect 80,000 people. The theory is that the local authority should cater for their mobility needs, but in practice is extremely unlikely to happen. This will leave many people isolated and unable to afford day-to-day activities, leaving them virtual prisoners in their place of residence. It's hoped that this will save £150 million a year; it will not affect people who fund their own residential care.

There is still ongoing concern about the changes to Incapacity Benefit (IB) and transferring people to Employment and Support and JobSeekers Allowance (ESA and JSA). Already started by the last government, the target is to reassess 1.6 million claimants between April 2011 and 2014. Thousands of people have already been found “fit for work” and changed to JSA, which is a lower rate of both benefit and support.

ESA is then divided into two groups, “support” for ongoing needs and the “work-related activity” group; the government intends to time-limit the latter to one year only. This also applies to JSA and they plan to reduce Housing Benefit for people on JSA over one year. The waiting list for tribunals for the ATOS medicals is currently at 6 months, many of these benefits are reinstated after appeals. This is therefore a waste of time and energy all round, but causes many people with disabilities immense amounts of stress in the meantime. It's also rumoured that the healthcare professionals who carry out these medicals are rewarded with £70 incentive bonus for each claimant they disqualify. (It is not reported whether they repay this when benefits are reinstated.)

WUG feels so strongly about all these matters that letters have been written to the ministers involved; this was within the consultation period, which ran to 14<sup>th</sup> February. We feel that disability equality is going backwards, not forwards, and the mobility component changes are particularly discriminatory. The prevailing social view nowadays seems to be that any benefit claimant is a “dirty scrounger” and this is evident by the decline in social attitudes and increase in disability discrimination in general.

Changing the eligibility criteria does not take away the disability, and one effect of this in the long run is likely to be an increase in disabilities; largely caused by the increased stress this will cause people with difficulties, who already face many social barriers. With 80+ applicants reported lately for small part-time jobs locally, the question does also arise as to who is going to employ all us disabled people anyway, when there's plenty of people without disabilities to choose from? If you feel up to contacting your MP about these changes, please do, as they need to know how it will affect individuals on a daily basis.

In the meantime, despite having no money, we get involved in yet another war...



**Transcription of a speech by Sue Bott,  
CEO of the National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL)  
to the Independent Living Festival, Glasgow, 17th February 2011**

Thank you for inviting me to your festival and giving me the opportunity to speak to you about independent living and the current situation we are faced with.

We have come a long way in the last 30 years. Looking at the exhibition of disability history you can see how much our lives have changed since the days of institutions and low expectations of disabled people. This is thanks to the pioneering work of disabled campaigners: people like John Evans who (as part of Project 81) argued for and eventually succeeded in persuading his local authority to give him the cash so that he could employ his own personal assistants rather than have to spend the rest of his days in the Leonard Cheshire home in Liss, Hampshire; and people like Ken and Maggie in Derbyshire who were able to move out of an institution to a house where they occupied the ground floor and the people who lived on the floor above provided personal assistance in return for living rent free.

The Independent Living Committee of the British Council of Disabled People led the campaign by disabled people for direct payments so that we could arrange our own support rather than have it arranged for us. Eventually of course we succeeded and direct payments legislation was passed in 1996.

But we know, and experience has confirmed, that realising independent living is not just about changing the law. We have to change hearts and minds, we have to bring about a complete change in the culture of professionals working with disabled people. What is even more important is that we have to believe and understand independent living ourselves. I think perhaps in recent years we have become complacent and assumed there is acceptance of independent living, giving us choice and control in meeting our support needs.

The last few months have taught us that there can be no such complacency. In the battle of ideas we disabled people are being severely challenged.

The UK Government is taking our terminology and abusing it. Andrew Lansley, Secretary of State for Health takes the acknowledged term of the international disability rights movement "nothing about us without us". How dare he! It is clear from his plans for reforming the NHS – giving all the decisions to GPs and health clinicians – that he is not talking about the rights of disabled people.

Maria Miller, Minister for Disabled People, has claimed that her plans for abolishing the Disability Living Allowance and replacing it with Personal Independence Payments are based on the social model and yet, if you get anything at all, it will only be through a medical assessment. We're all going to be 'PIPed at the post'!

I have heard it said that such an abuse of our language means that we should change it. Personally I do not think so, rather we should seek to explain our language more widely, what it means, and what it means for our rights.

We need to explain the social model, that it is about the environmental and attitudinal barriers facing disabled people and, contrary to what you think Maria, these barriers have by no means disappeared.

4 Yes, we have made progress but we are not there yet.

We need to explain independent living, that it is about doing what we want to do at the time we want to do it by having choice and control in how our support needs are met, and that by having such control we can be active and equal citizens.

Never has it been more important to articulate our aspirations as disabled people than now. Just consider the attacks on disabled people that the Government have unleashed upon us: -

- Independent Living Fund – Closed.
- DLA to be replaced with PIP which most of us will not be eligible for.
- The agents of ATOS assessing us and stopping our support according to some code that only they understand. By the way I have heard that here in Scotland you had a day of action that closed all the ATOS offices.  
Congratulations. I always say people north of the border have much to teach us southerners about campaigning.
- The frankly bullying tactics of access to work administrators on disabled people who have the temerity to have support in employment
- The draconian cuts (as much as 20 – 30%) being made to disabled people's care packages by local authorities

If we are to assert our right to independent living, which we are entitled to under article 19 of the UN Convention of the Rights of Disabled People, we need to build allies.

We need to build allies with trade unionists. I attended the People's Convention in London on 12<sup>th</sup> February. It was good to be there and have a workshop on disability rights and independent living. The SE regional Secretary of the union Unite was clearly moved by what we had to say and referred to the attacks on disabled people in his final speech. This is different to cuts campaigns of the past. We are there and speaking for ourselves.

We need to build allies by signing up to like-minded initiatives such as the Campaign for a Fairer Society, which was launched in The Times in the last few days. I know many organisations in Scotland have already signed up.

If we don't act what will happen? It will be: -

- Back to the institutions
- Back to reliance on family and do-gooding volunteers
- Back to having no choice and control in our lives
- Back to the invisibility of disabled people in our society

We cannot and will not allow that to happen!

If you can, join us in London on March 26<sup>th</sup> for the TUC march against the cuts. If all goes according to plan disabled people will be leading this march which will probably be an even bigger event than the anti-war march in 2003. Watch out for the disabled people mass lobby of Parliament, likely to be on May 11<sup>th</sup>.

So, go to it and do the pioneers  
of our independent living movement proud!



Liz Carr is an actress and comedian who has been disabled since the age of 7; she challenges disability issues face-on with great humour.

Regarding the current situation, she says: "Disabled people make up 20% of the population. That's a conservative estimate. We are hidden impairments, we are visible, we are old, we are gay, we are lesbian, we are black, we are white, we are all sorts of people, that's who we are.



"But what we are not is... we are not victims. We are not scroungers or frauds. We are not vulnerable or work-shy. We are not charity cases or burdens, 'unsustainables' or useless eaters. We are fighters, survivors, leaders, comrades, brothers & sisters, campaigners, citizens and equals. "This is not a new struggle. Our history is littered with disabled people being scapegoated, demonised, discriminated against and oppressed. It is also a history of people fighting back.

"From the League of the Blind who unionised in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to fight for their rights, to the war veterans who marched on Whitehall for the jobs and respect they were due, to disabled people fighting to escape residential care in the 60s and 70s, forming the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation, to those of us in the 80s and 90s who chained ourselves to buses to secure equality in public transport and in law... We have been here before.

"We are now faced with a horrific onslaught of attacks from all directions. The cuts that we're all talking about today, we encounter those cuts too – whether it's the increase in VAT, privatisation of our basic services, of the NHS, of cuts affecting the public sector – we experience them too as disabled people but on top of that we're having our benefits whipped from us, we're being assessed by 'barstewards' at ATOS, people in care homes are having the mobility component of their DLA (Disability Living Allowance) removed, we're being charged for the basic right to have a wee, our Independent Living Fund money that allows us independence within the community is being removed in 4 years time, Incapacity Benefit is being scrapped - replaced with the unforgiving ESA (Employment Support Allowance), on top of that there is hate crime, limits to housing benefit, Access to Work, to transport and if we want to challenge it, to Legal Aid too. That's f\*\*\*\*d as well.

"Disabled people are living in fear. We are living in poverty. We are going to be living in the Dark Ages where they decide between the deserving and the undeserving poor.

But we will not let this happen. Because through our history, what we have learnt is that the media, policy-makers and Government will try to separate us into our different groups; they will try to weaken us. They will try and make us compete against each other for whatever crumbs are on offer, fighting amongst ourselves, individualising this struggle, dividing us so that they may conquer and change the balance of society in favour of financial capital rather than social capital and equality. That's what happening. We cannot afford to let this happen.

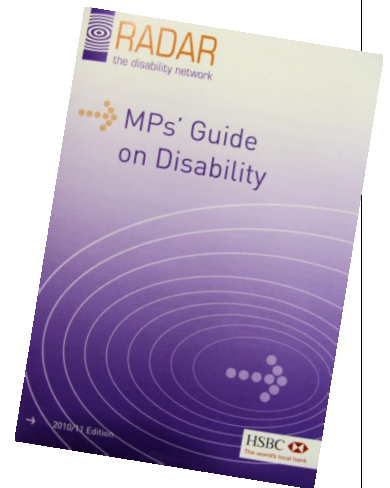
"We are fighting for our lives, for our freedom, for our existence. That's how important it is to disabled people and for everybody here today. It is about our basic liberty, our basic right to life. We will not be hidden away. We will not be hidden away behind closed doors, out of sight, out of mind, in our homes or institutions. We will not settle for charity rather than rights.

"We will not be forgotten. We will not be silenced. We must mobilise and in doing so not forget those who cannot take to the streets in protest but who can through virtual protesting. We must politicise. We must educate ourselves and others in what's happening in our own and wider campaigns. We have to radicalise. This is about revolution not reformation anymore.

"We must unite. As disabled people, as disabled people and allies, as everyone – we must unite. Together we are stronger. Thank you."

**“Nothing about us without us”**

RADAR (the disability network) has produced a 32 page guide to disability for MPs in conjunction with HSBC and the Employers' Forum. It provides information on the Disability Equality Duty and Equality Act of 2010; how disability discrimination laws affect MPs and useful contacts; it's also simply and clearly written and promotes the social model of disability.



It aims to be a practical guide to empower MPs to fully represent their disabled constituents, with guidance to them on how to behave with someone with any of a range of disabilities.

This includes NOT making any assumptions; being aware of use of language and promoting best practice.

There are currently 10 million people with disabilities in the UK; face-to-face meetings and real-life stories have a huge influence on policy-makers. The guide will “reinforce RADAR’s role in brokering dialogue between MPs, businesses and disabled people”. WUG has a copy, if any member wishes to refer to it, otherwise it can be downloaded for free from the RADAR website (radar.org.uk). Make sure your MP has a copy!

RADAR The Disability Network, 12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London EC1V 8AF

☎ 0207 566 0116

Textphone: 0207 250 4119

Fax: 0870 141 0337

Email: [Marrije.Davidson@radar.org.uk](mailto:Marrije.Davidson@radar.org.uk)

**Independent Living Events**

Naidex runs regular national large-scale independent living events, with the next one at the NEC in Birmingham, from Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> to Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> April. It is open from 10-5 on the first two days and 10-4 on day three.

Over 390 companies will be exhibiting, from mobility vehicles to the ‘innovation zone’, to showcase new products. There will be practical advice, from rehabilitation to nutrition and well-being, and complementary therapies on offer. There is an area dedicated to children with special needs, seminars for healthcare professionals, assistance dogs and help with products for aiding communication. The Disabled Living Foundation (DLF) will have an information point, which can also guide you to the products and companies which best answer your needs. The whole event is a chance to share experiences, gather knowledge and to be inspired by other people’s stories.

A further show will take place in London in October.

For more information, contact Naidex at:  
[naidex.co.uk](http://naidex.co.uk) or ☎ **08445 888 076**

**Bus Pass Changes**

From 1st April, bus passes for older and disabled people will come under the remit of KCC instead of local councils.



The main change will be that they will only be valid from **9.30am** until 11.00pm; this will save KCC money. As yet unconfirmed, WUG believes that companion passes will be much cheaper, which we welcome, as SDC recently put the cost up by 700% in one go! This can only be maintained if the quantity issued remains small; they are usually for people with mental health or learning difficulties, dementia, visual impairments and some cases of physical disability.

### Safe Scootering

Norfolk Police (in conjunction with Halfords) has produced a 16 page guide to the Highway Code in relation to mobility scooters. This is because they recognise that while there is plenty of guidance for motorists and cyclists, the increasing number of mobility scooter users just get clauses 36-46 of the main Highway Code. They also recognise that the scooters are essential for accessing the outside world.

Mobility vehicles ("invalid carriages") are divided into 3 groups; class 1 is manual wheelchairs; class 2 powered wheelchairs and scooters capable of 4mph or less; and class 3 scooters capable of speeds up to 8mph. The first two groups are designed primarily for use on the footpath, whereas class 3 can be used on roads and must be registered with the DVLA, although this is free.

When first buying a scooter, it is most important to get the right guidance so that it fully meets your needs. A reputable dealer will also provide basic training and ensure you are safe to drive.

It's important to keep the battery fully charged and the scooter well maintained. The conditions such as weight, weather and environment will also affect its capabilities. On the road, the rules for vehicles must be followed; on pavements the rules for pedestrians. Extra care should be taken in busy areas.

Safety advice includes not drinking alcohol before driving and being aware of the effects of prescription drugs; seeing and being seen; not taking another person or animal on the scooter; not overloading it and carrying luggage sensibly so that the balance of the vehicle is not disrupted.

It's also important to remember that the scooter does not protect the user but if anything increases vulnerability; the greatest degree of care and attention is needed at all times. It is suggested you plan your journeys (including being aware of where kerbs are dropped), drive carefully and be fully aware of your surroundings. Insurance is not yet required by law, but third party is certainly recommended, as well as for fire, theft and damage.



To access the full document, useful guides, information and a short video on scooter safety, visit the website at [safescoot.co.uk](http://safescoot.co.uk) Norfolk Police also runs mobility scooter awareness courses to improve users' skills.

NB WUG still has copies of the Consumer Guide to mobility scooters 2010 on sale for £3.99; this can also recommend "reputable" mobility dealers.

*WUG is extremely grateful to the following for their funding support during 2010-11:*  
KASS, Ronald Cruickshanks Foundation, SDC Community Chest  
and the Yapp Charitable Trust