

Disability News

ISSUE 8 FEBRUARY 2009



Welcome

to this issue of the Disability News. At the Forum in March 2009 we have decided to try something different. We are holding the event on a Saturday for the first time and will be offering different art and craft activities for people to try out. The reason we are having a change is because you have asked for social events as well as information and discussion. We are really looking forward to the day and hope you can join us.

Rod Case

Disability Steering Group



You are invited to the next Westlea Disability Forum...

Disability Forum

Saturday 14th March 2009

Lansdowne Hall, Petty Lane

Derry Hill SN11 9QY • 10am-1.30pm

Lunch and refreshments included + BINGO

To book your place please fill out the separate booking form – postage paid envelope.

Spring into Action

Creative Workshops include:

• Fabric Painting • Scenes of Wiltshire • Craft display and demonstration • Gifts, craft materials for sale at affordable prices • Card making • Container gardening

Children welcome if accompanied by an adult. Help with transport available

Breathe Easy

I eagerly awaited the results of the survey you all filled in at the last Disability Forum to find out whether or not you found my talk about the British Lung Foundation and Breathe Easy Groups were interesting and enjoyable enough for you. I was so pleased that the answer was yes.

People with lung disease and those who care for them often feel isolated and unsupported. The British Lung Foundation supports people affected by lung disease by providing a range of publications on lung diseases and related issues, a Membership scheme, a Helpline and Website, BLF Nurses, BLF Active exercise classes, a Penpal scheme, and a network of more than 200 Breathe Easy groups across the UK.

The British Lung Foundation works for positive change in the UK's lung health by funding world class

research, raising awareness, and campaigning to improve treatment, care and support for everyone affected by lung disease from earliest childhood to the last stages in their life.

You, a friend, carer, or relative can contact the British Lung Foundation by the following ways: **Email enquiries@blf-uk.org, Helpline 08458 505020 (Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm) or www.lunguk.org**

Breathe Easy North Wiltshire hold their meetings on the first Tuesday of every month at the Pewsham Community Centre, Pewsham, Chippenham, between 2pm-4pm.

For more information please contact **Valerie Skruse on 01380 721139 or Elaine Campbell on 01225 743276**

Remember YOU DON'T HAVE TO FEEL ALONE!

Marion Burfield – Disability Steering Group

FEEDBACK

from October's meeting

In October we met at Purton Village Hall. It was a really good atmosphere, lots of chat, helpful information, a comfortable venue with engaging and knowledgeable speakers. Here is a summary and some useful contacts

Affordable Warmth

Martyn Matthews, the Westlea 'energy champion' made a brief presentation on the work being done to improve homes energy efficiency, in that new homes are now 25% more energy efficient than regulations require, and our existing homes are having increased roof insulation where appropriate to reduce energy cost to residents. Martyn also explained the current trial projects aimed at improving control and cost for electrically heated homes, and the programme

of consultation being carried out with communally heated homes.

He emphasised that the 'cheap energy' era was over, and that residents can reduce costs by changing supplier, changing tariff, payment methods, efficient use of the heating system, reducing energy waste and dressing appropriately. Martyn also offered to discuss any issues for those attending, and nine residents took advantage of this.

Finally Martyn promoted the excellent 'moneyfriend' service provided by the Citizens Advice Bureau and handed over to Nigel Jones to offer more detailed advice.

Nigel made the following suggestions for keeping your fuel costs down;

How to cut your gas and electricity bills

1 Are you getting benefits such as Pension Credit, Income Support, and Housing

Benefit, or spending more than 10% of household income on heating? Then call your energy supplier and ask about their social tariff.

Southern Electric, for example, has a scheme which gives all customers spending more than 10% of household income on energy a 20% cut in their bills for two years.

2 If you have not yet thought about changing your energy supplier you could be paying more than you need for your gas and electricity. You could be paying £250 more than the cheapest deal.

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Social Group

A group for people with learning difficulties meet every Thursday at the Pack Horse in Chippenham, 11am to 12noon. You are welcome to attend if you would like to join the group.

HANDY HELP

Price Cuts



Until 31 March 2009 this service will be charged at £7.50 (inc. VAT) per hour. The price drop is to help our customers in this difficult economic climate. If you have any decorating or DIY jobs, why not take advantage of this offer. **Contact the repairs line 01249 466100 soon for further details.**



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Consumer Direct on

08454 040506 will send you a price comparison sheet and details of how to switch suppliers. If you don't want to change suppliers, call your existing suppliers to see if they can offer you a cheaper deal.

- 3 If you are elderly, disabled or chronically sick you should contact your supplier to make sure you are on their Priority Services Register.
- 4 Call your supplier with your meter readings so they can send you actual rather than estimated bills.
- 5 North Wiltshire CAB can offer advice on reducing your energy bills. **Call 01249 445115 Ext 3 for more information.**

Independent Living Centre (ILC)

Independent Living Centres help people with a disability by offering impartial advice and assessment for a range of equipment and services for independent living. You can see and try a wide range of products and receive information on where to buy or how to get help to obtain the equipment you need.

Jenny Bayliss, an Occupational Therapist from the Swindon ILC Centre, used a quiz to demonstrate the range of equipment that was available to help with everyday living.

There are two Independent Living Centres covering the area where

Westlea have homes;

**Stratton Road
Swindon, SN1 2PN
01793 643966**

**St George's Road
Semington, BA14 6JQ
01380 871007
welcome.ilc.semington@
googlemail.com
www.ilc.org.uk**

Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living (WCIL)

Sounds the same... but they are different.

Based at the same venue as the Independent Living Centre this group offer a different service.

Run by disabled people they aim to help people to live independently by

- Giving information on direct payments and individual budgets
- Writing support plans
- Acting as advocates

WCIL are running peer support days for people who receive direct payments, people on individual budgets and for self funders. This is to discuss any issues which may occur about direct payments and also to meet and talk to other people. The dates for these meetings are 23 February or 30 March 2009.

**For more information or to book a place contact WCIL
Telephone 01380 871100
info@wiltshirecil.org.uk
www.wiltshirecil.org.uk**

Mobile Phones

Sue Simmons wanted to encourage more disabled people to carry a mobile phone. They are an essential item if you find yourself in difficulties outside your home and are relatively inexpensive if you can pay as you go.



Ideas for 2009

We asked people at the meeting what subjects they would like to discuss or get more information about in 2009. We had lots of suggestions with some common themes coming through;

- Social events / leisure activities
- Hearing impairment / deafness
- Help and support at home
- Entitlement to grants and benefits

Thank you to everyone who put forward their ideas, we will make these themes a priority at forums and through the newsletters.

Opportunities to increase your knowledge and skills

- An Introduction to the Disability Discrimination Act – March 24, 1.30pm to 4.30pm at Westlea
- An introduction to sign language – date to be confirmed but likely to be May.

If you would like to attend one of these events please contact Julie Bielby on 01249 466054 or email julie.bielby@westlea.co.uk

Are you, or do you know, a young carer?

Young Carers are children and young people aged 5-25 years old that are providing a significant level of care for a relative who is seriously ill or disabled.

Alan Burke has recently joined the Youth Action Wiltshire Young Carers team, where he will be working in partnership with Westlea Housing.

Alan is running a range of support for young carers, from mentoring sessions, a counselling service to weekly activities where we provide fun activities. Last term we did a range of environmental activities and then over the Christmas period we went to see Aladdin in Panto.

This project gives Young Carers the chance to meet others in a similar situation and relax away from their caring responsibilities.

For more information please contact Alan Burke on 01380 729813.



No Barriers Day 2008

On 3 December 2008 Westlea hosted an event with North Wiltshire District Council to celebrate the International Day for Disabled People.

The event, at Chippenham's Neeld Hall, was organised to:

- raise awareness of barriers faced in society by people with disabilities,

- share information regarding services available for people with disabilities in North Wiltshire, and
- promote disabled people as positive role models in society.

The day went really well, with many of Westlea's residents in attendance.



If you would like to have any part of this document explained or translated, or in a different format such as larger print or on audio tape, please contact Westlea on 01249 465465 to discuss your needs.

