

FORWARD MIDLOTHIAN DISABLED PEOPLE



Abolishment of Disabled Living Allowance

The government has announced that from 2013, Disability Living Allowance (DLA) will be abolished and replaced with a new benefit - the Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

At the same time the government has announced that the budget and caseload for DLA will be cut by 20%. This means that a fifth (360,000) of the 1.8million disabled people receiving DLA, could lose their benefit.

Key changes include:

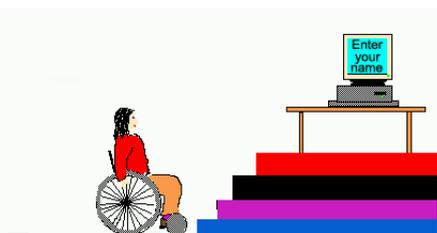
- The care component will be renamed the Daily Living component. There will only be two rates of Care, currently there are three. (those with low support needs may lose their entitlement)
- The person will not qualify for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) unless they have had their condition for 6 months, at present they can claim DLA after 3 months.
- The assessment for the new benefit will be carried out by a face to face interview with a health professional, contracted by the Department of Work and Pensions. (At present, most of the medical information for DLA is provided by the claimant's own GP or hospital

consultant.)

- The assessment will take into account any aids or adaptations the person has. It has been suggested that in future some wheelchair users may not qualify for the mobility component: 'This might mean, for example, considering an individual's ability to get about in a wheelchair, rather than ignoring the wheelchair, as we do currently.' (DWP consultation paper)
- All claimants of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) will have their benefit reviewed regularly on an ongoing basis.

For more information please go on line to Department of Work and Pensions – DLA consultation
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/2010/dla-reform.shtml>

Download the consultation document (70 pages)
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/dla-reform-consultation.pdf>



Claim a free energy saving plug

Save money on your energy bills and support Arthritis Care.

Arthritis Care is working in partnership with Grass Roots to offer a free energy saving plug to anyone over 70 or on one of the benefits listed below.

The plug is worth £19.99 and can save you up to £20 on your energy bills, as well as helping to make your home more environmentally friendly.

For every plug claimed, Arthritis Care will receive a small donation from Grass Roots. One plug can be claimed per household.

Visit Energy saving plug to claim your free plug using the code DIR0004004.

www.energysavingplug.co.uk/web/guest;jsessionid=51753DEB6B01A6B0865513B9BC953588

Qualifying benefits

If you are under 70 but you or someone in

your household receive one of the following benefits, you are eligible to claim a free plug.

- Attendance Allowance
- Council Tax Benefit
- Child Tax Credit (with an annual household income of no more than £16,040)
- Disability Living Allowance
- Disablement pension (must also be in receipt of Constant Attendance Allowance)
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
- State Pension Credit
- War Disablement Pension (must also be in receipt of Mobility Support or Constant Attendance Allowance)
- Working Tax Credit (with an annual household income of no more than £16,040)
- Income-related employment and support allowance

Forward Mid Memeber blows own trumpet

From Iain Tait

My disability onset happened in 2002, after a long illness was unable to return to full fitness my previous job as a taxi driver was impossible to return to.

I looked about for another job in a dwindling job market and with little hope of finding employment I felt I was being put out to pasture very early, I then managed to get a part time job as a script checker at the Scottish Qualification authority for six weeks, during my time at this employ I came across a document called access to industry (www.accesstoindustry.co.uk/). I contacted access to industry and was accepted into a course run by Jewel & Esk College in 2007 to study computing, I completed the course and found this course opened up a whole new area for retraining. I embarked on a full time study course in Web Development with help I had

developed from Access to Industry.

This was a two year course with the first year being a Higher National Certificate the second year being a Higher National Diploma. I graduated from Jewel & Esk College in November 2010 and also won a the citizenship award, which was a unexpected.

The Jewel & Esk College has recently gone through extensive modernisation and both campuses offer a full modern tuition for everyone as both sites have full wheelchair access and understanding staff.

I have now moved onto Edinburgh Napier University and I am chasing a degree in Web Technologies as a direct entry student into 3rd year. I am hoping that when I qualify I will be able to leave the pasture for a few years and become an integrated member of the community once more.

Direct Payments – Changes in Midlothian

There have been a number of changes in Midlothian to the way Direct Payments (DPs) have been administered in the past to the way they are administered now.

These changes and the way they have been suddenly implemented, has affected service users in different ways. Several DP recipients have contacted Forward Mid confused and concerned about some of the changes and how they had being affected by them.

Many people use their DP to purchase their own support with some employing their own staff. This can be an isolating experience. Being an employer brings with it many legal responsibilities and having the opportunity to speak to someone from an independent organisation that has experience in direct payments is essential, from the pre-assessment stage onwards. Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living (LCIL) is paid by Midlothian Council to undertake this role. Some service users, when being assessed, do not know what kind of extra expenses they may need to consider when employing staff. This can lead to delays and extra expense for the service user who has to apply for funding to cover additional costs at a later date.

DP recipients need to fill in a quarterly return form: the format of this has changed with many service users saying it is not user friendly and has not been designed with them in mind. Some feel there is increased pressure to get these forms completed on time and increased worry that if they are late they will have to delay payment of wages and other fees. A delay in completing the quarterly return could easily happen if someone was unwell or life circumstances prevented them.

Some DP recipients had being asked to pay a contribution to their support package for the first time or have had their contributions increased. Some have found they cannot afford their full contribution and feel they have no choice but to reduce their hours of support.

People have been trying to access the Rapid Response Team but without success. There seems to be a lack of knowledge of this service from social work staff.

Forward Mid is in discussion with Midlothian Council to clarify what these changes mean and we hope to be able to update readers in the next issue of this newsletter.

Here are some of the key questions that have arisen from the changes.

Q1. Are all DP recipients in Midlothian aware that they can contact LCIL for independent advice and support?

Q2. . Will the social worker conducting the assessment know about and advise their client to consider what extra costs may be incurred when taking a DP?

Q3. At the pre-assessment and assessment stage of receiving a DP, are clients informed of the independent support available?

Q4. What support are DP recipients told they can get in completing their quarterly returns?

Q5. How can a DP recipient find out how their personal contribution is assessed?

Q6. What can a person do if they cannot afford to pay their full contribution?

We will continue to update and inform regarding Direct Payments and Self Directed support for individuals in Midlothian. If you would like to know more, Get intouch

Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living



LCiL's Independent Living Team can provide you with the information and advice you need to arrange and manage your own support package.

- One-to-one advice on Self Directed Support and advice re self-assessment
- Support to liaise with Local Authority Departments and other appropriate organisations
- Support from the Independent Living Team can be arranged as a home visit or at another appropriate or accessible venue.

Midlothian's Independent Officer is Louise McMeel, Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH7 5QY TEL: 0131 475 2350

Service Users and Carers event for services to People with Progressive Neurological Conditions



A consultation event took place at Loanhead Miners on 1st February. Around ten service users and carers attended this event facilitated by Rona Laslowski from NHS Lothian and David Piggott from the Joint Improvement Team, Scottish Government.

Lothian is currently undertaking a review of the services provided to people with progressive neurological conditions, within the Lanfine Unit, in Edinburgh and by other related services within the Community. This review is being assisted by the Joint Improvement Team together with a wide range of stakeholders, including local authority partners

The Lanfine Unit provides a short stay inpatient service for adults, aged 16 + with neurological disorders who experience moderate to severe disability. The service supports people to live well with their conditions whether that is in their own home or another form of supported accommodation in the community.

People, with progressive conditions, and/or

their carers make different choices or may have different opportunities in regard to the range of services they make use of and the support they receive.

The event's purpose was to discuss these issues in more detail with service users and carers. It took the form of facilitated small group discussion to explore with attendees four main areas:

1. The aspects of services that people considered could have a positive impact on quality of life for people with progressive neurological conditions and/or their carers
2. The aspects of services/ supports that people currently use which have proved particularly useful/ helpful/ supportive
3. The aspects of services/ supports that are currently accessed which have proved particularly unhelpful/a barrier are
4. The changes people would make to the services that are currently provided

Some early feedback from the day has been positive, but we look forward to bringing you some service users views and how this event will impact on the future of this very important area of service, in the next issue.

Alternative Publications

The editions of the Forward MID newsletters are available in large print or at www.forwardmid.org.uk
For alternative publication please E-mail to eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk or call Eric Johnstone on 0131-663-9471 or write to him at MVA 4-6 White Hart Street, Dalkeith EH22 1AE with your request.