

FORWARD

MIDLOTHIAN

DISABLED PEOPLE

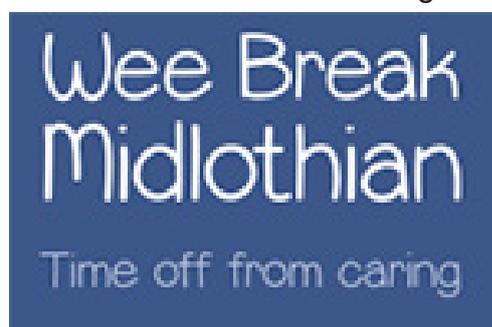


Equality - Diversity - Inclusion

Funding for carers – time for you

Remember when you had time to meet people, go to the cinema or do whatever it was you used to enjoy doing? Leisure time is often the first thing that disappears for carers and the last thing they have time for, and yet it is one of the best stress relievers.

Wee Break Midlothian can help you take a Wee Break from your caring role. Wee Breaks can help you think about what you would like to do, what is out there and how to fund it. On our website www.weebreak.org you can find a list of all the groups and activities happening in your area. Wee Breaks work with the Community Coordinators from the red cross to try and get as many clubs as possible listed – from angling to aqua fit or table tennis to tai chi.



Wee Breaks have created a 'dummies guides' to some of the most frequently asked questions including 'How much will I have to pay for respite?' 'Am I eligible for a service?' And 'how can I use SDS?'.

Finally Wee Breaks can help you fund your break away with our list of funds, freebies and discounts. Wee Breaks also have money you can apply for directly. If you care for someone aged between 21-65 you can apply for up to £500 and if you care for someone over 65 or are over 65 yourself you can apply for even more – up to £750. You can apply for anything that will give you a life outside of caring. The possibilities are endless and depend on what is important to you. Here are a few examples to get you thinking:

“I don’t have to watch football in the wet and cold!” Rebecca cares for her husband who has MS and a visual impairment. She wanted time to herself to follow her own interests – which were not always the same as her husband! They spend his individual budget on a season ticket for his football club. A fellow fan accompanies him to matches so she has her Saturdays back – and is spared from watching football in the wet and cold!

“A seismic shift in my life” Lucy cares for her husband who has terminal cancer. After his diagnosis she needed to find time for herself in between her husband’s treatment and needed space to come to terms with the ‘seismic shifts’ that were occurring in her life. She used the Creative Breaks fund for therapies at a spa that offered free use of all facilities with a treatment.

“Time for my hobby” Gary cares for his father who has dementia. He has always kept dogs but as his caring role increased he was finding it harder

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to find the time to take them for walks – especially in the bad weather. He used the Change Fund to buy new equipment (coats, muzzles and leads) that makes it easier, and quicker, to take his dogs out. His daily walks give him time away from his father, physical exercise and time out of the house in the fresh air.

It is easy to apply and the panel meet every month so you won't have long to wait.

To apply or find out more call Kathleen Tel: ☎ 0131 271 3765

Lothian Wheelchair Curling Club

Lothian Wheelchair Curling Club (LWCC) has been formed following a program of biweekly sessions introduced by Murrayfield Curling Club and is run and developed by Jean Lennie (MCL staff). Tom Killin & Dave Wightman are both experienced wheelchair curlers who give excellent coaching. Other able bodied curlers are available to coach/assist too.

As the sessions are becoming more and more popular, We have decided to change from just fortnightly sessions, into a proper Curling Club. This is currently being developed and LWCC are working towards ratification from the Royal Caledonian Curling Club, Curling's governing body.



LWCC aim as a club is to provide anyone of limited mobility or a wheelchair user the opportunity to participate in a very rewarding sport. LWCC not only want to be able to compete within our own club, we also want to expand and start competing with other Wheelchair Clubs and perhaps other events run by Murrayfield Curling Club.

Curling is an excellent sport, and allows wheelchair users to compete on a level playing field with able bodied curlers. Age is not relevant nor is gender. Murrayfield has been very accommodating and have made several adaptations which now allow access for all.

LWCC welcome any new curlers, and for the remainder of this season(25th March), they will be curling every Wednesday at 15:00 to 16:30 (12.30 on 11th Feb.) To encourage people to participate, LWCC have been able to arrange for the first session a new curler attends to be free of charge. Thereafter we are asking for only £5 each session attended.

If you would like to speak to someone before coming along, please call Jean Lennie tel: ☎ 07762 056 293 or Malcolm Winning tel: ☎ 07415294849, or email: ✉ jeanatneuk@hotmail.co.uk.

Edinburgh College invites applications for courses starting in August 2015.

Applications open on 02 February 2015 and close on 15 May 2015.

Whether you want to get on the career ladder, continue with your studies or learn new skills, our courses will equip you with the knowledge and expertise you need to get you there quickly. Edinburgh College offer courses across the following areas:

- Business and management
- Computing
- Community and Outreach
- Construction and Building Crafts
- Creative Industries
- Childhood Practice, Health and Care
- Engineering
- English for Speakers of Other languages
- Food, Hospitality and Tourism
- Hair and Beauty
- Highers and Social Sciences
- Modern Languages
- Sport and Fitness
- Veterinary care



For more information go to our website here: www.edinburghcollege.ac.uk/courses/course_landing.aspx

If you are unsure about what course to study, or would like more information on a specific course,

- Fill out our data capture form on our website www.edinburghcollege.ac.uk/august2015/
- Contact our course information line tel: ☎ 0131 660 1010 or
- Email: ✉ courseinfo@edinburghcollege.ac.uk.

Open learning courses If you are looking to start a course before August, Edinburgh College currently have open learning courses available for applications now, including a selection of Highers, Computing and Languages. More details can be found on our website here: www.edinburghcollege.ac.uk/openlearning/ For further information, you can contact us on openlearning@edinburghcollege.ac.uk or phone us tel: ☎ 0131 535 4658.

Student Funding and Fees

When you are considering starting college, one of the most important issues to consider is funding and how you intend to pay for some of the costs that come with being a student. You can download our Funding Information Booklet from our website here: <http://doc.edinburghcollege.ac.uk/courses/prospectus/funding%20information.pdf>

Student Support

Staff in our learning support team are experienced in supporting students with:

- Physical disabilities
- Visual impairment
- Learning difficulties
- Mental health or medical problems
- Hearing impairment
- Specific learning difficulties eg Dyslexia, Dyspraxia. Contact us tel: ☎ 0131 669 4400 or email: ✉ info@edinburghcollege.ac.uk for more details on how Edinburgh College can support you to achieve your ambitions.

Digital Support @ Gorebridge Library Hub



Need to do something online?

Wish there was someone who could help?

Now there is.

Digital Supporters can help with :

- ✓ Logging onto a computer and basic on line skills.
- ✓ Setting up a free email account
- ✓ Finding useful information on line
- ✓ Using universal jobmatch.
- ✓ Accessing claim forms online
- ✓ Referrals to local advice and support agencies

Digital Supporters won't be able to :

- ✓ Give advice about welfare benefits or job applications.
- X **Input personal information into online forms or benefits claims**
- ✓ Volunteers can refer you to organisations that can help

Information for disabled users

- ✓ New assistive hardware and software available
- ✓ Blue badge parking space
- ✓ 0.1 Mile from nearest bus stop

**Drop-In Mondays
2:00 PM - 3:30PM**

OR

**Book a time
that suits you**

**Phone  07410 932 303
Or ask in Gorebridge Library**

The Cost of Internships for Disabled People

The Equality Internships Programme provides paid internships to unemployed graduates with an HND qualification or above.

SCVO working in partnership with BEMIS, CEMVO, Scottish Disability Equality Forum and Inclusion Scotland are creating paid internships within third sector organisations for unemployed graduates.



50 internship opportunities will be targeted at graduates with a disability or long term health condition and 24 will be open recruitment with applications actively invited and welcomed from graduates from Ethnic Minority communities.

To qualify applicants must hold a SCQF Level 8+ qualification and be unemployed; either in the first 12 months of a benefit claim, or 2 years+ or unemployed and not claiming benefits.

The internships are for 13 weeks and all have the same pay structure of £6.31 per hour and are contracted for a 35 hour week. I decided this might be a way into full time employment therefore I accepted an Information Technology internship with a large Scottish advice company.

On starting I was told that the pay section had decided that £6.31 per hour was not a liveable wage and increased it to £7.85 an hour, before tax and national insurance. Because the pay was so low I received working tax credit. I enjoyed my time working here and it felt good to hold my head up high again.

As I was in employment all my benefits stopped. I lost my Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. At the end of the first month I looked at my pay and did all the sums; taking into consideration travel and the extra cost of food. I worked it out that I was £87 out of pocket. I started to write everything down in a little note book and at the end of the second month was over £300. I re-visited my first month and noted the items I missed out. This took my out of pocket expenses in the first month to just over £200.

I had informed Midlothian Council that I was in employment and the charge I have to pay for the support I need was reassessed. Following this reassessment my contribution was increased by more than 110%.

After 13 weeks of work with out of pocket expenses in the hundreds of pounds it became apparent I had not considered all the implications behind this scheme. As for this being a way into full-time employment - after completing my internship I visited the website: 2015 www.scvo.org.uk/jobs-employability/vacancies/equality-internship-programme/ on 22 January 2015 and didn't find any jobs. I do not know if any of the other people who accepted an equality internship were kept on in full time employment, The SCVO have not yet completed a post Equality Internships Programme evaluation.

Iain Tait

Scotland Against the Care Tax

On 27 January the Public Petitions committee considered the petition by Jeff Adamson, on behalf of SACT, on abolition of non-residential social care charges for older and disabled people and took evidence from Shona Robison, Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport. You can view this at: www.scottishparliament.tv/category.aspx?id=25

At the end of the session the Committee agreed to consider a paper submitted by SACT in response to the evidence already given to them by the Scottish government, COSLA, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and a selection of local authorities. This meeting will be held on 17 February at 11:45 in Committee Room 2. This meeting will be available to view live at: www.scottishparliament.tv/?vid=live-committee-room-2.



If you would like to attend the meeting you can book a seat in the Public Gallery through the Scottish Parliament's Visitor Centre, either by tel: ☎ 0131 348 5200 or by e-mail: ✉ sp.bookings@scottish.parliament.uk

You can follow the petitions progress and view all the evidence submitted at: www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01533

Midlothian TaxiCard News

From 1 April 2015 Midlothian Council will no longer accept new applications to join the Midlothian Taxicard scheme. This will not affect those who are already in the scheme and have a Midlothian Taxicard. They will continue to have up to a £3 discount off 104 single journeys per calendar year. Existing Taxicard holders will continue to be invited to renew when Taxicards expire.

Midlothian Council took the decision at a Council Meeting held on 16 December 2014.

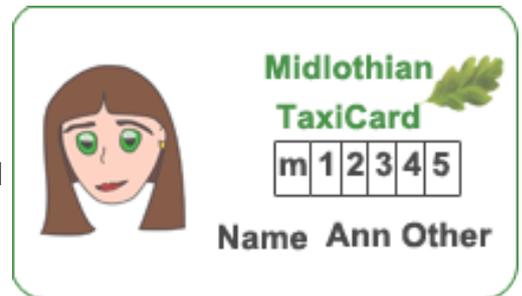
The Midlothian Taxicard discount scheme will be retained for current users. However, no new applications will be considered after 1700 on Tuesday 31 March 2015. This change is expected to save £12,000 by 2017. There is a minimal impact in the early years, but the budget saving will increase in future years as people drop out of the scheme without being replaced.

There are currently just over 1000 people in the Midlothian Taxicard scheme.

Some Scottish Councils have never had a Taxicard scheme, one is now charging a fee to issue a Taxicard where previously it was issued free of charge, and another will soon consider a report proposing to scrap their entire Taxicard scheme before the end of 2015. Midlothian Council has chosen a different way of keeping the scheme without any new entrants.

Taxicard schemes are not a statutory requirement, that is, they are not required by law. This is discretionary spending by a Council that chooses to establish and maintain a Taxicard scheme, and this makes such schemes particularly vulnerable to cuts when compared with other activities that the Council is legally required to provide [such as the Blue Badge scheme or the Scottish bus pass scheme].

Forward Mid: Disabling conditions can affect anyone, there is a need to ensure equal access to transport for everyone, particularly people who have the greatest difficulty in travelling. Closing this scheme to new applicants will severely restrict their inclusion in society.



Helen's Tips

Not time to rip up the L plates just yet!

About six months ago it was suggested to me try out an electric wheelchair. I said well ok if I can hire one for a week and have a trial run maybe I would be up for that. (It's amazing these days what you can hire!). I contacted Med-Ecosse Ltd in Loanhead on 0131 440 4225, medeco67@aol.com to see what they could offer me. When I phoned them they were very helpful. They gave me lots of information about all the different chairs they had and this was very useful to me as it helped me decide which model of chair I thought would best suit my needs. I decided I would hire the chair for five days at a cost of approximately £90 with a delivery charge of £25 each way if you are unable to collect it yourself. I first went up to their showroom in April and tried out a couple of electric wheelchairs. There was one in particular that I liked but unfortunately I wasn't able to try it outside as it was a miserable day so I decided to leave it for another time. I returned again at the beginning of August when I thought the weather would be more kind, I know that's a bit of a gamble in Scotland but it paid off as the sun was shining and I was able to do a "test drive". My preferred model of wheelchair had been programmed to go slower for learner drivers like myself and I felt quite comfortable using it so I put down a deposit and said I would think about it. I then came away and thought, better just go ahead and hire it as I wouldn't get any peace from everyone who had been telling me I should at least give it a bash before I decide if it's for me or not!. I arranged for the wheelchair to be delivered to my home address and as planned wheelchair arrived on Monday 18th August and I tried it out by going up and down the drive of my house, so far so good.



My first challenge was a day out in Dalkeith with a friend. I managed in and out of the shops as well as going to Morrison's for a coffee without any problem. The entrance/exit in Morrison's was very accessible and user friendly. The next challenge I set myself was to try a pedestrian crossing. I set the speed on the chair a bit faster than it had been in the shops when crossing but turned it back down to slow again just to get use to it .I had to remember I'm not in my manual wheelchair today where I would normally feel more in control. Takes a bit of getting used to this faster model! What next? Challenge number three, came to a bus stop, Oh great, do I want to try and get on a bus? As it was destined for Tesco's I thought, why not! I made the bus driver aware I wanted to get on so he moved forward and a ramp came out. I had to straighten the wheelchair to enable me to access the ramp safely then I took it up slow and steady and showed my bus pass to the driver. The tricky part was reversing into the wheelchair space. It took a couple of tries and some of the passengers on the bus were saying well done once I had "parked" it. I replied, "not bad for a learner driver, Tesco's, here I come". The return journey wasn't too bad but with a little more practice I'm sure I would be a great female driver (no comments please!)

Another day another challenge...Today's the day I venture further afield than Dalkeith, so Edinburgh here I come! The bus stop near to where I stay is on a hill so it's not the easiest place to get a wheelchair to, but that's a moan for another day. The bus arrives and I make the driver aware I want to get on. A ramp comes out and slowly I get up the ramp and manoeuvre myself

into the designated wheelchair space and not at my first attempt, it takes a 2nd and almost 3rd attempt before I am in and settled. The position you now find yourself in is with your back to where you are going so no problem if you know the stop you want to get off at as you can ring the bell as you are approaching your destination. However, if you are not sure when and where your stop is try to focus on a familiar



place you know is on your route. There is a bell at the side of the wheelchair space which makes a different sound to the regular bell; this then alerts the driver that a person in a wheelchair wants to get off the bus. The driver will then activate the ramp into place and you can then get off the bus, hopefully in a smooth manner, but not always in my case I fear... I have decided I want to go to St James Centre so I make sure I ring the bell well in advance of it turning the corner at the top of Leith Walk otherwise I have visions of me flying past all the seated passengers and heading right into the front of the bus, not really how I want to portray myself when up the toon! Great, I've arrived in one piece and now shopping, not that I like shopping, well to be honest I suppose you could say it's a bit of a hobby of mine as those of you who have read my previous articles in this newsletter may have noticed. There are quite a lot of shops in St James' centre but I've decided I'm going straight to John Lewis as it's the shop that has everything. Need a coffee first to sustain me for the task ahead. I get a lift to the 4th floor where there is a restaurant and a coffee shop as well as toilets. I ordered my coffee and a staff member was happy to help carry my tray to a suitable table. After enjoying a relaxing coffee break I am now ready to shop. There are so many shops in St James' centre you could be there for hours so after my second coffee break I think I had almost seen them all.....

This was my first time in the Edinburgh for a couple years so it was great that the electric chair gave me the freedom to do and go where I wanted and using the bus saved me money on taxis. I went back to John Lewis later that week and started my Christmas shopping, sorry saying that word Chr++++++ but you need to start sometime!

Now back to what I was really telling you about, my time with a power chair. It gave me the confidence and freedom to get up and down to Dalkeith myself and I could go into Edinburgh whenever I felt like it. I'm now back to my manual wheelchair but with the confidence I gained from using the electric wheelchair and accessing buses into Edinburgh it gave me a great buzz and true sense of freedom.

(You never know I might try going to John Lewis again, although getting out and about doesn't help my bank balance, next stop their Glasgow branch?)

Forward Mid hubs now in place in the following locations:

 **BONNYRIGG**

 **GOREBRIDGE**

 **PENICUIK**

 **DALKEITH**

 **LOANHEAD**

These hubs hold lots of valuable information for everyone, If there is anything that Forward Mid has missed please let Eric know on Tel:  0131-663-9471, as long as the documents come in sufficient quantity for all the hubs, Forward Mid will try their best to have them added.

Alternative Publications

Editions of the Forward MID newsletters are available in large print or at www.forwardmid.org.uk alternative publications, please email:  eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk or call Eric Tel:  0131-663-9471 or write to Eric at MVA, 4-6 White Hart Street, Dalkeith EH22 1AE with your request.