

# **Looking Forward to 2016 Challenges**

There's a lot of bad news about – wars, terrorism, famine, floods, reports of Scottish children coming to school unfed to say nothing of political situations and judgement. So when Eric asked me in a conversational way how things were going in transport and I started blethering away, he said that there seems to be some good news there and that I ought to tell people about it. Of course I've left it three weeks now, Christmas has been and gone, and I can't remember exactly what I said, but here goes.

Most of my travel is done by bus but I do some by rail, and the good news this month is the significant investment that Virgin East Coast and ScotRail are putting into new (and a lot of that is new, not refurbished) rolling stock. This will improve comfort and reduce overcrowding. In addition ScotRail's programme for refurbishing the class 158 sets (as used on the Borders Railway) and the class 156 sets (used on the West Highland line) is already started and will be completed by autumn 2018.

From my personal experience on the Borders line, I can report that the stations have been built to the standard specification of accessibility (e.g. Steepness of ramps, handrails on steps, tactile paving etc) but that there are still some deficiencies in signage. This would apply mainly to strangers wanting to know how to get out of the station to a particular destination or even how to find the station itself, but some would apply to all users. For instance as all the stations are unstaffed you are required to purchase a ticket from a ticket machine. These machines are situated within the shelters on the platform, but on arriving at the stations you go from the car park/entrance to the platform and there is nothing informing you where the ticket machines are (the shelters are not always close to the entrance to the platform). Hopefully these things will be sorted out fairly soon. The on-board staff are helpful and accommodating. One train I was on was an unrefurbished 158, which is only designed to take one wheelchair comfortably, but we did have two on-board + a third one which was folded up belonging to a person who was able to transfer to an ordinary seat.

On the buses, both FirstGroup and Stagecoach have been putting a lot of effort and money into

replacing their old and often inaccessible buses with new ones and I think that now normally all the FirstGroup buses which pass through Midlothian have low floor entry and ramps. I'm not sure whether Stagecoach are still using coaches on their routes to Dumfries (where booking for a wheelchair is necessary and seats have to be taken out) but I have noticed that on their Fife routes they certainly have more modern vehicles.

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Lothian Buses have all had ramps for several years now, and this winter there does not seem to have been so much trouble with sand and salt getting into the mechanism. However I'm always amazed at the patience and ingenuity of the drivers in dealing with ramps that will not behave. It is only if a bus is running very late that a driver will leave a wheelchair user behind. In normal circumstances they will have several goes at getting the ramp to work and if that fails will reposition the bus, get out of the cab and get the chair into the bus. I think we can also say that within Lothian there is now no "war" between buggy users and wheelchair users. With the provision on most buses of two spaces there is much more give and take. When a bus is running a 10 or 15 minute frequency service and there are already two buggies on the bus, most buggy pushers who don't want to or can't fold the buggy are quite prepared to get off and wait for the next bus or even walk, especially as they can get a voucher to let them onto the next bus without having to buy another ticket. Common sense and courtesy do work.

Not just in the run-up to Christmas but from August onwards at least the number 37 route has been exceptionally busy. At one time to find people standing even at peak times was quite rare. In the last few months there have been people standing at all sorts of times of the day, and when you consider that many people are going on holiday and have very large suitcases, others have their shopping trolleys or bulging plastic bags, walking frames, walking sticks, dogs and children – sometimes it's rather like an Indian Railway. All of this of course does slow the service down, but there is a general spirit of camaraderie among those who travel by bus. Even when a bus breaks down the passengers are generally relaxed and accepting. Fortunately a rare event. I have experienced 4 in a year (i.e. <1%). There was a gearbox failure (leaving the stop on Straiton Park Way horrible noises every time we tried to move), a loss of power going up Liberton Brae, and two occasions of youngsters throwing stones and breaking a window.

### A Bus note

Since January 1 this year, all single deck buses used on local registered services must conform to the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 2000. This means single deck buses must be accessible to disabled people, including wheelchair users. From January 1 2017, the regulations will also apply to all double-deckers, and from 2020, to all coaches.

### **POSTSCRIPT**

I don't think that I lead a sheltered life, but in the 10 years that I have been disabled I haven't experienced any Disability Hate Crime, yet some seem to attract it. The only antagonism I get is

from motorists who have an unnatural relationship with their vehicles. I frequently speak to those who park on yellow lines, on bus stops where the signs say 'no stopping at any time except buses' or at dropped kerbs, pointing out to them that they are inconveniencing other road and footpath users as well as breaking the law.

The responses are of the form of

- a) Are you the law?
- b) Don't tell me what I can or can't do
- c) I'll only be a minute
- d) Don't touch my car (when I tap on the window!)
- e) [silence, pretend I'm not there]
- f) some unprintable expletive.

To so many, the car is a sacred object even personality whose holiness and superiority must not be challenged. And these are people who would be rational in almost all other circumstances. As we say in Yorkshire "There's nowt so queer as folk."



# **Self Directed Support**

This year, 2016, Forward Mid will be focussing on self directed support. Self Directed Support lets you take more control over the money available to meet your agreed care and support needs. It allows you to make choices about your support based on the things that are important.

> To you, and to goals you want to achieve

To help you stay safe and well

In each newsletter we will be exploring one of the four options available to an individual, we will call this, "Self Directed Support – Bite Size".

Our aim is that, across the course of the year, we can inform people, clearly, about the choices they have in arranging the type of care and support they want. Forward Mid can provide you with general information about SDS: for detailed information LCIL offer expert advice and support. Or you could visit Cafe Connect,



held on the last Tuesday of each month at the Welfare Hall in Dalkeith, for an informal chat about this with people who use SDS in the Cafe's relaxed, welcoming atmosphere. Forward Mid hope you enjoy learning more about this empowering approach, that can offer greater control over how your support and care is provided.

"Self Directed Support is the biggest change to Social Care in a generation."

"Greater opportunity for everyone to have a greater control over how their care is provided."

"The provision of direct payments has been around for quite some time but even with this provision there still was too much focus on what's in the interest of the social care system rather than the

interest of those who require social care and its support."

"Fundamental change in the locus of control - no longer from those who provided the assessment or who design and plan services but the locus of control shifts to those who need the services to be able to make the informed decision about the care and support that meets the needs."

"So if a decision in the past was made that a carer comes in at 7:30 to get



you up and will be back at 7:30 at night to put you to bed. Now if that doesn't suit, you have the choice to be able to design a care package that does reflect the time you want to get up, what you want to do, where you want to go to and when you want to go to bed."

"It's these small practical differences that are absolutely key in delivering what everyone would want to aspire to for themselves and that is to be able to lead an independent life in a way that best suits their personal circumstances."

"Creating more independent living now a legal entitlement for someone to live as independent a life as any individual chooses to."

## **Self-Directed Support – the basics**

Self-directed support is a tool which enables people to have greater choice and control over their support.

Since 1 April 2014 – the commencement date of the Social Care (Self Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 – all local authorities have a statutory duty to give people who are eligible for social care more choice about how they receive support – they must offer self-directed support.

The Act is one part of the Scottish Government's 10 year self-directed support strategy. The core values of this strategy are: respect, fairness, independence, freedom and safety.

The statutory principles which underpin the Act are:

Participation and dignity	Supported people should have the same freedom, choice, dignity and control as other citizens at home, at work and in the community
Involvement	Supported people must have as much involvement as they wish in assessment and the provision of their support
Informed choice	Supported people must be given reasonable assistance to enable them to express their views and make choices
Collaboration	Professionals must collaborate in an equal partnership with supported people in relation to assessment and provision of support

Local authorities should consider these values and principles as part of their social care strategy, polices and practice.

In practical terms self-directed support means a person requiring support will:

- Have their needs assessed in terms of outcomes what they want to achieve with their support. This should be done as a conversation and exploration, rather than a form-filling exercise.
- ➤ Be told the overall amount of money (in £s, rather than hours of support) available for their support. This amount is called an Individual Budget. The budget will be based on the support needed to fulfil the person's outcomes.
- Be offered four options on how their support and budget are managed, and by whom
- Be helped to make a plan on how and what to organise as a support package within their budget so that they can achieve their outcomes

## The four options

**Option 1** – The person receives a direct payment and arranges the support themselves, often with the support of an advice and support organisation

**Option 2** – The person chooses how their individual budget is spent while the local authority or a third party (such as a support organisation or service provider) manages the money and arranges the support on their behalf

**Option 3** – The person asks the local authority to decide and arrange the services and support they receive

**Option 4** – A combination two or all of options 1, 2 and 3. For example, the person may choose to use part of the budget as a direct payment to employ a personal assistant and another part to receive a service decided and organised by their council

Everyone who is eligible for social care support should have access to independent information and support when considering, choosing or managing any of the four the options. Here are some real examples of how some people have used each of the 4 options.

**Option 1**: a direct payment (Jeff)

I chose Option 1, and use a direct payment to employ personal assistants. For me this was the

only option that could give me full control of how I want the support I need delivered. Employing PAs gives me the freedom and choice to go where I want, do what I want, when I want. The benefits of this option is that I get to choose the staff who work for me, what their duties are and when they start and finish. Knowing who is coming in each day, people who know exactly what I need and how I like things done, gives me a continuity I don't think any of the other options would give me.

### **Option 2** Example (Fiona)

Option 2 was the best option for me. I use the budget to buy services from an agency for my personal care needs, but I also use it for social and leisure activities such as a gym membership and art class. I knew I wanted to have some control over how my services were arranged, but I didn't want to have to manage the money. It benefits me because I still feel I have control and I can make my own decisions, but I have someone else helping me with the finances and paperwork.

### **Option 3**: a direct service (Mary)

I choose a direct service for my daily care needs because I didn't want the hassle of making my own arrangements or having to decide how to best spend my money. I felt my social worker had a good idea of what I needed. This works for me because I don't have to think about it and I know I can just go back to my social worker if there is a problem.

### **Option 4**: a mixture of options (Robert)

I first received a service from the local authority a number of years ago. As my condition changed, so did my needs. The service on offer didn't suit me so I asked for a direct payment to give me more flexibility. I use this to employ PAs in the evenings. The direct service is used in the mornings and the afternoons. I have regular workers from this service that I get on well with and I trust and I don't have to worry about arranging cover for their holidays and sickness.

## **Questions to Midlothian Council on their Self-Directed Support Strategy**

We have encountered that people across Scotland have a lot of the same questions and concerns about self-directed support so we have put these questions to Midlothian Council's lead officer on SDS, Graham Kilpatrick.

## 1. Is SDS a cost cutting exercise?

SDS is not as a cost cutting exercise. It is being introduced to provide more choice and control around how social care services are provided. It also gives people the opportunity to be more creative so that people can make better use and get more for the money that's available.

2. Will I pay more towards my care if I choose different options?

Currently, some people who receive a service are financially assessed and pay a contribution towards their care. Under SDS, the council will charge you in the same way that it charges these people. Therefore, the amount you are assessed to pay will be the same whichever option you choose.

3. I am happy with the support I have. Do I have to take SDS?

SDS is all about people choosing the way they want their support provided. You do not have to take control of your own budget if you don't want to.

4. What can and can't I spend my individual budget on?

When someone is eligible for a service an assessment will be carried out to identify the outcomes

they wish to achieve. There is a lot of flexibility on what the individual budget can be spent on providing your agreed outcomes are met. Your local authority will need to agree that what you propose to spend your budget on will meet your outcomes.

5. What if I want to change my option?

If you wish to change the option you should discuss this at the next review of your current care package.

6. Can I get help to decide?

There are local support organisations which can help you with a range of issues which will allow you to make an informed decision.

7. What if I want to use option 1 to employ a PA, but I don't feel confident to manage the money myself?

In some circumstances extra support can be provided to help individuals manage the money associated with direct payments. If you think you would need help with this you should discuss this when your assessment or review is being undertaken.

## **British Red Cross Open Hour**

We are writing to inform you of our service for the Neighbourhood Links and Red Cross Buddies projects.

Due to the high demand for our services and information, we are holding an Open Hour in the Dalkeith office where we can offer help and information about our services to any of the Statutory or Voluntary Sector key workers.

The next date we have planned is Tuesday 23 February 2016 from 10am – 11am.

We would be grateful if an appointment could be booked by telephone in advance. Alison Murrie Telephone 0131 654 9260

# **Pipped at the Post**

The BBC on the 3rd of February 2016 reported nearly 14,000 disabled people who rely on a specialist motoring allowance have had their cars taken away from them following government welfare changes.



Figures seen by the BBC show almost half of those having to be reassessed for this support under the changes lost their Motability vehicle.

Many had been adapted to meet their owners' needs and campaigners warn it could lead to a loss of independence.

Minister for Disabled People Justin Tomlinson said people's circumstances changed over time and it was right they should be reassessed.

"But rightly we have a system that allows for an appeal, a mandatory reconsideration and then if they're not satisfied with that they can go for an independent appeal, so there are lots of opportunities if a claimant thinks a decision is wrong to have that looked at again."

Latest figures show that of all the appeals to do with PIP, 60% have found in the claimant's favour. Motability says it provides a support package, including a £2,000 grant, to anyone forced to leave the scheme following a PIP reassessment.

The charity added: "This helps individuals to remain mobile, in many cases by purchasing a used car. Motability has already provided some £16m in support through this transitional package." For more information please visit www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-35476904

# Café Connect

Cafe Connect hosted the National Conversation for a Healthier Scotland, Tuesday 26 January 2.30 pm – 4 pm (tea, coffee and chat from 2 pm)@ Dalkeith Older People's Welfare Hall, St Andrew's Street, Dalkeith

**Forward Mid** and The ALLIANCE had around 40 people come to Cafe Connect and joined in with a lively Conversation. Included in the 40 people was the Minister for Public Health, Maureen Watt, Midlothian Council and Lothian and Borders Fire service.





The conversation was an opportunity for citizens to engage with each other and share their views on:

- What is needed to help you live well in the future?
- What support do we need in Scotland to live healthier lives?

Café Connect provided an opportunity for constructive conversations around health and wellbeing which will form part of a dialogue on the future of health and social care in Scotland.

Café Connect is a vibrant community café run by Forward Mid with tremendous aid from Midlothian Local Area Co-ordinators. It gives disabled people a chance to meet up to talk and listen. Café Connect is a great place to find out useful information about a whole range of relevant supports and services; Welfare Reform, Access Issues, Self- Directed Support; a friendly gathering where everyone is welcome; a place where you can listen in, share your story, or just turn up for a coffee, tea and cake on the house!

Forward Mid also brought along the 2015 Directory and some newsletters to highlight the work done by Forward Mid.



# Life priorities

At a consultation event last year, based around the Keys to Life priorities, people told the Midlothian Local Area Co-ordinators that they wanted opportunities to meet up to share

experiences and learn. Subjects were identified under the main themes of a healthy life; choice and control; independence and active citizenship.

25 people attended the first "Chat Night" information sharing evening at the end of January, on "How safe do you feel?" After an informal start, Rosie and Ronald from MIDSAFE provided useful information about the role the group plays in community safety. MIDSAFE is an independent, community organisation that seeks to promote and enhance the aims of the Midlothian Community Safety



Partnership and membership is open to all residents of Midlothian (see link below for further information).

We learned that Midlothian Community Safety Partnership involves several key agencies, including Midlothian Council, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and NHS Lothian, and others

We also heard about the Nominated Neighbour Scheme which enables people to arrange for a trusted person to be present when a caller visits their home, confirm the person is who they say they are, say no on their behalf, if required.

A representative from Midlothian Community Policing team provided information about the team's role and gave a clear guidance on when and why to call 999 and 101.

The next subject is Local and National Government, date to be decided, however anyone interested in coming along can contact the LAC team Tel: 0131 454 1785. keystolife.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/The-Keys-to-Life-Implementation-Framework-and-Priorities.pdf

www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/396/crime\_prevention\_and\_community\_safety/1027/midlothian\_community\_safety\_partnership

# Police can now instantly identify Blue Badge Abusers

Police officers in Scotland can now immediately identify people who misuse Blue Badge disabled parking permits after an agreement was reached with local authorities.

The agreement now means that officers can access real-time information on the Blue Badge Improvement Service database, allowing them to immediately identify people who are abusing the Blue Badge scheme.

Deputy Chief Constable Rose Fitzpatrick said: "The Blue Badge scheme is an important resource for people who really need it. Those who abuse the scheme make life harder for people who need to have access to places such as medical centres and social facilities. "It is important that people realise not only are they making life harder for others, but they may also be committing fraud, if they use a Blue Badge to obtain free parking to which they are not entitled.

Minister for Transport & Islands Derek Mackay said: "This is a fantastic tool that will help local authorities in their bid to tackle abuse of the Blue Badge scheme.

## **Motability Now offer Scooter and Powered Wheelchair lease**

The Motability Scheme enables disabled people to lease a new car, scooter or powered wheelchair by exchanging their Government funded mobility allowance. If you receive either the Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance, the Enhanced Rate of the Mobility Component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement (WPMS) or the Armed Forces Independence Payment (AFIP) you may be eligible to join the Motability Scheme.

Parents can apply on behalf of a child who receives the allowance, but please speak to your dealer, as some products may not be suitable for all ages. There are 3 classes into which wheelchairs are prescribed, Class 1 is a self propelled or transit wheelchair, Class 2 is a powered wheelchair or scooter that has been built and designed not to exceed 4 miles per hour on level ground on its own power, Class 3 is a powered wheelchair or scooter capable of exceeding a speed of 4 miles per hour but incapable of exceeding a speed of 8 miles per hour on the level ground on its own power, a Class 3 must also have a horn, reversing alarm, road tax and insurance as it is



allowed to be used on roads. To drive a class 3 the user must be older than 14 years.

Unfortunately, the Attendance Allowance cannot be used to lease a product through Motability.

### **Worry-free mobility**

Motability scooters and powered wheelchairs are available on a three year lease (five years for some custom-built powered wheelchairs). This simply means that you lease the product from us and we arrange for the relevant amount of your allowance to be paid direct to us every four weeks.

Most Motability scooters and powered wheelchairs cost less to lease per week than your mobility allowance, so the remainder of your allowance continues to be paid direct to you, to spend as you wish. The cost of your Motability scooter or powered wheelchair includes what we call our worry-free package. So with a Motability product, you don't have to worry about arranging and paying for insurance, breakdown cover, maintenance, servicing, tyre or battery replacements.

### More about worry-free mobility

Non-refundable Payments

From 1 January 2015, all of our standard products require an up front Non-refundable Payment of £100 payable to your dealer before you take delivery of your scooter or powered wheelchair.

#### More information

www.motability.co.uk/scooters-and-powered-wheelchairs/important-things/payment-and-cost-scooters

www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code/rules-for-users-of-powered-wheelchairs-and-mobility-scooters-36-to-46

# **Disabled man wins Design Awards**

Grant Douglas teamed up with a local designer to create a spoon that could revolutionise mealtimes for people with shaky hands

A Scot with cerebral palsy has won a design competition run by a Scottish housing and care provider after creating a spoon which could revolutionise how people with conditions that cause shaky hands eat.

Blackwood Homes Care and Support Design Awards showcased designs from around the world but a panel of expert judges chose the remarkable S'up Spoon as the winner.

Designed by computer science graduate Grant Douglas, who lives in Edinburgh, and industrial designer Mark Penver, who is based in Glasgow and works at 4c Design, the spoon reduces spillage and is designed to help those with shaky hands, such as people with cerebral palsy and Parkinsons.



It differs from standard cutlery as it has a deeper cavity which partially extends into the handle allowing it to contain food and liquids more securely.

The ergonomic utensil also features a high arch in the handle and a concave dip in the top to alleviate any difficulties in lifting it from surfaces and maintaining grip allowing those with disabilities greater freedom to eat independently.

Judges were also impressed that the innovative spoon's sleek contoured design and matte black finish also ensure that the product will not be perceived as an assistive device.

Mark and Grant will now receive a cash prize of £1000 as well as invaluable legal advice on issues such as patenting and trademarks, professional service support from Blackwood and its' partners.

Speaking to Grant, who has cerebral palsy, explained how the spoon, came about. He said: "One morning, my Mum was called away when she was feeding me, and this is when I had the lightbulb moment that I needed a spoon with a lid on it. A friend put me in touch with 4c Design and that was the real start of the S'up Spoon journey.

We entered Blackwood's Design Awards as we share its aim to enable disabled people to live as independently as possible through designing accessible products in a way that is pleasing to the eye.

"Within days of receiving the first prototype spoon, I had a whole bowl of soup independently and went out for a Chinese and had two portions of rice, which was a first for me. So it is also effective in that it can be taken to restaurants without people staring and wondering what it is.

"We entered Blackwood's Design Awards as we share its aim to enable disabled people to live as independently as possible through designing accessible products in a way that is pleasing to the eye".

"We are overwhelmed to have won and so grateful to Blackwood and the panel for choosing our design. The advice and guidance we will now receive will mean there is a far greater chance of getting the spoon as a standard piece of adapted cutlery which is considered when disabled people are assessed by allied health professionals."

The competition took place at Blackwood's tech-care inspired office at Dundee Street, Edinburgh, with competitors located as far away as Canada and Pakistan pitching via Skype to land the top prize.

Volunteer judges from various care, private and public sector organisations provided contestants with direct feedback on the day and critique over the live stream feed.

"We were blown away by some of the entries and it was extremely difficult to choose just one, but Grant and Mark's S'up spoon is incredibly innovative and provides people with shaky hands the opportunity to eat independently with minimal spillage," said Fanchea Kelly, chief executive at Blackwood.

"We hope with our backing and the backing from our partners, that the design will go on to help many people and improve their quality of living.

"We would also like to wish all the runners up the best of luck and much continued success in their design endeavours."

The S'up Spoon is currently available for purchase at www.sup-products.com/



## A Kindness of Strangers

Winter hit the Midlothian plateau on Thursday evening (December 3rd 2015). As I came home at 5 o'clock from an all-day conference it was raining quite steadily and water pouring down the gutters. 15 minutes after I got into the house it turned to snow, and when I went out to go back into town again at 6:30 it was snowing gently but steadily. I thought nothing of it and there was no sign of snow once I got down to the level of Edinburgh. At 9:15 I was back in Princes Street waiting for a bus to come home. When it arrived, it had the legend "part route only – Straiton" and the driver said the road beyond there was blocked by abandoned cars. I didn't think I had any option but to go as far as he was going and then see what I could do. My thought was to phone for a taxi.

By the time we got to Straiton there were only four of us on the bus, two middle-aged ladies who were going to have to walk to the Roslin Road end where husbands could meet them in a car, a 25-ish young man and myself. Because of the snow and ice at the bus stop he helped me off the bus and said he wouldn't abandon me until I had got hold of a taxi. We tried phoning

Kindness is the Language Which Deaf People can hear and Blind people can see.

Mark Twain

three taxi firms, two didn't answer and the third didn't have a wheelchair accessible taxi available.

Having discovered that he lived quite near to me, my hero offered to help push me home (a distance of 2 km). We had covered some 750 m along a very wet road with a lot of standing water in the gutters and slush on the road but fortunately not many vehicles, when an SUV with two young man and a young lady (all also in their 20s I guess) pulled up and asked if they could help by giving a lift.

We accepted, and the two blokes lifted me body lay into the car, folded up the chair, and I was driven right to my door. They put me back in the chair (slightly more difficult than getting me into the car) and insisted on seeing me into the house before going on their way to Lasswade or somewhere.

So these four young people are my heroes of the week for putting themselves out to help somebody who should perhaps have had the sense to stay at home. I was too knackered to do anything about it last night, but I'm just going to drink a toast to them now.

The total journey of just under 10 km from Edinburgh to home which would normally have taken about 50 minutes in a bus or 20 minutes in a car had taken about an hour and three quarters.

## Café Connect

The Café is held in the Dalkeith Welfare hall in St Andrew Street, Dalkeith and is held on the last Tuesday of Every month. The next Café is on the 23rd of February 2016.





### Alternative Publications

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