

**Forward**

**Midlothian**

**Disabled People**

[www.forwardmid.org.uk](http://www.forwardmid.org.uk)

**Equality - Diversity - Inclusion**



## **Welcome to the Beacon Gorebridge**

A new hub for the community of Gorebridge and surrounding areas. It's taken sometime to be at the stage to open. It's fixed many stumbles and challenges but it finally opened its doors in January 2019.

We were received by Brian the Chairman of the hub, who conducted us around the building. It's a pleasant welcoming space with lots of light, and a buzz feel to it. With lots to offer each week the Beacon offers a range of activities from Gardening to sewing group to a Tea Dance and Choir to name a few.



Some different organisations share the building; Sure Start, Midlothian Ladies Club plus more.

There is a bright, lovely cafe. It's wonderfully airy and welcoming with lots of the community enjoying a coffee and cake. Some of the Forward Mid team had a coffee and scone on the day of our visit.

The hall can be rented out for children's parties or any event that you may have planned. They provide a service with the local shops called The community fridge. Anyone is allowed to go to the Beacon and take from this generous service. Everyone that helps run the Beacon are all volunteers, if you feel you would like to be involved then please contact the hub.

On looking around this fantastic building there is a few teething problems. The toilets are behind two heavy doors and we struggled on our own trying to navigate our wheelchairs and operate the doors open. The lift to the first floor operates a manual door in an awkward position. On chatting with Brian the chairman of the Beacon we suggested that Midlothian Access Panel come perform an assessment and issue our concerns to them so changes can be made to make it a more accessible building.

Forward Mid are extremely impressed with the building, the welcoming volunteers and what is on offer to the Midlothian community. A lot of work and planning has gone into establishing a successful all round place that has much to offer us.

Contact Information: the Beacon [www.facebook.com/gorebridgebeacon/](https://www.facebook.com/gorebridgebeacon/) ☎ 01875 816320.

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## **Leaked paper shows disabled people get only a quarter of what was promised in Frank's Law**



Frank's Law is named after Frank Kopel, the well-known footballer who developed early onset dementia. For many years Frank and his wife, Amanda, had to pay charges for the same personal care services that were given free to those with dementia who were over 65. Frank's Law now means that everyone in Scotland will not be charged for any Personal Care support, irrespective of their age.

However, the introduction of the law has been controversial, with many people arguing that a different approach is needed for younger disabled people because their needs are different. In general, younger disabled people are more likely to be in receipt of social care support than people over 65. As social care is not covered by Free Personal Care, most local authority charging policies will mean that a smaller proportion of younger disabled people will benefit as compared to people over 65.

Critics point out that unless Free Personal Care is implemented in a different way for the under 65s, Frank's Law is unlikely to benefit the number of people intended. They argue that achieving a fair outcome for different groups of disadvantaged people cannot be guaranteed by simply treating everyone the same. This is the core principle underpinning the notion of making 'reasonable adjustments'. However, the Scottish Government and others decided that they had to follow strictly the same procedures that were already in place for people who were over 65.

Ian Hood, Spokesperson for Scotland Against the Care Tax said "At first the Scottish Government said that over 10,000 people would benefit but because of the way they have gone about this, only about 3,000 people will benefit. And many of them will still have to pay large weekly amounts because some of their support won't be counted as personal care."

He added, "The remainder of the money is not ring-fenced and is being given to councils to spend as they want. They justified this additional funding as being needed to meet an anticipated rush in demand for support. Yet, 5 months after the introduction of Frank's Law, it is clear that there has been no such increase. Nor will there be. Councils have robust procedures in place to make sure that only those with needs classed as 'critical' or 'substantial' get support."

Jeff Adamson, Chair of Scotland Against the Care Tax said, "I am one of the many disabled people in Scotland who rely on large amounts of personal care and social care support to live a good life. 80% of my care package has been adjudged as being personal care (the other 20% being social care) and I don't pay for this but I'm still paying the same amount as I did before the introduction of free personal care for people under 65 as my social care costs more than I've been assessed to pay."

"We said there was a fairer way of doing this but they wouldn't listen. Now we see why. No wonder, the Scottish Government was reluctant to release this paper to the Scottish Parliament Petitions Committee."

To find out more about Scotland Against the Care Tax visit our website at:  
[www.scotlandagainstthecaretax.co.uk](http://www.scotlandagainstthecaretax.co.uk)

## Reading a Phone Call

Making and taking phone calls, particularly with mobile phones, is such a routine part of life it is now unremarkable. Except that is if, like me, you are deaf or hearing impaired and don't use British Sign Language.

It can be challenging enough to make a call to your broadband provider to find out why your internet connection has fallen over, but when you add in the poor connection quality encountered all too regularly, call centre staff not having their headset mike close to their mouth, people mumbling, and time spent on hold while you are assured your call is important to someone, the reality is that many people like me look for workarounds. These can include getting someone else to make the call, using web chat [if it is offered by the organisation] or firing off an email.

These workarounds do not always do the trick. If you need to speak to the bank about your accounts, getting someone else to call for you might not always work as you might have to share confidential information at all sorts of levels with them. And the banks will be unhappy if they find out you have shared confidential account or security information with anyone else.

In other words having to make contact by phone can often be a real barrier. It can even be argued that it is discrimination – which is unlawful – for organisation to avoid offering deaf and hearing impaired people an alternative to what works well for hearing people. There are options like Minicom [clunky and dated] or Next Generation Text Relay [NGTR]. Part of the trouble with NGTR is that it leaves you reliant on an intermediary between you and, say, your GP Practice. While it can work and be suitable in some settings, in others it affects the natural rhythm of a conversation and becomes very stilted. It also means that independence to make and take calls is not available to deaf and hearing impaired people.

I found late last year that there are at least 2 smartphone apps which offer a very real option to all of that. One is called Pedius Call and one is called Roger Voice. In simple terms, they use voice recognition software to instantly translate voice responses into text on your smartphone screen. It means you can have real-time conversations with anyone and means there is no need for an intermediary.

Both apps offer a limited number of calls/time allowance free each month. If you want to have more than that you will have to pay a monthly charge.

I have used both in a trial and opted for Pedius Call package. Neither of them are perfect. Voice recognition software is not yet perfect as it has to deal with a huge range of accents and languages across the world. I tend to ask people I call to slow down the pace at which they speak so that how they speak is more deliberate. This allows the software time to catch and transcribe more of what is being said.

If you are fed up at not being able to make and take calls, do try out both apps and see which ones work best for you.

Who knows, if enough of us opt to use Pedius for example, we could persuade Midlothian Council to do what the Hong Kong government has agreed to do in a contract with Pedius – underwrite the cost of all the calls made and taken by deaf and hearing impaired people in Hong Kong.

<https://www.pedius.org/en/home/>

[rogervoice.com/en/](http://rogervoice.com/en/)

Thanks to Wlad Mejka



# Wheelchair Access

Shops, councils, car parks, restaurants, hospitals, Taxis and access in general are all quick to jump on the bandwagon and display the wheelchair symbol to inform everyone that they are accessible friendly.

After reading Shirley Todd's Story

Three weeks after completing the London marathon, Shirley Todd suffered a stroke on the operating table while having a brain tumour removed and was left partially paralysed. She states:

"It's become so difficult that I just don't go out, it's caused a lot of social isolation, I don't feel welcome anywhere."

Mrs Todd highlighted fully-able store customers who use a lift intended for the disabled as a particular problem.



"Mrs Todd surveyed 130 places on Lothian Road, Bread Street and Grassmarket and a massive 95 (73 per cent) are not wheelchair accessible.



"Wheelchair access needs to be a prerequisite of planning permission for old and new buildings. Often when inaccessible premises change ownership, undergo extensive refurbishment and re-open as new businesses they are still inaccessible. I don't understand how this is being allowed to happen."

To assist wheelchair users who have not been into a premises and are unsure of any access restrictions there should be two symbols used one that is accessible and one stating they are not accessible. As the opt in does not seem to work the next option is the shame option.

Therefore I am suggesting we ask those premises that are not accessible to display a symbol to that fact. Cut out this page and send it to your local non accessible premises and also to your local council. If they are willing to place the accessible badge in the window it is only fair that inaccessible premises do the same.

## Alternative Publications

Please like us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/forwardmid/](http://www.facebook.com/forwardmid/) 

Forward Mid newsletters are available in large print on request from Eric Johnstone ☎ : 0131-663-9471 or email [eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk](mailto:eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk) write to him at MVA, 4-6 White Hart Street, Dalkeith, EH22 1AE with your request. Electronic copies can be found on [www.forwardmid.org.uk](http://www.forwardmid.org.uk). The latest Firefox browser has the reader symbol  in the address bar, click and select narrate from left menu. The latest Safari Browser has the reader symbol  but does not read aloud. These only work on websites without errors. If you require help please contact Forward Mid and we will arrange to help you.

**Edited by Iain Tait for Forward Mid**