

Autumn / Winter 2008

Devon *Link*

Large Print

The regular magazine for people with physical and sensory disabilities in Devon

Diary of a disabled rambler

Devon Link correspondent Jackie Oldham on braving challenging terrain as well as the elements on her Tramper scooter

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Focus on caring in Devon

DID YOU KNOW that one in ten people in Devon are carers?

There's a carers theme to this issue of Devon Link, which coincides with the launch of 'Devon Cares' – a campaign by Devon County Council to improve access to help and support services for carers across the county. You can find out more about the types of help available in Devon, and read about the 'real lives' of local carers, on page 18.

Continuing the carers theme, we're featuring a new support programme from St John Ambulance on page 31. The programme offers practical training for carers, as well as the obvious support that goes with meeting people in similar situations.

You may remember that back in the Spring we featured 'off-road' wheelchairs and scooters. You could say that this issue's cover stars road-tested the latter – completing a challenging cross-country ramble across Salisbury Plain on Trumper scooters. Our very own Jackie Oldham took part in the expedition, which was organised by the Disabled Ramblers. Turn to page 22 for Jackie's diary account of three days spent tackling tough terrain and sleeping under the stars!

If you found our feature about Employment and Support Allowance in the last issue useful, we've revisited the topic on page 27 of this issue. ESA is such a complex subject, there was too much to cover in one feature!

Finally – I would just like to say a big congratulations to the winners of last issue's 'Rough Guide giveaway'. Copies of The Rough Guide to Accessible Britain are on their way to Mrs A P Morris, Miss Jenna Chynoweth, Mr Sidney Wilson, Mr J Heath and Mr Philip Hulme.

Best wishes, **Sarah**

News from North Devon

MP calls for more jobs

MP Geoffrey Cox visited the headquarters and workshop of Plymouth-based organisation, Pluss, to look at the work it has been doing to provide training and employment for disabled people in the Torridge area. Mr Cox has called for more opportunities, that can only be made available by 'persistent and far-reaching work', to be made available to many more people in the area.

Sponsored 'lie-down'

Army cadets from North Devon completed a half marathon with a difference. The youngsters came up with the idea of lying down, head to toe – to cover the distance in a relay around the perimeter track at RMB Chivenor. With an average height of 5ft, 100 cadets had to lie down 143 times to complete their target. They were sponsored to raise money for St Dunstons, the national charity for blind ex service personnel.

TV licence mix-up

Disabled pensioner Marlene Wyatt, from Holsworthy, was wrongly accused of not paying her TV licence and threatened with the bailiffs. The mix-up was due to the name of Mrs Wyatt's street being changed by the council. A spokesman apologised to Mrs Wyatt and reassured her the matter had now been resolved.

Jackie Oldham

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Switchover help scheme

IN OUR LAST issue we featured the digital TV switchover – when it is happening and what it will mean for Westcountry viewers.

This issue we're reminding readers that older and disabled people can now get help to switchover to digital TV next spring with the launch of the Switchover Help Scheme. The Switchover Help Scheme has been set up to help eligible older and disabled people to make the change to digital on one of their TV sets.

You are eligible if you are aged 75 or over, get or could get, Disability Living Allowance, Attendance or Constant Attendance Allowance or Mobility Supplement, or if you are registered blind or partially sighted.

For a one-off payment of £40, you will be offered easy-to-use Freeview equipment to convert one TV set, installation of that equipment, a demonstration of how it works and someone to call for help while you are getting used to it.

Between November and next spring every eligible person in the ITV Westcountry region will get a letter and an application pack from the Switchover Help Scheme. They will receive their pack in plenty of time to get help before switchover.

To make it even easier, eligible people can choose to apply by calling the Help Scheme free on 0800 40 85 902.

News from Torbay

Princess Anne launches yacht for disabled sailors

HRH Princess Anne officially launched a new yacht at Torquay harbourside for the bay's disabled sailors. The event saw months of planning and hard work put in by the Sailability group come to fruition, as the yacht's name 'Freedom' was unveiled by the princess. The vessel has been designed with disabled people's needs in mind.

Falklands hero visits local adventure park

Falklands hero and author Simon Weston visited South Devon adventure park – Woodlands – to launch his latest book 'A Nod from Nelson'. Simon, the well-known personality and former soldier, has undergone many operations since he was badly burned aboard the Sir Galahad during the Falklands conflict. Now a successful author, Simon has written a best selling autobiography as well as several novels.

This is his first children's book, all about a cart horse called Nelson.

Diana Frost

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New helpline for deaf and hard of hearing

AS PART OF the NSPCC's Helpline for adults who are concerned about the welfare of a child or young person, the children's charity has introduced a new service for deaf and hard of hearing adults.

This new service comes at a time of real significance for the NSPCC as it launches its *Child's Voice Appeal* to develop and expand its helpline services. The appeal aims to raise £50 million over the next three years to continue to run and develop the services provided by ChildLine and the NSPCC Helpline for adults.

The NSPCC Helpline is a 24-hour service with the majority of calls coming from adults concerned about the welfare of a child, including concerns about abuse or neglect. Anyone who is deaf or hard of hearing and is worried about a child or needs advice can contact the Helpline through qualified British Sign Language interpreters. The NSPCC BSL Helpline, which is available Monday – Friday between 9am and 5pm, uses video conferencing technology to relay callers' concerns to the practitioners.

Worried adults can call via ISDN videophone on: 020 8463 1148 or online via IP videophone or web cam to: nspcc.signvideo.tv. All calls are confidential, except in a situation where a child is at risk and can be identified.

News from Mid Devon

Duo in national championships

Crediton teenager Rowan Crossman, aged 16, recently represented England at the Four Nations Disabled Badminton Championships in Wales. Rowan was joined by fellow Devonian David Follet, aged 19, from Exeter. Rowan also hopes to qualify as a level one wheelchair badminton coach in the near future.

Appeal for help in Crediton

Kevin Yarnley, manager of Crediton and District Community Transport, is urgently appealing for more voluntary drivers to keep the community buses on the road. This transport for elderly, frail and disabled people has been a life-line for fifteen years – without it, many would be totally isolated. If you can help, please contact Kevin Yarnley on 01363 773303 or call in to the office at The Old Surgery, 55 High Street, Crediton.

Cullompton rider tipped for 2012 Paralympics

Sixteen-year-old Althea Bleekman is being sponsored in her attempt to compete in the 2012 Paralympic Games in London. Her backers are Stephens Scown, a westcountry law firm. Althea recently left Uffculme School, and won a place on the Great Britain eventing team after coming second at the British Pony Three Day Eventing Championship at Chepstow earlier this year.

And finally...

Mid Devon District Council would be interested to know if

anyone has had any problems finding out who to talk to about access problems. Contact Jill Haines on 01884 233561.

Patricia Clow

patricia.devonlink@yahoo.com

News from Exeter

Singing for the brain

Since October 2006, Jean Usher has been running a singing group for people with Alzheimer's in Exeter. Jean has found that people who may not be able to remember what day it is or what they had for lunch, can remember songs and lyrics. For more information, call 07717 292817 or email exeter@alzheimers.org.uk

Tom in training for Tapei

Exeter University student Tom Staniford has been selected to take part in the Deaflympics in Taipei in 2009. Tom, who cycles every day for up to four hours, will compete in the 1km sprint and 50km points race on track and the 100km road race and 35km time trial. Anyone willing to support Tom or the Deaf Olympic Squad can email him at deaf.cycling@hotmail.co.uk

Jackie Oldham

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News from East Devon

Obi takes title

Hearing Dog Obi – who is a canine member of Sound Out, Honiton's Hearing Support Group – has been named hearing dog of the month by Favour magazine, the Hearing Dogs for Deaf People publication. His 'partner' Dot Piper is justly proud of her companion, who has proved his worth many times. For details about Hearing Dogs for Deaf People ring 01844 348 100 (voice & minicom), fax 01844 348 101, email info@hearingdogs.org or write to: The Grange, Wycombe Road, Saunderton, Buckinghamshire HP27 9NS

East Devon farm

Stallcombe House is 'a home, a farm and a place of work' to the people with learning difficulties who live there, who also have sensory and physical disabilities. They recently had an open day and a small animal corner was opened called Hero's corner. There is also a 42 acre farm, five acre organic garden and orchard, as well as a craft workshop. There are also computer facilities available and opportunities for residents to take part in day placements. If you would like to help support Stallcombe House you can ring 01395 232373, fax 01395 233351 or email stalfarm@eclipse.co.uk

Patricia Clow

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News from South Hams

Villages In Action – theatre in your village

Villages in Action (VIA) is a scheme supported by six councils which brings live entertainment to smaller communities across Devon. Many villages across the South Hams take part in the scheme and there is almost sure to be something taking place near you. You can obtain a copy of the VIA programme by contacting Roger Werner on 01363 773660. There is no need to worry whether the hall will be accessible or if there are accessible toilets or a hearing loop, these details are given in the booklet.

Carers' counselling service

Caring for an elderly or disabled relative can often be an extremely lonely and difficult experience. South Devon Carers Consortium is launching a new counselling service for carers which will be free and take place in a private, confidential setting. If it is felt that you would benefit from counselling you will receive as many sessions as you need. Call the Carers Support Line on Freephone 0808 801 0878 to access this service.

Beautiful and accessible places

This summer when the rain eventually stopped I tried out my new mobility scooter and visited some lovely places in the South Hams. The Avon Dam near South Brent is well worth a visit. There is an accessible toilet at the start, and the road (no cars allowed so quite safe), bordered by spectacular moorland, follows the Avon to the foot of the dam. The coastal tarmac path to Start lighthouse was a revelation to

me providing lovely views of Start Bay.

There isn't a toilet here and the climb is fairly steep in places so may not be possible all the way for smaller scooters and wheelchairs. More information about accessible walks in Devon can be found at www.devon.gov.uk/easily_accessible_paths.

I do realise that not everybody is lucky enough to have their own transport to get to such places. In the last issue of Devon Link a reader from Paignton wrote to our letters page about this. I'd like to suggest contacting Torbay Ring & Ride on 01803 201000 about their day trips.

Pat Mayston

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DCAB needs your help!

DEVON COUNTY Association for the Blind (DCAB) is in the process of setting up a new pilot voluntary visiting scheme in Mid Devon and Torbay. The charity needs volunteers to help provide confidential support to visually impaired people in their homes. It could mean reading post, going out for coffee or a walk, or just having a chat. Training is provided and reasonable expenses are covered. CRB checks are required. For more information ring Lynne on 01884 266658 or Cherrie on 01803 203791.

News from Teignbridge

Energy savers

Teignbridge residents who are in receipt of council tax or housing benefit can now get free energy saving equipment. Teignbridge council has partnered with E.ON, one of the UK's leading power suppliers, to give away energy saving bulbs and computer 'PowerDowns'. Visit the council office at Forde House in Newton Abbot to collect these goodies.

Kay's cakes worthy of award

Kay Summers from Dawlish was awarded silver in the 'Taste of the West' awards for her gluten-free and wheat-free cakes. Kay's Cakes are available at farmers markets and also on sale at local outlets such as Darts Farm near Topsham. Contact Kay on 01626 864709.

Diana Frost

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Experience action and fun for £99!

IN THE LAST issue we featured the fantastic activities and facilities on offer at Calvert Trust Exmoor activity centre in North Devon.

With Christmas on the horizon, why not treat that special someone, or yourself, to an activity weekend – Calvert Trust

Exmoor is currently offering all-inclusive activity breaks for just £99 per person next spring.

The centre offers a host of challenging outdoor activities for people with disabilities – climbing, abseiling, sailing, canoeing, kayaking, hand crank cycling, archery or high ropes courses. Highly qualified staff ensure that everyone has a great time.

All accommodation, meals and activities are included, as well as use of the pool, jacuzzi and steam room. Calvert Trust Exmoor has a range of equipment such as hoists, electric beds and shower chairs to make your stay even more comfortable. There's never been a better time to book an accessible activity weekend! For more information, please call Lisa Young on 01598 763221.

News from West Devon

Tavistock library pilots new audio books

Tavistock Library will be the first library in Devon to pilot a new form of audiobook which should improve services for visually impaired customers. The audiobooks will be formatted on MP3-format CDs, which are able to carry far more information, and are lighter and smaller than a normal CD. Most books will easily fit onto one CD. They can be played on ordinary CD players, computers, MP3 players and on some car stereo systems. Visually impaired clients do not have to pay to borrow the discs. After feedback from Tavistock library it is hoped that these audiobook discs will be available across the county. For more information ring

Tavistock library on 01822 612218.

Success for West Devon Paralympians

Well done to Louise Watkin, Claire Cashmore and Lauren Steadman – swimmers from Kelly College in Tavistock – who all competed in the Paralympics in Beijing. Louise won a silver medal in the 100m freestyle as well as three bronzes and Claire won bronze in the 100m breaststroke.

Access improvements in Tavistock

Tavistock Access Group, who work with local businesses to help them make their buildings more accessible, are due to publish their latest Access Guide for 2008. Buildings with improved access include Boots in Duke Street, now fully accessible with automatic doors and a ramp, and the British Legion building with a new lift to the first floor function room. Another important building – The Bedford Hotel – will soon be accessible, with plans to install an external lift. Contact Angela Bradford at Tavistock Access Group on 01822 613540.

Pat Mayston

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St Loye's has moved!

ST LOYE'S Foundation has completed the relocation of its headquarters operation to Brittany House in New North Road, Exeter.

The move follows the sale of the charity's Topsham Road campus and is part of an overall restructuring of the training and job placement services they provide.

The re-structuring entails a more client-focused training service. Chief Executive Christopher Knee said: "This new operational structure makes St Loye's a more flexible and dynamic organisation. This means we can fulfil our training remit across the country. Through our person centred approach, we offer a range of internal and external training programmes, support services, personal development and nationwide employment opportunities."

Most of the in-house training courses, which can be on a residential or non-residential basis, will now take place at the new city centre facility, although the Land Based Skills course will now take place at West Hill Garden Centre. The highly successful 'Meet St Loye's' events will be held at a new location in the city centre.

To find out more about St Loye's, please visit www.stloyes.org.uk or call us on 01392 255428.

Caring for Devon's carers

Early morning starts are fairly typical for the county's 72,000 informal carers...

CHRISTOPHER JONES' day usually starts at 5.30am. He spends an hour at the gym, then is back home for 7.30 to wake, shower and dress his wife.

Christopher, who lives in Exeter, has been caring for his wife for 18 years – she has MS and had gradually needed more and more care as her disease has progressed. Her husband is her full-time carer, and over the years they have used the services offered to carers by Devon County Council to help make their lives easier.

"When I started caring for Pat, I didn't have anything or know anything," said Christopher. "Then Pat's Occupational Therapist (OT) told us about the Devon Carers Link – which can put you in touch with other carers and services in your area.

"At the beginning, I needed contact with other carers more than ever – and just to chat with others not only helped me feel more in control, but also meant that I heard about all of the other services that were available to us.

Now, we also have a wet room in the house which is easier to use than a shower. The OT arranged that, and someone also keeps Pat company for three hours a week – which is arranged through the Take a Break voucher service – while

I get time to take my elderly sister and neighbours out shopping.

“It’s hard work but caring for Pat is just the natural thing for both of us – we’re happiest when we’re with each other.” That’s a sentiment which other carers often echo. Elaine Jenkins from Buckfastleigh took early retirement to care for her elderly mother who is deaf and partially sighted.

Although her mum has caring professionals in the house morning and evening to deal with the ‘practical’ aspects of her care, Elaine sees the care she gives as the kind of care which only a close family member could provide.

“Although anyone could take mum out or keep her company – which is essentially what I do – mum and I have a lot in common and we’re comfortable with each other,” said Elaine. “For example, she trusts me to deal with her personal affairs, and I know what makes mum laugh. It’s an easy relationship which would take years to build with a stranger.”

Elaine, who is also disabled, needs time to herself too, and she has made good use of the Flexible Breaks Grant available from the Council. Carers can apply for money, once a year, to spend on an interest of their own. Elaine – who has a love of jazz music – chose to spend last year’s grant on a trip to Teignmouth Jazz Festival with friends. This year she is hoping for a short break – maybe with her mum too.

For the past few years, Allen Lewis, a carer from Tavistock, has used his grant to help fund a family holiday to Sandy Bay in Exmouth. By the time it comes around every year,

it's a holiday that's sorely needed by all the family – seven-year-old son Paul is severely autistic and everyone pitches in (including Paul's two older brothers) to care for him.

Allen – who used to be a mounted policeman – now spends lots of his time with his son in his specially-designed sensory room, giving him the play therapy he needs. He also spends a lot of time promoting Upsides for Autism, a charity which organises fundraising horse racing events.

He has taken on the role of main carer for Paul with gusto. "I make use of everything which is on offer to me," said Allen. "When Paul was first diagnosed with Autism the Council put me in touch with Parent Carers Voice – a group of parent carers who get together for mutual support.

"Through Parent Carers Voice I learnt about how to save on bills, apply for Flexible Breaks Grants and also about everything that's available for Paul's brothers – such as trips away – because they care for Paul too. Other parents have really inspired me."

"Anyone could be a carer – there isn't one kind of person who fulfils a caring role", said Councillor Sally Morgan, Devon County Council's carers' lead. "There are carers who are still children who look after their parents, working carers, carers who have been in a caring role for years, and those who are new to caring.

"The only thing in common for all of these informal carers is that they may not recognise themselves as carers because they are caring for someone they love – whether it's a family

member or friend.

“In Devon it is estimated that 14,000 people provide over 50 hours of care per week, saving the local economy £1.1 billion per year.

“We want to make sure that as many carers as possible are getting all the help from us that they are entitled to, so we have launched a new campaign – telling people that ‘Devon Cares’ – to encourage carers to get in touch.”

Article reproduced courtesy of Devontalk magazine

For more information about the services Devon County Council offers to carers visit www.devon.gov.uk/devoncares or call 0845 155 1016 (Textphone 0845 155 1020)

Services for carers

Devon Carers Link

All carers can join the Devon Carers’ Link for free. As well as everything listed below, one of the most valuable services the Link offers is the chance to meet other carers and have a say in the services that Devon County Council provides.

Breaks

There are many different breaks on offer to suit all kinds of carers and cared-for people, such as sitting services in the person’s own home, or an escorting service to take a cared-for person out.

Take a Break sitting service

A flexible voucher-based sitting service which allows a carer to use vouchers to pay. The carer needs to contribute a small amount per hour and the rest is paid in vouchers.

Flexible Breaks Grant

A Flexible Breaks Grant helps carers towards the cost of a break or leisure activity, with or without the person they care for.

Carer Alert Card

A Carer Alert Card is one way to let people know that you have someone at home who relies on you – should anything unexpected happen.

Other services

One-to-one advice and support, information services, outings, pampering days and general community services.

Jackie's Trumper challenge

In August, Devon Link correspondent Jackie Oldham and seven other Disabled Ramblers on Trumper scooters set off on a 30-mile, three-day expedition across the vast terrain of the Imber Firing Range on Salisbury Plain. Here Jackie gives us her account of the expedition...

Day 1**When the fighter planes flew over**

Eventually I arrived at Knook Military Camp, near Heytesbury on Salisbury Plain. I'd managed to get lost on the way (even with a road map), but I wasn't quite last to arrive. There were eight disabled ramblers in total, some who I'd met before and others I hadn't.

They included Audrey, who has Multiple Sclerosis, with her carer. Julie, journalist for the magazine *Able*, who was born with spina bifida. David with polio in his leg. Two of us who had had strokes – Carolyn (accompanied by her husband) and myself.

We were introduced to the camp team, including various volunteers, the catering team, and Pat – our 'chief' who would oversee everything. After lunch we were briefed by Robin, our chairman and group leader. We were also joined by Richard, who is (wait for it!) Head of Access and Recreation at the Defence Estates Environmental Support Team, Land Warfare Centre (which basically means he is in overall charge of civilian access to Ministry of Defence land). We set off to darkening clouds followed by intense sunshine. Just as we seemed to be in the middle of nowhere – down came the rain. Which soon turned into hailstones. Unfortunately my waterproof trousers were safely stashed behind me in my Trumper bag! Thanks to the hailstones, by the time I had pulled them on, I was soddened!

All day we could see helicopters and fighter planes in the sky. Our Trampers managed much of the terrain with ease – going

through puddles, some up to six inches deep.

Those first few hours weren't without drama however. Robin managed to get himself stuck in the middle of a quagmire and had to be pulled out by another Trampler!

After covering 10 miles through the elements we finally arrived at our camp for the night. Hungry and tired, we sat down for a much deserved supper. I couldn't wait to climb into bed.

Day 2

Exposure to the elements

After a sleepless night, I got up at about 6am, feeling rather cold and damp! During the night, our camp generator had run out of petrol. Our cook had gone to get some more, but the lack of generator also meant that our Trampers still needed to be charged – a noisy process.

You could say I wasn't exactly prepared for a camping expedition, having brought with me some white crockery – not exactly unbreakable! Please bear in mind that the last time I camped was as a 15-year-old girl guide and 45 non-camping years had passed!

My next crisis was discovering that the transformer on my Trampler had failed! This is a necessary bit of kit and my only option was to replace it – at a cost of little under £200. However, I was eager to finish the expedition, so there was no choice in my eyes. Luckily a supplier in Salisbury was contacted and we managed to get it replaced.

The team finally set off at 10.45am. On our way we passed military buildings and dwellings made to look like Afghan houses, which the Army practice their missions on before being deployed for real.

We managed to escape the rain all day, but it began to pelt just as we were in sight of our destination for the night – White Horse Hill.

The shower developed into a storm just as the camp team were in the middle of putting our tents up. The wind blew and blew all of the night. I prayed that my tent wasn't blown away, with me inside!

It wasn't just dampness I had to contend with – everything was wet before I even got into bed. I put on my soddened trousers and anorak and eventually fell asleep...

Despite the overnight conditions, I didn't mind about the camping. I'd been so pleased to be given the chance to take part in the expedition full stop – after all 'tramping', not 'camping', is my thing!

Day 3

No going back!

After being woken early to the sound of the generator, we got on our way again. One of the first challenges was to go down a very steep hill. Robin psyched us up but I was a tiny bit worried. First, Robin went down on his Trumper. Back came the message that it was too steep for us, which I was glad about! Robin had gone down with speed and taken off

Feature

on the long wet grass – he later described it as being like an out-of-control skier. Thankfully he remembered to steer in a straight line!

Our second challenge came later that day. The track ahead looked only just wide enough for the Trampers. On the right side, there was a steep drop. On the left – thistles and nettles. There was no going back! I was all ready to leap down to the left side, into the thistles and nettles, rather than roll down the slope, should my Trampler misbehave! One by one, each Trampler was secured by rope and helped over the edge until we reached safety (or a level piece of ground at least!) Pushing on to our final destination, we all felt incredibly pleased with ourselves for overcoming the challenge. You could say our our celebration dinner that evening was a slightly muted affair, because everyone was so very, very tired.

On our return home...

We were all very proud to accomplish our expedition, categorised by the Disabled Ramblers as 'grade four' – the official description being 'only for the users of heavy-duty buggies, prepared to try routes that may be impassable. Participation in rambles of this nature will be on an invitation only basis'.

As far as the camping is concerned, the less said the better!

Jackie Oldham – September '08

The Disabled Ramblers are a group of like-minded disabled people who enjoy the countryside. Members use a wide

variety of mobility aids, ranging from electrically powered pavement buggies, scooters, powerchairs and, in some cases, manually propelled wheelchairs. The group organise rambles of varying difficulty from 'easy' to 'challenging' all over England and Wales. Membership (£12 per year) is open to anyone with an interest in access to the countryside for those with disabilities. For more information visit www.disabledramblers.co.uk

Revisiting Employment and Support Allowance

In the last Devon Link, we introduced Employment and Support Allowance. In this issue, Disability Information Adviser Sue Longworth, explains ESA assessments in more depth and looks at how benefits are affected when you return to work.

THIS TIME we will concentrate on the assessments which determine eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), as well as exemptions, the work-focused health-related assessments and the effect on benefits when returning to work.

The main phase

During this phase, claimants are paid a basic allowance of £60.50 per week plus either the support component (£29.00 per week) or the work-related component (£24.00 per week). The contributory allowance amount is payable just for the

claimant as there are no dependant additions and is based on the current levels of contributory Jobseekers Allowance (JSA). During the assessment phase, it will also be age related like JSA, however in the main phase everyone will have a basic ESA amount of £60.50 (2008/09 rates)

The income-related allowance amount is similar to the calculation of Income Support. Premiums are payable from the first day of assessment for income-related ESA.

Work capability assessment

This takes place during the thirteen 13 week assessment phase and assesses three main things:

- Limited capability for work (in general).
- Whether the person is allocated to the support group or the work-related activity group.
- What work-focused health related support is needed to support a person allocated to the work-related activity group.

A claimant person will be defined as having limited capability for work if:

- their capability for work is limited by a physical and/or mental condition and
- the limitation is such that it is not reasonable to require him or her to work.

The assessment itself is a series of activities each with a choice of different 'descriptors' (statements describing the claimant's ability in certain activities) that carry different points. To qualify for the support component, the person

needs to obtain a total score of at least 15 points.

The new assessment is similar to the old Personal Capability assessment but with there are important differences. It covers both physical and mental ill health with claimants having to score at least 15 points in order to qualify for ESA. A select group of claimants, such as those who are terminally ill, some pregnant women where there is serious risk to mother and/or child and those receiving treatment such as chemotherapy will be exempt from this test.

At the end of the assessment, the claimant will have been assessed as being eligible either for the support component or for the work related activity component.

A claimant will automatically receive the support component if they are:

- Terminally ill.
- Receiving or recovering from certain kinds of chemotherapy.
- Have an illness or disability that would be a substantial risk to their mental or physical health if they were found not to have limited capability for work-related activity.
- Pregnant and there is serious risk to the unborn child or mother if she does not refrain from work or work-related activity.

In addition to the above criteria, the regulations define a claimant as having limited capability for work-related activity if the claimant's physical or mental condition means that at least one of the 'descriptors' apply to them. The difference

between this assessment and the other one is that the claimant only needs one descriptor to be in the support group, not a total score of points. The descriptor will need to apply to the claimant for the majority of the time.

Requirements for the work-related activity

The person who is assessed as 'not having limited capability for work-related activity' must, if they are to continue to receive the work-related activity component:

- Take part in one or more work-focused health-related assessments (carried out by a health care professional) and
- Take part in one or more work-focused interviews (assessing the prospect of a claimant being able to remain in work; identifying training opportunities to help the claimant be able to obtain or remain in work; identify work opportunities) and
- Undertake work-related activity if required.

These requirements do not apply to those aged 60 or over.

Work and ESA

The rules on how work will affect an entitlement to ESA are broadly similar to those which apply to Incapacity Benefit. These allow a person to work less than 16 hours a week, on average, for up to a year and earn up to an upper limit (this stands at £92.00 at the moment) without it affecting their entitlement to either contributory or income related ESA.

If you have any questions about ESA or any other benefit queries, please contact the Disability Information Service (see opposite page for contact details).

Training for practitioners and advisers on Employment and Support Allowance is available from Devon Welfare Rights Unit on 01392 274869 or email dwru@citizensadvice.org.uk.

For more information and advice about Employment and Support Allowance, contact:

Disability Information Service

Tel. 0845 155 1005

Textphone: 0845 155 1020

Email: disabilityinfo@devon.gov.uk

If you live in Torbay, contact:

Torbay Disability Information Service

Tel.01803 546474

Textphone: 01803 546497

Email: dis.torbay@nhs.net

New support for carers from St John Ambulance

A new carer support programme from St John Ambulance proves that the organisation has much more to offer than just providing first aid training.

ST JOHN AMBULANCE (SJA) are probably best known throughout the country for their provision of First Aid

training and emergency medical services at a wide range of events. But since the middle of 2007 SJA Devon has been working to establish a Carers Support Programme in the county.

Following in the footsteps of similar programmes already running in four other English counties, Devon has been running successful courses for carers for more than a year now.

“The aim is to provide carers in Devon with the opportunity for education and empowerment to help them in their daily lives,” said Emma Healey, Carers Support Programme Manager for SJA Devon.

“We have been getting fantastic feedback from the 130 carers who have come on the courses so far and are looking forward to offering the opportunity to even more in the year ahead,” explained Emma.

With sessions focussing on basic caring skills, continence issues, safer moving and handling, advice on back care and prevention of injury, falls prevention, basic skills in first aid, stress management and dealing with dementia, the course provides carers with specific skills.

“Equally important for those that have attended has been the chance to meet other people in the same situation and talk about their own experience,” said Emma.

Marian Tewkesbury from Ottery St Mary cares for her husband and attended the SJA Carers’ course in Sidmouth

earlier this year. She said the practical advice and instruction was incredibly useful, but the chance to talk to other carers was priceless.

“No-one understands the position we are in as well as another carer,” she said. “I always looked forward to the SJA days in Sidmouth because they made me feel so much more part of the caring community.

“I now know a group of 12 people who are in the same position as me, who understand the pressures and go through the same difficulties day after day. It is good to feel I am not alone in this.”

Emma Healey explained that courses were already scheduled across Devon in the year ahead and were open to any adult carers looking after an adult relative, friend or neighbour. “We have been really thrilled by the response to the courses so far, with so many people reacting positively to the training and the chance to make local friends and learn from each other,” said Emma.

Comments so far have included: “A very enjoyable course, a breath of fresh air”; “A truly excellent course with plenty of time for discussions and questions”, “It made me feel valued as a carer”, and “Fantastic to meet others in a similar position”.

Carer case study

Kaye, a carer, attended the SJA Carer Support Programme course in Exeter in March of this year.

"I thought it was a brilliant course. I found out lots of new information and loved meeting the other carers on the course. It was great to have time to talk and exchange experiences," said Kaye.

"During the session on safer moving and handling it dawned on me how wrong I had been doing things. It was great to learn how to look after your back, and to see equipment that can help at home," she explained.

"I now have a handling belt and other moving equipment at home – thankfully my neck and shoulder pains are much better as a result.

"The First Aid session was also excellent – I feel much more confident should I need to put my new skills into action," said Kaye.

Find out more

If you would like to find out more about the St John Ambulance Carers Support Programme and the courses available in your area, contact Emma Healey at SJA Devon on 01392 822646, or email emma.healey@devon.sja.org.uk

Now you can send your letters free!

Just use this address:

Devon Link, Freepost NAT 21298, Exeter, EX2 4BR

or email devonlink@devon.gov.uk

One letter will receive a £25 Marks & Spencer gift card.

The trouble with toilets!

Dear Devon Link

It goes without saying that going on holiday is much less stressful when there are plenty of accessible toilets available. I was on holiday travelling around this summer and found plenty of accessible toilets, however, each one had a different layout. The problem, I found, was that in some cases the loo-roll was rather difficult to reach. In fact a backward flip* was the only way to reach some of them! Now my motto is "reccy before you go". It would perhaps be a good idea if 'planners' followed a standard design...

Lorna, by email

*I didn't do one!

Unfortunately we don't have the power to influence toilet design here at the Devon Link office... However, we can thank you for bringing a smile to our face with a £25 Marks & Spencer gift card!

Artistic ambition

Dear Devon Link,

The article about 'Kaleido – Disability and Deaf Arts' in the last issue of Devon Link [Summer 2008 – page 4] was most helpful to me.

I am registered disabled with CRPS (Complex Regional Pain Syndrome) type 1.

I am a sculptor and artist, hoping to become a professional artist and have my work printed onto greetings cards and 3D effects. I am trying to get some financial help due to my disability.

Although I don't have a landline or a computer at the moment, I'm hoping that if you pass this letter on to Kaleido for me, they may be able to send me further information by post.

I would also like to thank all the staff at Devon Link for your help, in helping me to break free from all the obstacles that a lack of knowledge can prevent us from even starting. This letter is the first key to unlocking my successful destiny.

K H Weston, Barnstaple

Thank-you for your letter, Mr Weston, we have passed your details on to Kaleido as requested. Thank you for your kind words about Devon Link and we wish you well in your future career. Other budding artists can contact Kaleido by post at Kaleido, Bradninch Place, Gandy Street, Exeter, EX4 3LS, by telephone on 01392 219440 or by email at info@kaleidoarts.org

A grand day out

Dear Devon Link,

The Tavistock Physically Challenged Group had a wonderful day at Roadford Lake earlier this year.

This was a pre-booked trip with The Wheelyboat Trust. The back of the accessible 'wheelyboat' opens up to allow wheelchairs to drive straight on, which are then securely fastened in. The skipper was an excellent speaker and it was a relaxing and informative trip. Three hours on the water with a picnic was just the ticket! It was great value (about £7 each depending on how many people book). I can certainly recommend it.

Lesley Friend, Tavistock Physically Challenged Group

For more information about The Wheelyboat Trust and their wheelchair accessible boats contact the South West co-ordinator on 01822 615953. Alternatively visit the charity's website at www.wheelyboats.org

***Link* Letters**

Get in touch with Devon Link!

Remember this page isn't just for letters.

We welcome funny stories, poems, recipe ideas, handy hints and tips... and letters too of course! You could even win a £25 Marks & Spencer gift card – so get writing!

Information

i Local information services

Devon's Disability Information Service provides information and impartial advice for people with disabilities, their carers and their families. Open from 8am-8pm Monday to Friday, 9am - 1pm Saturdays.

Tel. 0845 1551 005. Email: disabilityinfo@devon.gov.uk

Minicom: 0845 1551 020. SMS: 07773 333231.

The Torbay Disability Information Service welcomes enquiries by telephone, fax, minicom, by post or in person. Open Monday to Thursday from 9am - 4.30pm and Fridays from 9am - 1pm. Based at The Chadwell Annexe, Torquay Road, Preston, Paignton TQ3 2DW. Tel. 01803 546474

Textphone: 01803 546497 Fax: 01803 546498

Email: dis.torbay@nhs.net

DISCplus provides information for the parents and carers of children with special needs.

Tel. 0800 056 3666 Email: discplus@devon.gov.uk

www.devon.gov.uk/discplus

i Local groups

East Devon Special Needs Action Group is a free information service for people with physical and sensory disabilities, carers and professionals. Information includes education,

Information

employment, support groups, charities, benefits, recreation, access, transport and mobility. Contact the group, by writing to: SNAG, Senphy Centre, St Michaels, Orchard Way, Honiton EX14 8HH

Living Options Devon Outreach Project runs disability forums for people with physical or sensory disabilities. Regular meetings are held across Devon, and are a way for people to comment on the services they use and become actively involved in improving those services. Representatives from the forums have access to service providers and pass on views from members. Service providers are also invited to our meetings occasionally to hear feedback and take questions. All meetings are held in accessible venues and communication support is provided to ensure that everyone can participate fully. Travel costs are also paid. For more information contact Living Options Devon, Isca House, Haven Road, Exeter, EX2 8DS Tel. 01392 459222. Fax: 01392 423427. Email: info@livingoptions.org

The Deaf Equal Action Forum (DEAF) is a group of people who have similar experiences and understand each other. It's where Deaf people can share their experiences and support each other. It looks at the barriers that Deaf people face and thinks about how Deaf people could better access services. It's also a place to meet service providers face to face and improve services together. The group is part of the Deaf community. How can DEAF work for you? Can you understand your Doctor? Are you unhappy in the cinema or theatre because there are no interpreters or subtitles? Have you had problems with the Police, hospital, education, transport, events or anything else because of communication

or other issues? If so, join us! Contact Living Options Devon,
Isca House, Haven Road, Exeter EX2 8DS
Fax: 01392 01392 423427, SMS: 07958 517919
e-mail: info@livingoptions.org

For 23 years Tavistock Area Support Services has reached out to older people living in rural isolation within Tavistock and the outlying area. The charity operate nine outreach centre's (Lifton, Mary Tavy, Horrbridge, Bere Ferrers, Bere Alston, Yelverton, Princetown, Buckland Monachorum and Milton Abbot) each offering a variety of support as well as a lunch where local people can come together share concerns, play games, have a laugh and a joke and support each other. Each centre is run by a volunteer helper and during the year they also go on trips. The charity also has a centre in Tavistock, where a variety of in house activities are run – Music and Movement, Line Dancing, Art & Computer Group, Socials, Table Tennis, as well as working with The Stroke Association, Parkinson and Blind Group, Hear me Now, Memory Café, Senior Council etc. Over 140 volunteers make all this work – through driving, supporting social centre's, working in our charity shop, fundraising, helping with administration etc. To find out on how you could help or how the charity could help you, contact Andy Lyle on 01822 616958 or visit our website www.tasstavistock.org.uk

Devon Ileostomy Association covers Devon and South Somerset and offers support to anyone with a stoma or about to undergo surgery for a stoma - ileostomy, colostomy, urostomy. For more information contact Margaret Bond (Secretary) on 01392 447374 or email Bomarg10@aol.com

Information

Sound Out – the East Devon support group for people with hearing impairment and their partners – get together at Dunning Court, Dowell Street, Honiton on Wednesday mornings from 10am - 12pm. Facilities include disabled access and a loop system. Tea and coffee is available. Car parking is available nearby in the municipal car park (currently 85p per hour). For more information contact Pat or Chris on 01404 54938 and leave a message, or email cy.clow@virgin.net or text 07702 504701.

Former pupils of the West of England School for the Partially Sighted, who went to either St David's Hill or Topsham Road sites may be interested to know that there is an association for former pupils and staff. For more information please contact the secretary, Mr A Potter on 01380 730616 or 07709 604103.

Ilfracombe Access Group is a voluntary group working to improve access for residents and visitors alike. The group has published the first edition of the Ilfracombe Access Guide, which details allsorts of useful information about access in the town, including accommodation, shopping, places to eat and other visitor attractions. There is also a very useful 'gradient map' which details the gradient of roads and walkways in the town. For copies of the guide please contact Mr Eric Hayes on 01271 864446 or email eric.hayes@tesco.net

Employment

Disability Employment Advisers and Incapacity Benefit Specialists offer assistance for disabled people looking for, or

seeking to maintain, employment. Devon's contacts are:

Exeter	01392 473929
Plymouth	01752 616154
North Devon	01271 392115
South Devon: Torquay	01803 356065
Paignton	01803 354239
Newton Abbot	01626 236327

For Access to Work assistance in your employment (equipment, help with taxi fares and other support) contact Colin Reeves on 01803 356947. For Pension enquiries contact the Pensions Service for Devon, Tel. 0845 6060265.

Pluss provides employment, training and equipment services for people with disabilities and long term health issues. We do this by offering disabled people a range of training and recruitment services, and through direct employment in our own manufacturing and mobility equipment businesses. Our employment services include training, personal development, work experience, job-matching, job-search, in-work support and rehabilitation. Our equipment services offer a one stop shop including assessment, purchase, hire, servicing and aftercare of disability equipment by fully trained staff, many of whom have a disability themselves. Pluss is the largest provider of disability service with 26 sites across South West England. We have been in business for over 35 years and are owned by Devon County, Plymouth City, Torbay and Somerset County Councils. To find out more about your local service, please call us on 0800 91 777 92, email pluss@pluss.org.uk or visit www.pluss.org.uk

i Taxi Services

Go Cabs taxi service, based in Torbay, offer taxis with disabled access and space for other passengers to travel at the same time. Drivers are CRB checked.

Tel. 01803 606060. Website: www.gocabs.net

Exe Access a specialist taxi service for people with mobility issues is now operational in Exeter. Part of Exeter Community Transport Association – supporting independent mobility. Tel. 01392 253004

Yelverton Cars private hire taxi service. 6 and 7 seater vehicles with wheelchair access. Available for airports, stations, weddings, local and long distance.

Tel. 01822 616695 or mobile: 07970 052668.

33 Oak Road, Bishopsmead, Tavistock.

Email: eric.pinch@btinternet.com

i Other services

Haven Advocacy assists and empowers individuals with physical and / or sensory disabilities, or older people experiencing general frailty to express what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests and to access services, in order to lead full and independent lives. Haven Advocacy is a professional advocacy service, providing one-to-one support to address health, social care and accommodation issues according to an individual's wishes and instructions. They can assist people with letter writing/

phone calls, gathering information to enable informed choices, attending and supporting individuals at meetings and by signposting individuals to other services. Contact Haven Advocacy via Living Options Devon at Isca House, Haven Road, Exeter EX2 8DS.

Tel. 01392 459222 / 456524. Fax: 01392 423427.

Email: advocate@livingoptions.org

The Devon Sensory Bus is a free, confidential and impartial service for people with hearing and/or visual impairment. The specially converted and equipped bus visits towns and villages in West Devon and Torridge on a regular timetable. The bus has been adapted to include special listening devices, lighting and colour contrast. Families, friends and professionals are also welcome to use the unit. Trained staff who understand the effects of hearing and sight loss provide support and advice. A comprehensive range of equipment – to help with everyday difficulties such as hearing the doorbell, telephone and TV, or with reading newspapers and books – is available for demonstration, trial and loan. Advice is offered on coping with problems associated with sensory loss.

To find out more ring 01392 383730 or email sensory@devon.gov.uk. Timetables are available online from devon.gov.uk/sensory-bus-timetables

Pharmacy to your phone – New NHS text service. Text 64746 followed by the service you require (eg. chemist or GP) and info about the nearest will be sent to your mobile with map/ tel no.

i Events

The Independent Living Centre (ILC) in Exeter run free weekly open mornings covering a variety of topics, from mobility equipment to adapted vehicles. Pop in on Wednesdays between 10am - 1pm. There is ample parking and level access, and tea, coffee and biccies are provided! For more information about upcoming events contact the Independent Living Centre: Isca House, Haven Road, Exeter EX2 8DS
Tel. 01392 687276 Fax: 01392 423427
Give us a ring if you need directions.

Parkinson's Disease Society – Teignbridge Support Group. Meetings are held at the Langstone Cliff Hotel, Dawlish Warren on the second Tuesday of each month at 10.30am. For more information or if you need help with transport please contact Chairman Mike Simmons or Treasurer Sheila Simmons on 01626 888791, or Secretary Jenny Breeze on 01626 200656.

i Leisure and relaxation

Pamper weekends are now available at Calvert Trust Exmoor. How would you like a weekend of rest and relaxation with the only hard bit being the decision between a swim and a massage? That's exactly what Calvert Trust Exmoor is offering guests in their pampering weekends. Ordinarily pushing our visitors through their paces on the climbing wall and reservoir, we've decided to add breaks of therapeutic relaxation. During the day guests can enjoy massage, reiki, aromatherapy, hairdressing, manicures and reflexology.

Alternatively they can relax in the pool, unwind in the jacuzzi or deep cleanse in the steam room. Both the pool and jacuzzi have hoists and the steam room as an accessible doorway. On the Saturday evening a 'Body Shop' party allows guests to try out new potions and lotions. The weekend is topped off with a celebratory party on the Sunday night to show off new hair, nails or makeup! Calvert accommodation is totally accessible and equipment such as electric beds and hoists is also available. Set on the stunning Wistlandpound Reservoir – the perfect setting for a relaxing break. For details contact Lisa Young on 01598 763221 or visit www.calvert-trust.org.uk

Affordable Complementary Therapies for carers – if you are a carer registered with Teignbridge Carers Link, you can now receive a range of complementary therapies for only £20 per one hour session. South Devon Carers Consortium and Westbank League of Friends have just funded the creation of the Teignbridge Therapist Link for Carers (TLC) which puts you in contact with therapists offering carers reduced rates for therapies such as: osteopathy, acupuncture, massage, reflexology and homeopathy. Look online at teignbridgetlc.org or email teignbridgetlc@googlemail.com

Accessible boating holidays on the glorious Kennet & Avon Canal. A canal boat holiday allows you to relax and let the cares of the world drift away as England's loveliest scenery slips by. The specially designed and adapted '72 Club' boat is operated on behalf of Queen Elizabeth's Foundation by the Reading Marine Company – providing fully accessible holidays along the beautiful Kennet & Avon Canal. The 55ft long, 12.5ft wide boat has enough space for up to three wheelchairs to manoeuvre easily below deck. For more information call the Reading Marine Company on 0118 971 3666 or visit online at readingmarine.co.uk

Classified Advertisements

Aids & Equipment

Aquatec Bath Lift Top condition. Comfortable seat. Height adjustment. Anti slip block. Only £70.

Tel. 01626 352269.

Premier Bath Easy walk-in bath Pink. Door opening inward. Hydrotherapy, with heater. In new condition. Length 50" Height 40". Cost £4,600, will accept £2,000 or very near offer. Tel. 01803 213472.

Apollo Bath and seat with electric hoist. Cost £3,000 will accept £200 ono. Hardly used. Tel. 01409 253474.

Wheelchairs & Scooters

4 wheeled mobility scooter Pride Legend Classic. 5 years old but very little used and kept indoors. £350.

Tel. 01626 890966.

Otto-Bock electric wheelchair Very good condition, apart from slight damage on armrests. Adjustable seat with safety belt. Max speed 6mph, range approx 20km. Weighs 66kg. Can be dismantled easily to fit into most cars. Little used. £350 ono. Tel. 01752 894279.

4 wheeled Rascal 3888XL mobility scooter 2 yrs old. 6mph 20 mile range. Disassembles. Excellent condition, kept inside.

Waterproof covers etc. £700 ono. Tel. 01237 476087.
Hand propelled folding wheelchair £100 ono.
Tel. 01237 476087.

Sunrise manual wheelchair 18". Hardly used. £50.
Tel. 01409 253474.

Holidays

Accessible Holiday home in Woolacombe, N Devon
Attractive site. Ramp accessible. Full use of facilities including
indoor swimming pool and licensed club house. Sleeps four.
Grab rails. Wheel-in shower.
Contact Ilfracombe & District Lions. Tel. 01271 883677.
Email: ray@everest21.orangehome.co.uk

Vehicles

Fiat Punto T reg, 34,000 miles. Good order. Lady owner.
Complete deal with Aquasoothe scooter and fitted electric
hoist. MOT March 2009. £3,500 ono. Tel 01626 362858.

Mercedes Vito 113 petrol June 2001, 61,000 miles. Automatic
with push/pull and controls, front swivel seats and rear
folding seats. Remote Ricon lift on rear doors. MOT July 2009.
£5,500 ono. Tel 01395 223272.

To put a classified advert in Devon Link, send your advert of no more than 40 words to the Devon Link address on the back page, with a cheque for £5.88, payable to Devon County Council. Please note that the cut-off date for the next issue is Friday 13 March and the magazine will be published mid April 2009.

Living Options Devon exists to ensure people with physical and/or sensory disabilities, and Deaf people with sign language can make an active and equal contribution in society.

Living Options Devon

Isca House, Haven Road, Exeter EX2 8DS

Tel: 01392 459222 Fax: 01392 423427

SMS: 07958 517919

info@livingoptions.org

www.livingoptions.org

Contact our correspondents

Our correspondents are waiting to hear from you – email them or phone Devon Link on 01392 382332, or write to the usual address on the back page.

Teignbridge & Torbay – Diana Frost

diana.devonlink@btinternet.com

North Devon & Exeter – Jackie Oldham

jackie.devonlink@btinternet.com

South & West Devon – Pat Mayston

devonlink@mayston.eclipse.co.uk

Mid & East Devon – Patricia Clow

patricia.devonlink@yahoo.com

About *Devon Link*

Devon Link is published by Devon County Council Adult & Community Services Directorate and Torbay Council Social Services, working with Living Options Devon. The contents of the magazine are determined by the editor and an independent team of correspondents (as well as consultation with readers) to ensure the independence of the magazine.

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