

bulletin



march 2009

Homecare charging begins to bite Peter Gay, Direct Payments Support Service Manager



We reported in the last edition of the Bulletin that HAFAC, a group of local disabled residents, had failed in their legal challenge to prevent the council from introducing

charging. The council started to charge for homecare services from January 2009.

Hundreds of people are now being told by the council to pay for their help from community services. This charge is commonly £30-35 a week – a lot of money to anyone. But it can be hundreds of pounds a week.

At HAFAD we have now had over 90 people contact us to ask for help about this issue. Some people are confused about the forms, some people feel threatened by the demands to return forms within a week - all are worried about their ability to pay a charge and angry that they are being asked to pay in the first place.

What help does HAFAD offer?

HAFAD can help you to complete your forms and give you advice and information about what you might be

asked to pay by the council and how you can reduce this amount. We can do this by giving you advice on the phone or making an appointment to meet with you.



We strongly advise everyone to ask the council for a **'Disability Related Expenditure Assessment'**.

This takes account of all the money that you spend on things because of your impairment – things that anyone who is not disabled would not have to pay for.

It can help reduce the amount you have to pay or even mean you pay nothing.

How can I get help?

Contact HAFAD on:

tel. 020 7471 8510

email info@hafad.org.uk

Individual Budgets are coming to town — Sunil Peck (Disability Now); nb (RADAR)

Recently the Government has been piloting 'Individual Budgets' in a small way. This scheme has finished and a report has been produced which indicates that disabled people prefer the independence they gain by using individual budgets to choose and pay for their own support.



The Department of Health-funded report looked at the 13 local authorities that piloted the scheme, in which disabled people were given a pot of money to spend on services such as equipment, access to work and housing adaptations.

Mental health service-users on individual budgets were able to access more appropriate services, leading to a better quality of life, said the report. Younger disabled people were more likely to report a better quality of care, and were more satisfied with the support available to them and the choice and control they experienced. They also felt that individual budgets enabled them to build better support networks. People with learning difficulties felt that individual budgets gave them more control over their daily lives.

But the report found that older people did not find the system as easy to use as the other groups, and did not appear to like the idea of managing their own support.

Sue Bott, director of the National Centre for Independent Living, said the results of the report were "no surprise" and said the report builds on previous research which

showed that direct payments work best where people receive support from user-led organisations. And she said that it would be wrong to conclude that individual budgets are not appropriate for older disabled people, who she said would benefit from more information and support. Leading on from the report about the initial pilot scheme in December last year Rt Hon James Purnell MP Secretary of State for the Work and Pensions announced that the government will legislate for disabled people to have the right to control the support services they receive from the state.

This would involve disabled people being told how much they are eligible to receive in support and empowered to choose how that money is used to achieve outcomes agreed with the State. A range of central and local government funding streams will be included in this system which builds on the success of the individual budgets pilots.

The right to control will not go nationwide until the new system has been piloted (or trailblazed) to use the latest jargon in 2010 to iron out teething problems. Although no expansion in eligibility from different services is envisaged this is a major



milestone in the campaign for rights to independent living. On March 12th the Disability Forum is hosting an afternoon event at Bishop Creighton House to introduce Individual

Budgets and what it will mean for us. This will be a very useful meeting as Hammersmith and Fulham Council are keen to promote the idea of Individual Budgets to all service users so the sooner we get to know about it the better.

Disability Forum News

**Zubee Kibria—Disability Forum
Co-ordinator**



Welcome to the Disability Forum section of the bulletin.

Coffee mornings at HAFAD

The Disability Forum had their first joint coffee morning with HAFAD in December last year. It was a way for our members to get together and find out what social event/activities they would be interested in.

Here are a few of the ideas that members suggested, IT classes, exercise classes and knitting classes. Members said that they enjoyed the coffee morning and would like us to run it once a month. Since then, HAFAD have managed to get some funding to start running IT classes.

HAFAD and the Disability Forum recently had another successful coffee morning with the help of Karen Linne from Mencap who did some gentle chair exercises, which members found useful followed by a talk from Patrick Denny about the new Advocacy Service at HAFAD and dates for the Expert Patients Programme.

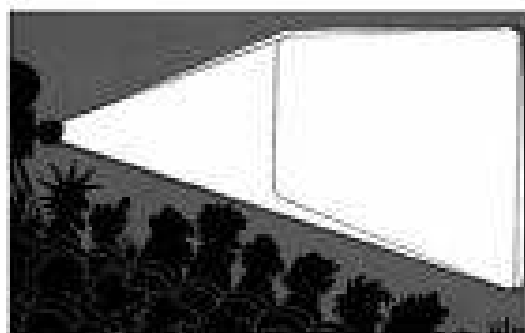
Disability Forum meetings

As a trial we have done 3 meetings in the morning to see how members feel with the change of time and we have also tried out different venues. We recently had a morning meeting on Health and Social Care at the White City Community Centre. We had a good turn out of members on the day.

As part of my outreach work to get more members to join the forum I visited the

Nubian Life Centre with John Sessahai, member of the Disability Forum, to tell their members about this meeting and encourage members to attend.

Movie Evenings



The Disability Forum used to run movie evenings at HAFAD as part of a social get together with HAFAD and Disability Forum members. I would like to know how many members would be interested in this if we were to run it again.

Please contact me on 020 8753 5034 or e-mail me at Zubee.Kibria@lbhf.gov.uk

Disability Forum meeting dates for your diary:

Health and Social Care

Thursday 12th March 2009
2.30pm until 5.00pm at the White City Community Centre in the main hall

Transport Group (Crossrail)

Tuesday 17 March 2009
6.00pm 7.30pm at HAFAD

Housing

Thursday 16 April 2009
10.30am – 12.30pm (venue tbc)

Transport Group

Tuesday 28 April 2009
6pm – 7.30pm at HAFAD

Tube Maps to assist disabled passengers Yourable.com



Two new London Underground maps have been produced to help disabled, pregnant and elderly passengers.

The Tube Toilet map shows which stations have accessible loos for wheelchair users, and whether they have baby changing facilities.

The Step-Free Tube Guide includes information about the stations where you can change between lines without encountering steps or escalators. The new map also gives the information on the gap between the train and platform. There are different symbols to show stations which are step-free when changing between lines, but where it is not possible to get in or out of the station without using stairs or an escalator.

At present London Underground has 54 step-free stations and 25% of stations will be step-free by 2010

'Green' light bulb fears rejected Yourable.com

The government has rejected claims that partially-sighted people will suffer when new low energy light bulbs are introduced across the UK.



Lord Hunt said the government was talking to the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) about brighter alternatives, such as "halogen lookalike lamps", and he said the quality and technology of low energy bulbs had improved.

The RNIB is concerned about the move to low energy bulbs, and recommends not replacing hallway and stair lights with new energy efficient bulbs, but suggests a tungsten halogen bulb instead, and advises people to look for bulbs recommended by the Energy Saving Trust for the rest of the house.

Audio books to benefit from a reduction of VAT Yourable.com

A proposal announced in July 2008 would allow European Member States to apply reduced VAT rates to audio books. The Royal National Institute of blind people (RNIB) enthusiastically welcomed the announcement and is calling on the UK Government to back this proposal. There are two million people in the UK with sight loss, and many others with a print reading disability, who cannot read standard print. For many of these people audio books provide the only access to reading.



An audio book listener said. "This is brilliant news. I love audio books and wish I could afford to buy more, but they are so much more expensive than print books. It can't be fair that there's VAT on audio books but not on print books. There shouldn't be a tax on anyone for reading"

What do you make of Westfield? The Editor



So
Westfield
has
opened!
I wonder
what
everyone

has made of it. I have trekked up to Shepherd's Bush twice now and neither visit was particularly successful.

True it is a very glamorous shopping centre with a large array of shops to buy things, restaurants to eat things and soon there will be a 14 screen cinema to look at things as well. Maybe it's my age but I found the site far too big. I use a wheelchair and on my first visit. I started by the Central Line tube station – you know, the one that was supposed to have lifts but doesn't – and wheeled up Eat Street to the main shopping area but there was so much to take in that I couldn't work out exactly where I was.

My companion asked where the concierge desk was located as it wasn't immediately evident and we were pointed in the direction of 'Café Concerto'. Easy mistake to make I suppose if you were after a cup of coffee!

At first glance it would appear that there are no accessible toilets on site anywhere. But this is a trick. In the interests of 'inclusivity' Westfield has done away with the accessible toilet sign that you see all over the country and assumed that you will know that there are accessible toilets where there are toilets. Silly me! Why didn't I think of that? The toilets when you find them, though, are spectacular. Large, comfortable and well colour contrasted.

Getting out of the shopping centre proved complicated as nowhere on the information fins could you see 'Way Out' indicated. Twice, as I was looking at the information, people came up and asked if I had any idea how to get out.

On my second visit I decided to use Shopmobility. I entered by the Northern bus station entrance and then it was a case of Hunt the Shopmobility Centre. It couldn't have been further from the drop off point if it tried.

The service at the centre is good, although I would have preferred to have had the choice of an electric wheelchair and not just a one-size-fits-all buggy. The buggy is fine for getting around the main concourse of the centre but proves too big for some shops, impossible to use lifts between floors in some of the shops and, if you want to sit and have a cup of coffee or a meal with a friend, difficult to make yourself comfortable in the space provided.

One good thing about Shopmobility is the fact that taxis arrive and leave from there. One bad thing about Shopmobility is that if you arrive by large Community Transport or Dial-a-Ride bus then there is a long walk to get to Shopmobility. If you book in advance though I was assured that the staff would come to your drop off point with the mobility aid you requested. After my second visit I took a taxi home and I haven't been back yet.

The Disability Forum will be hosting a meeting in the spring with some managers from Westfield to discuss our comments but at the Bulletin and on the Access2Info website we would like to hear what you have to say.



Beware blue badge vigilantes! Hammersmith and Fulham Press Office

Disabled drivers are being warned that some disgruntled people are taking the law into their own hands to stop them from parking on the streets.

The council has been made aware of several instances where disabled motorists have returned to their vehicles to find a notice slapped on the window. The notice says that they are suspected of misusing their disabled blue badge and illegally carries the council's logo.

Cllr Nick Botterill, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, said "We strongly condemn this vigilante-style approach to possible misuse of blue badges which could cause distress to genuinely disabled people. We will be working with the police to track down whoever is putting these notices on cars."

If one of these notices is placed on your car, or if you know who is issuing them please call 020 7371 5678.



Editorial Note: There will be a meeting of the Disability Forum soon on the topic of Blue Badges. Look out for the date!

Can a car be too quiet? Patrick Barkham - Guardian website

The noise of an electric vehicle used to be unmistakable - a loud whining crescendo followed the clank of milk bottles. Now, however,



virtually silent mass—produced electric cars will soon be creeping down our streets.

They eradicate noise pollution, and air pollution, but raise a new problem - for pedestrians, cyclists, and particularly for the blind and partially sighted.

Road safety groups are worried about children and cyclists, who are dependent on listening when changing lanes. Organisations for blind people are also concerned. "We're not saying we shouldn't have electric vehicles, but we need to consider the safety implications for partially sighted people and other vulnerable pedestrians," says Clive Wood of Guide Dogs for the Blind. "It would be better to do this now, rather than wait until we have a high number of quiet vehicles on the street."

A University of California study found that a petrol/diesel car could be heard 36ft (11metres) away, but a similar electric car was not heard until it was 11ft from blind-folded volunteers. Going at 30mph with only 11ft to stop is a real danger the study found. Clive Wood wants the Department for [Transport](#) to investigate the issue and establish a set of minimum requirements for vehicle noise in the UK.

Dial-a-Ride causes a few problems! The Editor

Recently there was an article on the internet about Dial-a-Ride. I quote some of it:

“Dial-a-Ride provides a door-to-door service but many users say they have difficulties contacting the provider. One London Assembly member has received more than 60 complaints”.

At a recent coffee morning several HAFAD and Disability Forum members got together and the subject of Dial-a-Ride came up. Some of the problems that members identified were:

- Drivers not knowing the roads or the quickest way;
- Drivers not turning up;
- Only being able to get a journey one way and not being able to get back;
- The office takes too long to answer the phone;
- Times the users told on the telephone do not match what is on the driver's card. This means drivers are turning up really late.

There were some good points though:

- Nice and helpful drivers
- Help with shopping
- Buses are good
- It is a free service

One of the main problems in the past 18 months or so has been the change over to a new computer system for the booking process which has taken a long time to settle.

Mike Weston, from Transport for London, said, after initial software problems they were now starting to see significant improvements. He said users make 1.2 million trips each year, on 350 minibuses and this year there have been 40,000 more people carried by the service than last year. Since the beginning of this year the service has been provided free.

I have been attending a Dial-a-Ride user panel meetings over the last few years and when I first attended the meetings there were 4 a year to address people's complaints and issues.

This was reduced to 3 a year and at the most recent meeting in February we were informed that the meetings were now 2 a year and we could not bring our complaints to the meetings anymore. Meetings in the future were only for Dial-a-Ride to consult us on issues that they wished to raise.

If people have any complaints or concerns we are to contact the Customer Liaison Unit on telephone 020 7027 5823; Fax 020 7027 5919 or by e-mail DAR@tfl.gov.uk.

There have been so many complaints and concerns about the service recently that the London Assembly and the Mayor have called a public meeting at City Hall on March 10th.



There will be a report from that meeting in a later Bulletin.

In the mean time if you have any complaints about Dial-a-Ride do let us know at HAFAD how you get on.

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installed

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£1000

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Fancy a cup of coffee and a chat?

Coffee Morning

Friday 27th February and Friday
27th March 2009

From 11.30am – 12:30pm

Join us at HAFAD for our friendly
and accessible coffee morning.

- Gentle exercise
- A friendly chat
- Useful information
- Lively
discussions and
much more.



Call **Mark** on
020 7471 8514.

Computer News

**Want to use a computer
and the Internet, but not
sure how?**

Sign up to our **free** IT skills course at
HAFAD, specifically for **disabled
people**.



We can:

- Teach you the basics of using a
computer and the Internet in a
welcoming, supportive and
accessible environment.
- Teach you how to overcome the
barriers of using a computer

Sign up today!!

Contact **Mark** on
0207 471 8514

Disclaimer: the Bulletin provides an opportunity to exchange ideas and information.

The views expressed do not necessarily reflect policy.

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