



## Welfare Reform - Be Prepared and Know your Rights

ICOD and Inclusion Scotland recently held an event on the 2nd of December to mark International Disabled Persons Day, helping to inform local disabled people of the changes the UK coalition government are making to the benefits system.

The government is currently implementing the most radical changes to the benefits system since those introduced after the second world war. These will have a major negative impact on the most disadvantaged members of society, including Disabled people.

For members unable to attend on the day below are the main details of the reform:

### **Incapacity Benefit/ Employment Support Allowance**

Changes are already underway to Incapacity Benefit, with people being

re-assessed for the new Employment Support Allowance (ESA) benefit. Assessments are being carried out by a private company called ATOS, with 38% of claimants being found "fully fit for work". Those found "fully fit for work" are then moved onto Jobseekers Allowance, which is paid at a lower rate of £67.50, lessening people's already low incomes. ATOS and the assessment process have come under a great deal of criticism from disability organisations, MPs and others. Of those who appeal decisions by ATOS, 40% have their benefits re-instated, indicating that the assessment process is deeply flawed.

### **Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payment**

The Government are also proposing to change the Disability Living Allowance

(DLA) benefit, which will become a Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The changes are designed to save 20% of the DLA budget, with a loss of £268 Million pounds for disabled people in Scotland alone. 1 in 3 disabled people in Scotland would need to lose their DLA completely to reach this target. The new PIP benefit will not have an equivalent of the Lower Rate Care of DLA, which is currently claimed by 1130 disabled people in Inverclyde alone. These changes will be implemented in 2013/14, and current claimants between 16 and 65 will be re-assessed using a similar process to that for the new Employment Support Allowance.

**We have included a useful guide on pages 3-6 of this Linkability informing you what to do if called for a medical assessment, and how you can help ICOD and Inclusion Scotland campaign against these cuts.**

# ICOD working to improve public transport



ICOD have been recently working with McGill's Bus services to raise awareness of the various types of mobility equipment that are able to access buses in the McGill's fleet and helped them produce a information guide for drivers. We have also discussed the accessibility of their buses on their services to Largs/Dunoon and Glasgow. Not all buses on these routes (X7, 901, 906 and 908) are accessible, however they are working towards becoming fully compliant

well before the legal deadline of 2015. McGill's have advised that customers can contact them on the day of travel to find out which departures will be accessible that day by calling **0800 515253**.

Anyone experiencing accessibility problems with McGill's services can contact ICOD and we will be happy to take the issue up with them.

## *Parklea Christmas Products on display*

Parklea Branching Out has a selection of seasonal arrangements and other items including Holly Wreaths, hanging baskets and bedding plants available for sale. Their Christmas display is on show from the 1st of December, and the project can be visited at Parklea Playing Fields, Greenock Road, Port Glasgow, PA 14 6TR. You can also contact them by phone on **01475 744516** or take a look at their website [www.parkleaassociation.org.uk](http://www.parkleaassociation.org.uk)

## ***Don't get Scammed!***

The festive season is a favourite time for scammers and fraudsters to operate, so be aware of the following scams that have come to ICOD's attention.

### **Fake Debt Calls**

Someone may call you saying that you owe money to a company (i.e. catalogue, mail order etc) and ask for your bank

details or a payment via debt/credit card. Refuse to give any details, and if you think you may owe the company money, find your last statement or check their website for the correct number to call.

### **Fake Delivery notices**

At this time of year we are often waiting for parcels to be delivered, and sometimes receive "when you were out" cards. Most of these will be genuine, but some fraudsters

distribute fake cards, giving a premium rate number to call to re-arrange delivery (taking a large amount from your phone bill). If you are in any doubt, check with the companies you have purchased things from and ask which delivery company they have used. For more information or to report a fraud contact ActionFraud on **0300 123 2040** or visit their website: [www.actionfraud.org.uk](http://www.actionfraud.org.uk)

## *A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our readers!*



See the back page for Shopmobility Christmas opening hours, useful contact numbers and hints and tips for over the festive season



# Welfare Reform - Get Involved, Get Informed...

Inclusion Scotland are currently running a campaign supported by ICOD asking disabled people to write to their MSPs to tell them how the UK Government's welfare reforms will affect them, and to ask MSPs to ask the UK Westminster Government to reconsider the changes before the Scottish Parliament pass a "legislative consent motion".

It is vitally important that our MSPs understand the effect that the Welfare Reform will have on the disabled people in their communities, as well as the extra pressures they will put on local and Scottish governments.

Overleaf you will find a model letter that you can adapt when writing to your MSPs, and their address details are below:



**Bill Scott of Inclusion Scotland, Jim MacLeod (Chair of ICOD) and Professor Adrian Sinfield (University of Edinburgh) at our recent Welfare Reform Event.**

## **Did you miss the ICOD and Inclusion Scotland Welfare Reform Event?**

If you missed our event on the 2nd of December, we can send you copies of the information pack, and also the presentations from our guest speakers (Professor Adrian Sinfield, University of Edinburgh, Morag Gillespie, Research Fellow with the Poverty Information Unit and Bill Scott, Project Manager with Inclusion Scotland).

Contact the ICOD Offices on tel: 01475 732700, email [enquiries@icod.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@icod.org.uk) or minicom 01475 732995

### **Constituency MSP**

**Duncan McNeil**  
Parliamentary Office  
20 Union Street  
Greenock  
Inverclyde  
PA16 8JL

### **West of Scotland Region MSPs**

**Neil Bibby and Margaret McDougall**  
1st Floor, 4 St Mirren  
Street  
Paisley  
PA1 1UA

### **Jackson Carlaw**

2.10  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

### **Mary Fee**

The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

### **Annabel Goldie**

10 Shuttle Street  
Paisley  
PA1 1YD

### **Stewart Maxwell & Stuart McMillan**

West Scotland SNP Office  
Unit 3003, Mile End Mill  
Abbey Mill Business  
Centre, 12 Seedhill Road  
Paisley, PA1 1JS

*See overleaf for the model letter you can use to write to your MSPs...*

Below is the model letter from Inclusion Scotland to use when writing to your MSP. This is also available electronically from their website: [www.inclusionscotland.org](http://www.inclusionscotland.org)

**If you would like help in drafting your letter you can contact ICOD and we will be happy to help.**

MSP Contact Details

Subject: Welfare Reform Bill

Dear **<MSP NAME>**,

My name is **<INSERT NAME>** and I live in **<INSERT AREA YOU LIVE IN>**. I am writing as one of your constituents to urge you to do everything in your power to make sure that the Welfare Reform Bill does not force disabled people in this area (and across Scotland) into poverty, isolation and despair.

In my opinion, unless the UK Government makes big changes to the Bill, the Scottish Parliament should not pass the Legislative Consent Motion which it will be asked to vote on in the coming weeks. By rejecting the motion you can show that you object to unfair and unjustified cuts and that you are standing up for the interests of disabled people in Scotland.

As you may know, the Welfare Reform Bill will result in a 20% cut to disability benefits. On top of this, all disabled people – including those with permanent and degenerative disabilities – will be forced to go through a stressful and intrusive medical assessment. As a disabled person I am really worried about the impact these changes will have on my life. **<INSERT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DISABILITY AND THE IMPACT THAT A REDUCTION IN YOUR DLA WOULD HAVE ON YOUR LIFE AND/OR HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT GOING THROUGH A MEDICAL ASSESSMENT>**.

The cuts in disability benefits, as well as reform to Housing Benefit and Employment Support Allowance contained in the Welfare Reform Bill will also put massive pressure on Scottish services including Local Authorities, the NHS and Registered Social Landlords. It also comes at a time when massive cuts are being made to services for disabled people and the Independent Living Fund is being withdrawn. All these changes will have a huge impact on disabled people, the economy and Scottish society as a whole.

I would urge you to read the briefing paper produced by Capability and Inclusion Scotland explaining some of the changes that need to be made to the Welfare Reform Bill. This can be found at their websites [www.inclusionscotland.org](http://www.inclusionscotland.org) and [www.capability-scotland.org.uk](http://www.capability-scotland.org.uk). I would urge you to read it and to circulate it to your colleagues at the Scottish Parliament before the vote on passing the Legislative Consent Motion.

Thanks for your time.

Yours Sincerely  
**<INSERT NAME>**

# Called for a Medical Assessment?

## What you should know...

ICOD have prepared the following guide as to what to do if you are called for re-assessment. We would recommend that you seek assistance from a support organisation to help you through the assessment process.

### **When You are called for a Medical Assessment...**

The Medical Services provider will contact you to tell you the date, time and location of your appointment. This will usually be at a medical centre near where you live, however if you will have difficulty getting there you can request a home visit.

It is important to attend the assessment, but if you are unable to attend you should contact the provider and let them know.

**You can have support at the appointment from people who know you well like family or support staff, so take someone with you if you can.**

### **Preparing for the appointment...**

You will be asked for some identification to prove who you are, this can be your Passport, but if you do not have one you need to produce 3 other forms of identification which can include a driving licence, birth certificate or recent bank statements.

You should also bring along any current medication you are on, or a recent printout of your repeat prescription list. Also take along any small aids that you regularly use (i.e. walking stick, hearing aid etc) and make a list of other aids or adaptations you use (i.e. mobility scooter, grabrails, walk in shower). **It is a good idea to list or write down how your condition affects you before the appointment, so that you can fully explain the impact of your disability.**

### **At the Appointment...**

At the appointment you will be asked questions about your medical condition, and you should take along any information in writing you have about your condition, and any letters from doctors or consultants. **If you feel that the questions you are asked do not fully explain your condition and how it affects you, you should make sure the assessor gives you the opportunity to state these.**

They may also do a physical examination. This means checking things to do with your body like your blood pressure, walking or bending and stretching.

### **After the Appointment...**

You will receive a decision letter based on the medical assessment, you can ask the DWP for a copy of the report.

### **If you are not happy with the decision...**

You need to lodge an appeal against the decision within 30 days, this can be done using a GL24 form. **You can get assistance to complete this form from the organisations listed below.** These organisations can also help you list the reasons why you do not agree with the medical report and decision.

**ICOD strongly recommend seeking assistance with your appeal, this will strengthen your chances of winning the appeal.**

### **Attending a Tribunal...**

If you are asked to attend an independent tribunal for your appeal, it is important to be prepared in advance with your reasons you disagree with the decision. You can also take someone along to support you with you to the appeal, this can be a relative or a friend or someone from a support organisation. **Current evidence suggests that taking someone with you can often double your chances of winning your appeal.**

**The re-assessment process is not easy and can be demoralising, however 40% of those who appeal win their case. ICOD and other organisations are available to give you practical and moral support.**

### **Where to get help...**

The following organisations are available locally to help with the re-assessment process:

**Welfare Rights -  
Inverclyde Council**  
Old Municipal Buildings  
Shore Street  
Gourock  
**Telephone:01475  
714461**

**Financial Fitness**  
29 West Stewart Street  
Greenock  
PA15 1SH  
**Telephone:01475  
729239**  
**Email:  
finfitteam@yahoo.co.uk**

**Inverclyde Council on  
Disability**  
10 Clyde Square  
Greenock  
PA15 1NB  
**Telephone: 732700**  
**Email:  
enquiries@icod.org.uk**  
**Minicom: 01475  
732995**

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### **Managing your finances...**

If you require help in managing and dealing with debt or household budgeting you can also get assistance from the Money Matters Team.

They can be contacted using the details below:

**Money Matters  
Inverclyde**  
Newark House  
Scarlow Street  
Port Glasgow  
**tel: 01475 715965**

### **Opening Hours**

**Mon – Thurs 08.45am -  
4.30pm**

**Fri 08.45am - 3.30pm**

# *Shopmobility* **Update**

## **Saturday opening hours**

We have changed our Saturday opening hours to between 10.30am - 2.30pm, please see notice below...

## **Membership fees**

We are now half way through our membership Year (June - May), so new members joining the service will now pay £14 for a membership up to the end of May 2012

## **Radar Keys**

The Radar Key Scheme gives access to nearly 9,000 locked toilets across the UK for those that need to use them for mobility, incontinence or other reasons. ICOD are the only stockists of the keys in Inverclyde, and are available to purchase for £5 by contacting our offices.

## **In the Picture**

ID Photographs are now needed for a number of different things, including Travel Passes and Blue Badges. ICOD can now

take ID photographs for you, with 4 photographs available for £4 at our accessible offices at Clyde Square.

## **A BIG Thank You to our Sponsors..**

We would like to thank the following businesses and organisations who have sponsored our Shopmobility scooter fleet: Tokyo Joes, Greenock Celtic Supporters Club, Duncan MacKenzie Butchers, Therapia, Woolcraft (Gourock) and Cafe Continental.

## **Revised Saturday Opening Hours for Shopmobility**

Please note that from **Saturday 10th December** our Shopmobility Saturday opening hours will be **10.30am - 2.30pm (excluding Christmas eve and Hogmany, see back page for seasonal opening hours)**.

The service remains open 10am -4pm Monday - Friday

## ***Buying a Scooter?***

We often get enquiries from people looking to buy their own mobility scooter, below are ICOD's top tips for a safe purchase.

- There are many companies now selling mobility equipment, ask if they will give you a free home demonstration before you buy.

-Ask how long the warranty is for, what it covers, and what the company will do if the equipment breaks down.

- Make sure the piece of equipment can be easily stored at your home and will get past any doors and pathways.

- If you are on the Higher Rate of Disability Living Allowance, contact the Motability team to see if you can use your benefit to pay for the equipment **0845 456 4566**. They also have a list of approved dealers

- If you are buying second hand, have a test drive and make sure the scooter is working. Scooters that

have not been used for a long period may need new batteries, these can cost between £100-300.

- Consider taking out insurance that will cover you if you have an accident on your scooter and injure yourself or others, ICOD can give you more information on insurance providers.

- If opting to pay for the scooter using finance (i.e. monthly payments), check how much interest is being charged, and that you can afford the payments.

## *Stay Safe over the festive season...*

● Doctor's surgeries and some chemists may be closed for a few days, make sure you have enough medication for the festive period.

● Make sure you keep warm!

● If going away for a few days, make sure your house is secure and keep some heating on to avoid frozen pipes.

● Guard your valuables and keep them out of sight when shopping.

● Don't drink and drive, take a taxi if you are planning to drink.

● Make sure you ask all callers at your door for identification, don't open the door unless you are satisfied they are genuine.

*If you need help, you may find the following numbers useful...*

### Inverclyde Council

Council Emergencies -

**01475 719999**

Social Work - **0800 811**

**505**

### Utility Providers

Gas Emergencies -

**0800 111 999**

Electricity Emergencies -

**0845 2727 999**

Scottish Water

Emergencies - **0845 600**

**8855**

### Housing Providers

River Clyde Homes -

**01475 788887**

Oak Tree Housing - **0845**

**930 3031**

Cloch Housing

Association - **01475**

**783637**

Larkfield Housing - **0800**

**595 595**

### Mental Health - Talk to Someone

Breathing Space - **0800**

**83 85 87**

Samaritans - **08457 90**

**90 90**

### Other Support

NHS 24 - **08454 24 24 24**

Women's Aid - **0800 027**

**1234**

Childline - **0800 11 11**

Greenock Police Station -

**01475 492500**

**Cut out this guide and keep it next to your telephone or somewhere handy**

## **Shopmobility Christmas and New Year Opening Hours**

Shopmobility will be open **10am-4pm Monday-Friday, Saturday 10.30am-2.30pm** apart from the following days:-

Christmas Eve (Sat 24th Dec) **10am-1pm,**

Boxing Day & Tues 27th (Monday 26th & Tuesday 27th Dec) **Closed,**

New Years Eve (Sat 31st Dec) **10am-1pm,**

New Year & Tues 3rd Jan (Monday 2nd & Tuesday 3rd Jan 2012) **Closed**

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