

ICOD are gravely concerned about the proposals by Argyll and Clyde Health Board to downgrade the health services at Inverclyde Royal Hospital, and the proposed closure of Ravenscraig Hospital.

We believe that any consideration of healthcare provision in Inverclyde should not be treated in isolation, and should be encompassed in a wider review of services within the west of Scotland, including Glasgow, Ayrshire and Argyll.

A review of this sort should take into account the geographical spacing of services, and the impact this has not only on patients, but their relatives and carers. The review should take into account how easily these services can be accessed, not only in terms of transport, but also time and financial factors.

Our main concerns regarding the proposals are:

- The proposed downgrading of the A+E Dept. to the minor injuries only service and the impact this will have on journey

# Save our Health Services

*Jessie Duncan, Chairperson of ICOD, airs our concerns*

times to Paisley in the case of emergency situations.

- The increased travel times and associated cost implications for elderly and disabled people (and their carers and relatives) will further affect those already suffering hardship in the many areas of multiple deprivation in Inverclyde.

- Unless realistic and comprehensive plans to increase community health and social services (along with the necessary increased funding commitments) are put in place, the health, welfare and independence of elderly and

disabled people will be adversely affected with the closure of the Ravenscraig Units. These provisions should be put in place before any service closures are made.

- The impact on patient recovery with the anticipated reduction in visiting opportunities.

- The local authority boundary limitations imposed on the Dial-a-Bus service, which can be used for hospital visiting.

- The accessibility of services particularly for elderly and disabled people in the rural areas of the west of Scotland.

## Get Involved!

**Write to Malcolm Chisholm MSP, Minister for Health and Community Care**

ICOD would urge you to write to Malcolm Chisholm, the Scottish Executive Minister for Health and Community Care. We believe the Minister should implement a review of

health services, not just in Inverclyde, but on a broader West of Scotland basis. We believe such a review would help to provide a more balanced and sensible approach to the future of NHS services in the West of Scotland. Issues which should have been addressed long before now.

With this issue of LinkAbility you will find a sample letter to the Minister, you can use this,

or write one of your own. If you wish you can return your letters to our offices and we will present these to the minister in Edinburgh. You can also air your views on-line at the AccessAble InfoClyde discussion boards at:

[www.accessable-infoclyde.org.uk](http://www.accessable-infoclyde.org.uk)



# FOCUS ON HEALTH SERVICES

## *What will we be left with?*

*James Brown, a local community volunteer, shares his views...*

We now have confirmation that IRH is going to close as a hospital in any accepted language. What will we be left with? A glorified health centre desperately trying to support current need, along with the increased demand of supporting those moved into the community after the closure of Ravenscraig? As a person who has been in the Coronary

Care Unit several times, who had a Pacemaker installed by the wonderfully skilled and close-knit team in IRH, I am horrified at this outcome.

Clearly there is a need for a fully functional General Hospital with teaching status returned to Inverclyde.

The great danger is we lose for good some quite outstanding consultants and highly experienced nursing staff. Politicians are now playing games, covering their tails. Where were these people years ago when this slow deliberate policy was first put in place?

We as a Community need to activate our Community Councils as the lead organisation in conjunction with representatives from the Voluntary Sector, in what is now a desperately serious fight. Lose and we have yet another nail in the coffin of Inverclyde, the infrastructure will implode at an unstoppable rate.

For many situations the difference between life and death or debilitating long-term illness is measured in a matter of minutes. We need at this stage a moratorium imposed from Edinburgh on those hell bent on the current path.

## *A view from Bute*

**Elisabeth Johnston from Bute Community Care Association shares her concerns about the new clinical strategy for NHS Argyll and Clyde**



Having read the "Shaping the future - Clinical Strategy for NHS Argyll & Clyde" document through several times, I find myself becoming increasingly concerned at the emphasis on community-based healthcare for several vulnerable groups of people, especially as there does not seem to be a clear statement that the "money will follow these people" into the community.

I can accept that an increasing concentration of acute care in one place, to make the most of all the necessary ancillary departments, which must be on hand for operating theatres to function, is a necessity, to make best use of consultants and staff. We are, after all, already using the specialist

hospitals in Glasgow for cancer patients and those people needing coronary by-pass operations. There are reservations, of course, about transport difficulties for those in the community who use public transport and the capacity of RAH to cope with the increased load on non-medical patient services. In addition, will there be a possible build-up of infections due to the proposed speedy throughput of patients who will return to their local intermediate hospitals before full discharge?

It does seem, however, that NHS Argyll and Clyde are intending to reduce mental health and elderly bed places and move learning disability patients with challenging

behaviours and complex needs into the community "making sure that appropriate services are in place". This can be done – using a fairly long time scale and remembering that these services will have to be in place for someone's lifetime. Can the continuing funding be guaranteed? Can community services/Social Work cope with this additional work? Some of the 24-hour packages required are very expensive. Will the services already operating successfully for many vulnerable people be affected, remembering also the expected rise in the numbers of elderly people?

Although our community joint working between health and social services is developing and is working, can these services, particularly Community Nurses, cope with the additional load? Are there enough agencies to take on some of the work? Have NHS Argyll and Clyde thought this through completely? I wish the document had been more specific in several areas.

# Down the Pan?

**Nell Mcfadden MBE**, Chairperson of Inverclyde Elderly Forum, writes about the closure of public toilets in Inverclyde



As the chairperson of the Inverclyde Elderly Forum, the campaigning group spearheading the 'Save our Loos' Campaign, I feel angry and distressed that this unbelievable situation is still with us here in Inverclyde after all these months.

The distress and anxiety this has caused to young and old alike should never have happened. We are not fighting for just one toilet, because the longer this situation goes on the more we realise we need all our loos re-opened.

We have been inundated with distress stories from people on water pills, people with Crones Disease, mothers with children and others with many kinds of health problems. Taxi drivers, bus drivers, people from cruise liners, older people, disabled people and those of us who don't have the luxury of cars in our everyday lives.

With one hand those in authority are promoting Inverclyde and on the other they are closing very vital services and curtailing our quality of life and dignity. As a Radar Key holder I keep asking, "where are the Radar toilets in Inverclyde?" I am still waiting for an answer.

The Elderly Forum has collected over 6000 signatures from people in and beyond Inverclyde, and the support of, among others, the Greenock Telegraph. We are still awaiting the date for the review of this situation from Inverclyde Council, and urge them to re-open all the loos. The Elderly Forum will be organising another protest to coincide with the date of the review. The Elderly Forum is not party political, and we care about the people of Inverclyde and what is happening here.

## *Accessible Loos - Where and Who's?*

There are still some Accessible Public Toilets open in Inverclyde here is a list of them:

**Inverkip** - at the War Memorial

**Gourock**- Albert Road and Shore Street

**Port Glasgow** - Opposite Coronation Park at the Bus Station

There is also a new toilet

planned at Campbell Street at the Esplanade, and ICOD will keep their members posted on this development.

There are also accessible toilets available for customers use at Greenock Waterfront Leisure complex, Tesco stores at Dalrymple Street and Old Inverkip Road, Safeway store at Dellingburn Street and also in the Oak Mall shopping centre.

## Get InContact

**Incontact** is a national charity for people affected by bladder and bowel problems. They can provide support and information and represent the interests of people with continence problems.

Their vision is a future where incontinence is no longer taboo, where people with bladder and bowel problems have free access to information and support and to the treatments, products and services they need.

A local support group meets on the first Thursday of every month at Room 201 at the James Watt College Waterfront Campus from 7pm. Their next meeting will be on September 2nd.

For more information you can contact Margaret Campbell on **743900**. You can also contact Cathy McKerrell (Project Manager, Scotland) for general information and advice on **0870 770 3248** or see their website at **www.incontact.org**

## **RADAR KEYS**

The RADAR Key scheme is designed to give disabled people access to accessible toilets. The keys ensure that only disabled people with these keys have access to them, helping to keep these toilets more secure and free from vandalism.

The key scheme operates throughout the UK, and keys can be purchased from the ICOD offices at Clyde Square for £5 each.

## **On the Move - Inverclyde Advocacy Service**

Inverclyde Advocacy Project have recently moved to new offices at Grey Place in Greenock, just across the road from Pipers Furniture and Carpet Warehouse.

The new address and contact details for the Advocacy Project are:

**21 Grey Place,  
Greenock,  
PA15 1YF**

**Telephone: 01475  
730797**

**Fax: 01475 727407**

## **Direct Payments-Get Involved!**

*Inverclyde Community Care Forum Consultation Group*

A direct payment is money paid by a local authority directly to a person, who has been assessed as needing care services. This enables the person to purchase their own care services, rather than the services being provided or arranged by the local authority.

Direct Payments can assist individuals to live independently by increasing choice and providing people with more control over their own lives. You can use a Direct payment to purchase care services, childrens services and housing support services.

### **Do YOU receive Community Care Services?**

### **Are YOU interested in Direct Payments?**

Inverclyde Community Care forum is co-ordinating a consultation group on how Direct Payments should be developed in Inverclyde. If you are interested in joining this group please contact Karen or Alice on **01475 728628** or email: **karen@iccf.fsnet.co.uk**



**DDA**

**October 2004**

One place that is prepared is the Housing Offices at Wallace Place in Greenock. After consultation with ICOD, the housing offices were refurbished, and this included many features designed to make the offices more accessible for disabled people.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) service providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to the way they provide their services and as of October 2004, this duty extends to the physical access to these services. Many adjustments cost only a little thought but make a big difference, some examples are:

- Reading out your menu for

## **Are you ready?**

visually impaired customers.

- Purchase of a small portable ramp to provide access.
- Re-arranging your displays to ensure easy circulation for wheelchair users and people with visual impairments.
- When you redecorate your premises, choose colours that contrast well to help visually impaired people navigate your premises.
- If part of your store is inaccessible (eg upstairs), provide a catalogue and bring goods down to your customers to view.

For further information and advice as to how you can meet the needs of your disabled customers you can contact us using the details at the back of our newsletter.

**Oak Mall**  
SHOPPING CENTRE



### **Improving Accessibility**

You may have noticed some changes at the Oak Mall recently, and these have been introduced to improve access for their disabled customers.

More accessible parking spaces have been created in both the car park behind the Central Library and also at Hunters Place. In addition, the bollards surrounding these car parks have been painted to improve colour contrasting for visually impaired people.

Likewise within the mall, all columns have been colour contrasted to aid navigation for visually impaired people. The Mall have also introduced visual alarms for its fire and emergency alerting system for deaf people.

Well done to the Oak Mall for helping to make our town centre more accessible.

# Holiday Spotlight

ICOD Secretary **Jim MacLeod** shares his experiences of his recent holiday in Benidorm



***There is, however, a gradual slope into the pool and so me and my wheelchair both went in for a swim!***

The hotel is situated in the new part of the city, 800m from the beach with bars and restaurants nearby. There is also a company that provides scooters, powerchairs and manual wheelchairs on a hire

basis from 75 Euros per week (with a 75 Euro returnable deposit). There are also several wheelchair accessible taxis available (through Euro Cars) in and around the resort, and these can be easily booked.

A must see for cabaret lovers is a visit to the Benidorm Palace. The cabaret includes a range of performances, from flamenco dancers and acrobats to comedians and a showband. Tickets cost £26 per person, and this not only includes the cabaret show, but a 4-course meal and a range of wine for your party.

If you would like further information about this hotel you can check out the hotelwebsite at [www.hotelmelina.com](http://www.hotelmelina.com)

ICOD Secretary Jim Macleod was recently on holiday with his dad and fiancée Sylvia. Jim, a wheelchair user, stayed at the Melia Benidorm hotel and informs Link-Ability that the hotel is one of only a few in Benidorm that has good wheelchair access.

Jim commented, ***“There are four or five wheelchair accessible rooms with grab rails and wheel –in showers in the bathrooms, generally the hotel is wheelchair accessible. The food is excellent but in self-service style, and the staff are friendly and very helpful. There is also entertainment on each night, along with activities each day. One drawback I found was that there was no chair hoist into the swimming pool.***

## ***Here to Help...***

If you have experienced difficulty in finding a suitable holiday, accommodation or transport, ICOD is here to help. We hold information on a range organisations and

businesses who provide accessible services.

Alternatively, if you have had a holiday experience you have enjoyed and would like to tell our readers about it, don't hesitate to contact us!

## Useful Holiday Information

### Able to go

Able to go is an on-line directory of accessible hotels, motels guest houses, self catering accommodation and more around the UK. The site gives individual premises an accessibility rating and provides detailed information on physical access features. The site also includes details of some accessible holidays abroad.

[www.abletogo.com](http://www.abletogo.com)

### TripScope

Tripscope is a nationwide (UK) travel and transport information service for people with impaired mobility. They offer assistance with information about any aspect of travel. They operate a national helpline:- **08457 58 56 41** or for more information visit their website at:

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

## **Building Societies On-Line - Air Your Views**

Do you manage your building society account on-line, or access their web pages for information? If so, Virtual Surveys are conducting research into the accessibility of such sites, and would value your experiences.

The survey can be found on-line at the address below, and should take 5-10 minutes to complete.

Virtual Surveys are keen to hear from people with sensory impairments (including dyslexia), learning disabilities and people with tremor disorders or similar dexterity problems.

<http://survey.euro.confirmit.com/wix/p0662968.aspx>

# Shopmobility Update

## New Services

Shopmobility can now provide lightweight scooters that dismantle into three parts and are easily transported in cars, buses, trains and boats to enable people to go on day trips and holidays within the U.K. and Channel Islands or just to go about their day-to-day activities. These scooters are a welcome addition to our existing fleet as they can be hired outwith Shopmobility opening hours and will be used to raise funds to help sustain this worthwhile service, the hiring charges are as follows, **£10** per day, **£30** per weekend and **£55** per week.



**Our new lightweight scooters available for hire**



## Our 400th Customer

We are delighted to announce we have now registered our **400<sup>th</sup>** service user, Mrs Ogilvie. We organised a small get-together and presented a gift to Mrs. Ogilvie to mark this momentous occasion (see picture). Please remember its your service so spread the word about Shopmobility and we could shortly be registering our **500<sup>th</sup>** customer.

## Volunteer Party

In June during the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of volunteer's week we hosted a soiree to thank our volunteers who tirelessly donate their time to Inverclyde Council on Disability and

Shopmobility. Our guest of honour was Jessie Duncan Chair of I.C.O.D. who is our longest serving volunteer.

## Thank You!

Recently 2 scooters and 1 powered wheelchair have been donated and we would like to extend our gratitude once again for the generosity shown to Shopmobility and its service users to Mrs McNeil and family, Kincaid and Co. and Brenda Devlin. Thanks also to **Something Different, Marks and Spencer, Safeway** and **Tesco** who supported us in providing our volunteers party.

## Pilot Schemes

Remember! You can access **Port Glasgow** on **Monday** and **Tuesday** from the **Town Hall** and **Gourock** on **Wednesday** and **Thursday** from **St. Ninian's Church Hall** from **10am** until **3pm**, both of which will run until the end of August, just remember to pre-book on **01475 732600**

# Inverclyde Deaf Forum

Inverclyde Deaf Forum is here to serve and represent the deaf and hard of hearing community in Inverclyde. We now have our first office based in Port Glasgow. This gives us

a much needed point of contact.

It is important to us to expand our membership particularly amongst hard of hearing people in Inverclyde. Our community faces many serious challenges, from isolation to poor services which can be

more effectively dealt with by us speaking as one voice.

Please help us develop and let us help tackle the many and varied problems we face by getting involved. You can do this by filling in the form below.

***I would like to learn more about Inverclyde Deaf Forum, Please contact me about future events and how I can get involved...***

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TextPhone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mobile Text Messaging:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please send your form to: IDF, Room 14, Port Glasgow Resource Centre, Block 8 Industrial Estate, Muirshiel Road, Port Glasgow, PA14 5XS

# Your Letters...

**Dear Editor,**

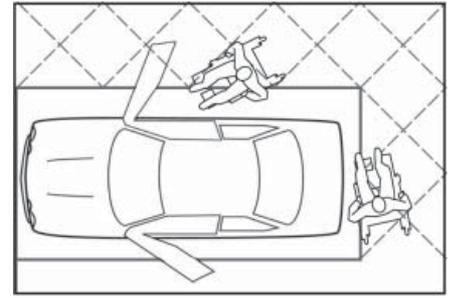
*I am writing this open letter for LinkAbility in continuing frustration at the many thoughtless and mindless drivers who abuse disabled parking bays in Inverclyde and beyond. How often do we, as disabled people, drive into our town centres, retail parks, hospitals, cinemas and health centres looking for disabled parking bays (which are usually located nearest to the entrances to these premises) only to find them being "hogged" by non-disabled people?*

*We have all experienced this problem, caused by selfish and lazy non-disabled people. Over the years I have personally had many arguments with idiots who*

*normally come out with one-liners such as "I did not realise it was a disabled bay" or "I've only stopped for a few minutes as I'm in a hurry". These feeble excuses will not wash!*

*I congratulate local MSP's Bruce McFee and Duncan McNeil for highlighting the issue regarding this type of abuse. It is also encouraging to note that there are moves being suggested to extend "traffic orders" to parking bays at hospitals, shopping stores etc meaning that the "inconsiderates" will be fined in these places too, should a traffic warden or police officer be around to catch them.*

*My own thoughts are rather than*



*fine the "inconsiderates" a paltry £30 (should they be caught), why not hit them with a three-point penalty on their driving licence each time and increase the fine. This would very quickly reduce the problem.*

*Hopefully, politicians reading this will take this suggestion forward and make it legislation.*

**James Macleod**

**Dear Editor,**

*I have just recently moved into my own house, which I have been looking forward to for a long time. However, I am worried about all the stories I have seen in the newspapers about bogus callers. What can I do to keep myself safe?*

**1** - First of all, genuine callers will normally make an appointment first and will carry identification with their photograph on.

**2** - Check to see who it is by using the spy-hole if you have one, or look through a front window.

**3** - Always put the chain on before you open the door. (If you don't have one it's a good idea to get one - they don't cost much). With PVC doors, it can be difficult and costly to fit a door chain. Check with the manufacturer before you buy a PVC door, that a chain will be fitted. **FIRE SAFETY -**

only put on your door chain as you answer the door - don't keep it on all the time as this could delay your exit in case of fire.

**4** - Look at their clothing. Some official callers will have a uniform bearing their organisation's name or symbol.

**5** - If you don't know the caller, ask to see their identity card. Check it carefully, and keep the chain on while you do this. Genuine callers won't mind if you close the door while you do this.

**6** - Some public utility services (e.g. water, electricity and gas) operate a password scheme. See our Useful Numbers section for some of the major suppliers schemes.

**7** - If you are still not sure, ask the caller to come back later. You can then check their story by phoning the organisation or

company they claim to represent. Look up the number in your own telephone directory. Don't rely on the telephone number on their card - it may be the number of their partner!

**8** - Bogus callers sometimes work in pairs. Beware of one distracting you while the other steals your property. The best practice is not to let them in.

**9** - Watch out for anyone who says they are in a hurry. Don't let them pressure you. If in doubt, call a neighbour or friend. **IF YOU HAVE ANY SUSPICIONS AT ALL, DONT LET THEM IN.** If you are still not happy, **PHONE THE POLICE** and tell them what has happened.

*Many thanks to the Community Safety department at Greenock Police Station for providing this information*



**Subtitled and Audio  
Described Cinema  
Screenings**

**Glasgow Film Theatre**

12 Rose Street, Glasgow  
Telephone: 0141 332 8128  
email: [info@gft.org.uk](mailto:info@gft.org.uk)  
[www.gft.org.uk](http://www.gft.org.uk)

**Troy (cert15)**

*(All dates are subtitled and  
audio described)*

Monday 16th August 5.30pm  
Tuesday 17th August 7.30pm  
Wednesday 18th August 1.45pm

**The Ladykillers (2004, cert15)**

*(All dates are subtitled and  
audio described)*

Tuesday 24th August 3pm  
Wednesday 25th August 6.40pm

**I'm not Scared (cert15)**

*(Italian with english subtitles)*  
Sunday 8th August 6.30pm  
Monday 9th August 8.30pm  
Tuesday 10th August 1pm

**Sunrise: A Song of Two**

**Humans (cert U)**

*(A Silent film from 1927)*  
Tuesday 3rd August 2.15pm  
Wednesday 4th August 8.45pm  
Thursday 5th August 6.30pm

The GFT also have other foreign language films with subtitles, more details of these can be found on their website or in their monthly leaflets.

**Events Listings**

**ICOD Events**

Monday 30th August 2004 6.30 - 9.30pm

**ICOD AGM** - This is the Annual General Meeting for ICOD, we report on our activities over the past year and elect our board members. **James Watt College Waterfront Campus**, Nat-Semi Suite.

Tuesday 31st August 2004, 5.30pm

**Scotlands Disabled Curling Champions** are visiting the **Waterfront Leisure Complex** in Greenock and playing a match against local curlers. Spectators welcome!

**Other Events**

**Edinburgh Festival**

*August-September*  
A variety of comedy, music, film and theatre entertainment for all tastes. Access to venues varies, so we recommend checking in advance.  
Telephone: 0131 473 2001  
TextPhone: 0131 473 2098  
email: [eif@eif.co.uk](mailto:eif@eif.co.uk)

**For  
Sale**

From time to time our members contact us with disability/mobility equipment for sale, if you would like us to publicise your equipment please contact us.

**Manual Wheelchair** - Pristine Condition, Swiss-made, small self-propelling wheelchair, cost £1600, will sell for £600 contact Mr. Grant on **01475 792834**

**2 Stairlifts** - One internal, one external (for 12 steps) 5 years old, only used for 2 years. Cost £8000 new, no reasonable offer refused. Contact Robert McShane on **01475 888704**

**Car Hand Controls** - Hand controls for Fiat Punto (automatic, R reg) and Nissan Micra (automatic, 8 yrs old) Cost £300 each, no reasonable offer refused, contact Miss Stewart on **01475 729009**

**Manual Wheelchair** - Self-propelling Quickie model, cost £1400, will sell for £500 ono, contact Magnus Peterson on **01475 726494**

**Useful Numbers - Household Utilities**

Here are the names and contact numbers for some of the main services designed to help disabled and elderly people manage their household utilities.

**Scottish Power** - Carefree Service, telephone - 0845 2 700 700 or textphone - 0800 027 9001.

**British Gas** - Home Energy Care Register, telephone 0845 600 1935 or textphone 0845 600 8500.

**British Telecom** - Age and Disability Action team, telephone 0800 800 150 textphone 18001 0800 0800 150

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**Tel: 01475 732700 TextPhone: 01475 732995 Fax: 01475 791622**

**email: [linkability.icod@ntlbusiness.com](mailto:linkability.icod@ntlbusiness.com)**

Although the Inverclyde Council on Disability makes every effort to ensure that all details within this publication are correct, we can accept no liability for any errors or omissions which may be contained within these pages. If you spot any errors, or would like to contribute to linkability please contact us at the numbers above.

We also supply Linkability in other formats such as audio tape and large print. If you would prefer a copy in a different format or language please contact us.



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and



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