

ICOD - Link-Ability

Inverclyde Council On Disability

Issue 8

July 2000

TALK QUIETLY... BUT CARRY A BIG STICK!!

Disability Rights Commission Opens For Business

April 25th saw the launch of the Disability Rights Commission and marked the achievement of one of the disability movement's main goals.

Establishing a Commission is a demand that has always been partly symbolic – showing that discrimination against us is as important as any other discrimination. The symbol was achieved when the Disability Rights Commission Act was passed, now the DRC needs to show that the substance is there as well

The DRC will be able to enforce the DDA – their goal is of “a society where all disabled people can participate fully as equal citizens”. They will have powers and resources to support some individual disabled people at law and to mount formal investigations into discrimination. There will also be vital work advising the Government on how best to implement the recommendations made by the Disability Rights Task Force in their final Report ‘From Exclusion To Inclusion’ which was published in January 2000,** and

preparing Codes of Practice.

At the same time the Commission will seek to change ‘hearts and minds’. They will provide information and advice both for disabled people and for non-disabled employers, businesses and service providers from four offices in Manchester, Cardiff, London and Edinburgh. Bert Massie, Chair of the Commission also emphasised the importance of the DRC’s educational and conciliation services. “Many disabled people will be watching to see how the DRC resolves the tension between enforcing the law and our cuddlier duties. On the one hand we mustn’t hold back from supporting a case or investigating discrimination, for fear of upsetting someone. At the same time, we have to ensure that we don’t undermine public support for the rights we’re enforcing.”

*(**To find out more details about the recommendations made by the Disability Rights Task Force in their final Report ‘From Exclusion To Inclusion’ - turn to page 2. You can also find out exactly what people are saying about the DRC on the same page).*

Link-Ability Is BACK!!!

Welcome to the eight edition of Link-Ability. Yes it has been some time since our last instalment - November to be precise - and no we haven’t gone to the wall, (at least not yet!), but it has been a very busy time here at the office, dealing with all manner of enquiries, advocating on behalf of disabled people throughout Inverclyde, keeping disability high on the policy making agenda and making sure that your voice is heard on the issues that need raising, both locally and nationally. But we are back (hopefully to our normal quarterly timescale) and to celebrate you will find that this issue is a bumper one - 12 pages - packed with all sorts of information - on new legislation, local services, holidays and much, much, more. One or two things to draw to your attention are, most notably the launch of the Disability Rights Commission which you can read about on this page and on page 2. Also you can find out about the changes in the Concessionary Travel Scheme on page 4, changes which have occurred in the provision of TV licences and of course as the holiday season is well underway, you will find a variety of holiday ideas on pages 6&7. A major issue which has come into the limelight again recently is that of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning and you can read about how this can affect you and your family on page 9. Finally, over the last six months we have had many enquiries about the accessible taxi services operating in Inverclyde - so turn to page 11 for some very important developments in this area! We hope you enjoy this bumper issue - don’t forget all comments and suggestions are welcome - contact details are listed on the back page!

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING ABOUT THE DRC...

“Disabled people will at last have an organisation to fight their corner and begin that long process of changing attitudes.” Margaret Hodge, Minister for Disabled People, in Disability Now Newspaper.

“I’m nobody’s poodle, but it’s not sensible to pitch into fights for no reason. You need to be able to sit round the table and argue things line for line.” Bert Massie, DRC Chair, in Community Care.

“Society does not listen to us. I hope people with Learning Difficulties can trust me to take forward their ideas and complaints to the DRC.” Eve Rank-Petruzzello, Disability Commissioner in DAIL magazine.

“The 25th April is an historic day and the culmination of a long hard struggle by disabled people to have our rights acknowledged and recognised. It is now our job to make it happen, in a way that works for all disabled people and that everyone can understand.” Jane Campbell, Disability Commissioner, in BCODP’s Update newsletter.

“The importance of the arrival of the Commission will only be understood once it is up and running. It will be judged a success or a failure by disabled people in terms of its ability to influence the removal of disabling barriers.” Bob Williams-Findlay, Chair of BCODP, in Update newsletter.

CONTACTING THE DRC

The DRC Helpline:

Tel: 08457 622633

Text: 08457 622644

Fax: 08457 622611

Email: enquiry@drc-gb.org

Web: www.drc-gb.org

By Post at DRC HQ Scotland:

1st Floor, Riverside House

Gorgie Road

Edinburgh EH11 3AF

The head of the DRC for Scotland is Bob Benson, formally the Director of Disability Scotland.

‘FROM EXCLUSION...

Recommendations made to the Disability Rights Commission from the final Report of the Disability Rights Task Force

The New Millennium got off to a good start with the publication of the final Report of the Disability Rights Task Force, ‘From Exclusion To Inclusion’. This brings to an end the work of the Task Force whose job was to look at the full range of issues that affect disabled people’s lives and to advise the Government on what further action it should take to promote comprehensive and enforceable Civil Rights.

The Task Forces’ previous Report in 1998 also led to the creation of the new Disability Rights Commission, which actively commenced work in April.

The lack of an enforcement body, responsible for ensuring compliance with Disability Rights Legislation was, undoubtedly, one of the greatest flaws in the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). However, ‘From Exclusion To Inclusion’ goes beyond looking at rights in the narrow sense, it tackles major gaps in the coverage of the DDA and critically includes education and extensions to transport, employment and public sector leadership in promoting equal opportunities. The Task Force also felt that it was essential that attitudes towards disabled people needed to be changed if any real progress was to be made.

The recommendations contained within the Report will be carried forward by Bob Niven, the recently appointed Chief Executive of the Disability Rights Commission, and fall within five key categories:

MAJOR EXTENSIONS TO THE COVERAGE OF THE DDA

Education

- The exclusion of education from the DDA is unacceptable.
- A strengthened right for parents of children with Statements of Special Educational Needs to a place at a mainstream school.
- Reasonable adjustments made to policies, practices and procedures that place disabled people at a substantial disadvantage to others.
- Increased accessibility to school premises and the curriculum.

- A separate section on Further, Higher, and LEA secured Adult Education should be included in future Civil Rights Legislation. Similar rights should apply to the Youth Service.
 - The legislation should have an associated statutory Code of Practice, explaining the new rights.
- ##### Transport
- The partial exclusion of transport from the DDA provides accessible vehicles but no duty on transport operators to allow disabled people to use them.
 - The exemption for transport operators from the first and October 1999 phases of the DDA access to services duties should be removed in Civil Rights Legislation.
 - An “end date” by which all passenger rail vehicles should comply with Rail Accessibility Regulations should be introduced.

Employment

- The rights of disabled people in employment should not depend on the occupation they have chosen to follow.
- The employment provisions of Civil Rights Legislation should extend to all employers, irrespective of size.
- The exclusion or omission of the Police, Prison and Fire Services, the Armed Forces, Partnerships, Qualifying Bodies and Barristers and Advocates from the DDA employment provisions should be ended, in Civil Rights Legislation.

PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERSHIP IN PROMOTING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Public Sector

- These services have a major impact on all in society, especially the most disadvantaged.
- The Public Sector should have a duty to promote the equalisation of opportunity for disabled people.
- The access to services provisions of Civil Rights Legislation should extend to all functions of Public

TO INCLUSION'

Authorities.

- Local Authorities and registered Social Land Lords should introduce performance indicators locally, including waiting times, for the housing adaptations services provided to disabled people.

Public Life

- Endorsement of the recommendations of the Home Office working party on electoral procedures on access to the electoral process for disabled people.
- Initiatives in the "Speaking up for Justices" Report welcomed.

Local Government, Health & Social Services.

- Local Government should be measured by a specific equality performance indicator in the area of disability.
- Access to Health and Social Services should be based on need alone.
- Department of Health (DoH) should provide a lead in challenging attitudes towards disabled people in Health and Social Services with a lead in discrimination.
- DoH should ensure that all aspects of its quality improvement agenda mainstreams disability rights issues.
- Barriers to the joint working in the provision of services and support for disabled people should be tackled.

REFINEMENTS TO THE DETAIL OF THE DDA

There should be continuity between the DDA and any future legislation in the following areas:

- General approach to the coverage of employment and trade organisations and the employer's duty to make reasonable adjustments.
- The provision of Access to Goods and Services in respect of: the categories of less favourable treatment and types of adjustments; services providers' duties to make reasonable adjustments; the defences for less favourable treatment.
- A landlord should not be allowed

to withhold consent unreasonably from a disabled person seeking to make changes to the physical features of his/her premises, although the landlord should not have to meet the cost.

- The DDA definition should be extended to cover people with HIV from diagnosis and Cancer from when it has significant consequences on people's lives.
- Disability or disability related questions before a job is offered should only be permitted in limited circumstances.
- The separate justification available to service providers for not making a reasonable adjustment should be removed and the factors to be taken into account in assessing reasonableness be expanded to reflect valid justifications.

USE OF NON LEGISLATIVE MEASURES

Many changes can be secured without recourse to legislation; a range of other levers for change should be considered first.

FUTURE WORK

There are number of areas, including Definitions and Goods and Services, which should be kept under review by the DRC.

Link-Ability welcomes the above, the most glaring omissions from the Report is the lack of a recognition of the practical problems faced by disabled people in Goods and Services enforcement. The Task Force also opted for the wholesale retention of the DDA with amendments which are achievable in the short-term, rather than repealing it, as much of the disability movement had initially demanded. Many of the issues identified in the report are without solution with the recommendation that the DRC carry on the process of reviewing the DDA and perhaps recommending more radical proposals. A pragmatic approach to the issues on the whole

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT DEBATES BSL

In December of 1999, Dr Winnie Ewing put forward a motion in the Scottish Parliament for the recognition of British Sign Language (BSL); this was debated on 16 February 2000.

The debate was remarkable in many ways:

1. Approximately two-thirds of MSP's stayed for the debate
2. The time allowed for the debate had to be extended because of the number of MSP's who wished to speak
3. The visitor's gallery was packed largely with deaf people; sign language interpreters were in attendance to relay the proceedings to the visitors
4. For the first time, sign language interpreters were on the floor of the debating chamber
5. Each speaker supported the motion

It was also a significant learning experience for the Parliamentary staff. The visitor centre had installed a minicom to deal with the many calls from deaf people wanting to attend the debate.

Liz Mitchell of the British Deaf Association (BDA) said, "The BDA is delighted that we were able to support this debate and that it was received so enthusiastically by the Parliament. This will open the door for official recognition but there still needs to be legislation to provide more interpreters and for BSL to be taught." (Presently Scotland has 6000 BSL users and only 30 sign language interpreters.)

Link-Ability fully endorses the BDA position and looks forward to the official recognition of BSL in Scotland and throughout the rest of the UK.

For more information about the campaign, contact Liz Mitchell at the British Deaf Association's Scotland Office - 3rd Floor, Princes House, 5 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh EH2 4RG.

LOCAL NEWS

HOW COULD INVERCLYDE BE IMPROVED...

TO MAKE IT A BETTER PLACE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO LIVE?

The Youth Pathfinder Initiative, Youth Strategy Group and Inverclyde Youth Council wanted to hear the views of young people and to involve them in decision making to help them and other agencies plan services. In order to do this they arranged a mini conference for young people entitled 'Talk Back' which was held in Greenock at the James Watt College on 8 March 2000. It allowed the young people who attended to discuss issues such as Drugs, Health, Education, Training & Employment, Housing, Homelessness and Youth Facilities. It also enabled them to take part in a survey to discover their opinions about these issues, and their priorities for improving the area. The significant priorities for improvement were:

Employment & Training

- More long term job opportunities.
- A wider range of jobs (it's either factory or factory).
- Better (good quality) job training/ courses and job information (perhaps a place solely for young people to get advice and

information on all aspects of employment & training).

- More jobs available for 16-18 year olds.

Drugs

- Need for Rehab Centres for drug users. Need to do something about the smack problem.
- Combine initiatives with better drugs education.

Police/Safety

Improve the Police's attitudes towards young people – but young people should also help to improve relationships with the police.

Things to do

Have more/improved facilities (particularly leisure) and make them more affordable (people would not commit so many crimes if they had more to do – keep them off the streets).

Transport

Public transport does not meet young people's needs.

Health

Tackle teenage pregnancy more proactively.

Food inequality

Many young people in Inverclyde cannot afford a healthy diet.

Housing

There is not enough decent housing in Inverclyde - standards are very poor.

Community Issues

Young people should be involved in decision making. Young people are not consulted enough about the issues that affect them and most importantly the local Council is not in touch with young people's needs and requirements.

Allan Gilmour from Inverclyde Youth Council said "This is an important step forward for young people in Inverclyde. In the past young people have been severely sidelined in the consultation and decision making process - we hope that this conference and the subsequent Report will establish a basis from which to work on in the future."

For more detailed information on the Talk Back Conference and the Report which has been produced contact Inverclyde Youth Council at ZODIAC on 01475 787049.

RIVERVIEW ROLLS OUT THE BARRA...

The Riverview Centre was awarded £2,000 to set up a Fruit & Veg Barra by the Local Social Capital Fund recently. It will provide quality and affordable goods in order to promote healthy living within Port Glasgow and beyond. Gordon McCrae – Project Co-ordinator said, "The establishment of a Fruit & Veg Barra will address the problems of food poverty in our area." It is anticipated that the service will start late June early July. Leaflets posters etc. announcing the opening will be available soon.

If you would like further information regarding the Fruit & Veg Barra or any of the Riverview Centres regularly organised activities/classes (such as First Aid, Computing Class, Computing Graphics, Hair Care Class, Stress Management, Aromatherapy/Massage), you can contact them on 01475 746253 or drop in at 3/5 Mansion Avenue Port Glasgow.

STOP PRESS...!

LOOKING FOR... ...A GOOD HOME?

"Almost Brand New" Electric Wheelchair with battery charge & other accesories - permanent availability - looking for a good home! Can you provide one? Interested? For further information contact Alan Burns at Glenburn Resource Centre, Inverkip Road, Greenock. Tel: 01475 637303.

LOCAL NEWS

Q&A

INVERCLYDE YOUTH COUNCIL - WHAT IS IT & HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

Who Are They?

Inverclyde Youth Council is about every young person having the chance to make their opinion heard to the people that make the decisions that affect their lives because too often the voices of young people are ignored – unless it is negative press coverage!

So What Do Inverclyde Youth Council Have To Offer?

Youth Work Services

This is one of the key services which Inverclyde Youth Council provide – issue based groups, drop in facilities, internet access, sports groups, events and residential experiences are some of the things on offer. At the moment Inverclyde Youth Council have groups which meet at Springfield School, Larkfield Youth Café, Greenock High and the Strone/Maukinhill area.

Youth Information Services

Based in the ZODIAC Youth Project in Clyde Square, the youth information team are on hand to deal with any queries or issues you have. They are also available if you need to talk to

someone about anything that is important to you – and if they don't know the answer, guaranteed they will know someone who does! The staff are friendly and the service is entirely confidential. You can also access the Net for a small charge.

Employment & Training Services

The Employment & Training team are on hand to offer informal guidance and advice on all aspects of employment and training matters. If you need a CV or help and advice on which direction to go in, you can drop into any one of the Youth Council's three bases. The Youth Council, in conjunction with James Watt College also provide access to Administration/Mechatronics/Access To Technology, and in conjunction with Inverclyde Employment & Training Initiative, Call Centre Training.

How Do I Become Involved?

To shape the work of the Youth Council, three development groups guide the three services described above. By joining a development group young people can make sure that the services

that the Youth Council provide are in all the right areas and that they are exactly what the young people of that area need and want.

Inverclyde Youth Council Says!

“Without the help and support of young people from across Inverclyde, the Youth Council cannot expand into different areas. The whole Project is run by young people for young people in Inverclyde. We want to expand our services to include services in areas where there are no facilities – but we need the help of young people – we need them to tell us where and what they want.”

For more information contact:

ZODIAC

Clyde Square

Greenock - Tel: 01475 787049

Larkfield Youth Cafe Project

Kylemore Terrace

Greenock - Tel: 01475 795727

Strone/Maukinhill Youth Project

80 Leven Road

Greenock - Tel: 01475 805637

Or at: www.youthcouncil.org.uk

CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL SCHEME CHANGES

From April 2000 Inverclyde Council along with the other local authorities who make up Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority are increasing the Concessionary Fare from 35 pence to 40 pence. There will however be some changes and improvements to the scheme.

The existing restrictions on concessionary fares between 6.00am & 9.00am Monday to Friday for disabled travel cardholders will be removed. This will be of huge benefit to the many disabled cardholders that are required to travel to work, college or Adult

Training Centres before 9.00am. Additionally partially sighted persons will now be included in the blind category of the scheme thus enabling them to become eligible for a Scottish National Blind Persons Travel Card which will qualify them to free travel on rail and bus services.

(Those who hold Companion Cards will still be eligible for their companion to travel at the concessionary rate if they receive the Scottish National Blind Persons Travel Card.)

Current requirements that elderly applicants for concessionary travel must

be in receipt of a State Pension will also be removed.

There is also a welcome expansion to the scheme that will enable disabled and blind children between the ages of 5 & 15 who are resident in the area to be entitled to concessionary travel.

However, there is still a need for a National Concessionary Travel Scheme to regulate the basic price of concessionary fares throughout Scotland, as the present scheme lacks structure and is arbitrary. This would ensure that people are not treated better or worse by the location they live in.



HOLIDAYS



With the holiday season in full swing, Link-Ability continues to look at what's on offer for disabled holidaymakers in the UK and abroad, but please remember that we are not in a position of recommending any of the following holidays and all readers are advised to check beforehand with the relevant agencies.

UK ACCOMMODATION

Holiday Guides

Best Western Hotel Guide 2000 - Disabled facilities: Hotels featuring 'disabled facilities' in their entry have been inspected by the Holiday Care Service and given a 'Tourism for All' status. It is recommended that guests contact the hotel for specific details. For further information contact: Hotel Reservations, UK Hotels: 08457 737373. Overseas Hotels: 0800 393130. Web: <http://www.bestwestern.co.uk>. Email: reservations@bestwestern.co.uk. UK Fax: 01904 695496.

Holiday Care offers a telephone reservation service, available to all disabled people and their Carers throughout the UK. It gives callers access to some of the leading hotel groups in the UK, and hopes eventually to become a 'one-stop shop' for disabled people, meeting all their travel needs from accommodation to transport. For further information contact: 2 Old Bank Chambers, Station Road, Horley, Surrey RH6 9HW. Tel: 01293 774535.

Tripscope: A nationwide telephone service providing free travel and

transport information and advice for disabled and elderly people, and their Carers.

For further information contact: The Courtyard, Evelyn Road, London W4 5JL. Tel: 020 8994 9204.

ACCESSIBLE CRUISES

P&O

P&O provide a variety of accessible cruising holidays aboard their four superliners, Arcadia, Aurora, Oriana & Victoria, to a variety of regions within the Caribbean, Europe, the Baltic and the Fjords. Passengers who have a disability, particularly those of you who have mobility difficulties or are wheelchair users are advised to let the company know when making your booking – this can be done by ticking the relevant boxes on the booking forms. If you are a wheelchair user you must provide your own standard size wheelchair (access is limited for larger wheelchairs) and you must travel with a companion. All four ships have cabins accessible for those who use a standard size wheelchair, while Arcadia, Aurora and Oriana have a number of cabins specially designed for non-ambulant passengers; facilities include wider doorways and ample grab rails. At launch ports the condition of the quayside can often be unsuitable for landing wheelchair passengers but aboard Arcadia, Aurora and Oriana you will be able to be taken ashore in the ship's launches wherever the condition of the quay ashore is suitable and weather conditions permit.

For further information contact: P&O Cruises, 77 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1PP. Reservations Tel: 020 7800 2222. Fax: 020 7831 1410. Web: <http://www.pocruises.com>.

JERSEY

Maison des Landes Hotel, St Ouen, Jersey. All hotel accommodation is en suite. Each bedroom has its own shower and toilet. Hotel consists of two floors; first floor rooms can be reached by a flight of stairs that also has a Stannah Lift. Situated on the ground floor there are also a standard bath, and a Parker bath which has an electric hoist above it for use when required. Also available is a sluice room with a large basin, spin dryer, iron and ironing board.

For further information contact The Manager, Maison des Landes Hotel, St Ouen, Jersey JE3 2AA, Channel Islands. Tel: 01534 481683. Fax: 01534 485327.

ENGLAND

West Sussex

Canute Cottages, Cobnor Farm, Chidham, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 8TE. Tel: 01243 574990. Four cottages around the old farm courtyard are in a quiet setting on the edge of Chichester Harbour, within an area of outstanding natural beauty. The Sussex Downs provides a lovely backdrop. Three of the cottages can accommodate four adults and up to four children. Of these, two are fully accessible for wheelchair users (Granary Cottage and Old Dairy have wheel-in shower with basin and toilet fully fitted). The other two cottages, Viking and Cullimers may also be suitable for visitors with mobility problems and can be entered in a wheelchair. The fourth cottage is for two adults and two children. All are centrally heated for year round use. There is a separate laundry room with



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an area for hanging up wet gear. Please note that the kitchen surfaces are at a standard height in all cottages.

For further information contact: Office: 15 Parkmore Terrace, Brighton BN1 6AL. Tel/Fax: 01243 275440.

Lake District

Lindeth Howe Country House, Lindeth Drive, Longtail Hill, Bowness on Windermere, Cumbria LA23 3JF. New Hotel for the New Millennium. Imagine a house so beautiful that Beatrix Potter of Peter Rabbit Fame bought it and wrote some of her magical stories there amidst its peace and tranquillity with stunning views of Windermere. Each of the bedrooms is beautifully appointed with its own traditional style. Situated on the ground floor are two attractive and spacious rooms for disabled guests both with easy, level access to the lounges, bar and restaurant and leisure areas.

For further information contact: Tel: 015394 45759. Fax: 015394 46368. Email lindeth-howe@lakes-pages.co.uk. Web: <http://www.lakes-pages.co.uk>

SCOTLAND

Inverness

Bramble Cottage, North Kessock, by Inverness. Newly built cottage consisting of spacious lounge with patio doors, fully equipped kitchen and dining area. Two en suite bedrooms, one double and one twin. One level has level access shower suitable to wheelchair use, low-level bathroom switches and the required hand rails. All doorways and halls are suitable to wheelchair use. Comfortable parking next to wheelchair ramp for easy access.

For brochure and further information please contact "Culbin", Drumsmittal, North Kessock, by Inverness IV1 3XF.

Sky

Isle of Sky, Greenbank, Halistra, Waternish. The bungalow is designed for Accessibility Standard, Category 2, awarded by Scottish Tourist Board. Self-catering with a helping hand. Greenbank sleeps 4, both bedrooms ensuite. One bedroom designed for the disabled has a clear turning circle of two metres. The built in wardrobe has a hanging rail of adjustable height. The bed height is 55cms. Three options are available for the step free shower, a wheel-in shower chair, a lift-up seat or a plastic, patio-type chair with arms. A measure of practical help is available for example when shopping or getting meals. The bungalow enjoys oil-fired central heating and in a peaceful unspoilt area, commands a spectacular loch and sea view. No pets accepted.

For further information contact Greenbank, Halistra, Waternish, Isle of Skye IV55 8GL. Tel/Fax: 01470 592369. Email: greenbank@freewire.co.uk

Fort William

The Freedom of the Glen. Family Hotels. The Isle of Glencoe, Hotel and Leisure Centre, Ballachulish, near Fort William. The Lodge on the Loch Hotel, Loch Linnhe.

For further information on the facilities for disabled people within these Hotels contact; The Glen Family of Hotels, Onich, near Fort William. Tel: 1855 821582.

PORTUGAL

Algarve

Carvoeiro – Algarve – Portugal. Spacious, luxury, fully equipped private villa comprising three bedrooms situated in its own gardens with private swimming pool. Air conditioned and purpose built for wheelchair users. All doors are 1m wide, specialist shower/toileting facilities – ideal for families and for those with disabled or elderly travellers. Sleeps 2-8 (plus cot & z-beds).

For further information contact Miss Wells, Ravenscraig, Metsons Lane, Highwood, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 3QZ. Tel: 01277 354313.

Emmets Ville Hotel and Bowling Club, Algarve. Small British owned single storey hotel. Five bedrooms – twin, double and family, designed for disabled guests. En suite bathrooms, T-handrails, space for side transfer to bath and WC. One wheel-in shower room. Swimming pool and hoist. Guests met at Faro Airport, minibus and tail-lift.

For further information contact: UK Office, Gower Attractions Ltd, 28 Ockmill Close, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 1SP. Tel/Fax: 01235 521804.

FLORIDA

Detached villa comprising 3 bedrooms. One bedroom with an ensuite bathroom containing corner bath and separate shower cubicle. The two other bedrooms share the family bathroom with low bath and shower. Sleeps 8. Fully equipped kitchen.

For further information contact: JB Blewitt. 18 Cromwell Way, Farmborough, Hampshire, GU14 8LN. Tel/Fax: 01252 662765 or 0973 269250 (daytime).

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT....?

Shared Care Inverclyde

Carers and Users of Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities have consistently identified Respite Care as a priority.

Over the past few years, Inverclyde Council Social Work Services and more recently the Respite Care Forum, have sought to widen the choice of respite available.

As a result a new 12 month pilot scheme has been launched within Inverclyde called 'Shared Care', which is designed to offer Respite Care/Short Break Service to Adults with Learning Disabilities and their Carers.

Shared Care is a Respite/Short Break Service, provided by local Carers in the Community, designed to give family Carers a break from looking after a relative for a few days. In addition it gives individuals using the service the opportunity to make new friends and

take up interests with local people, who are willing to become involved.

Respite Carers involved in the pilot scheme will be recruited from the local community and will be people who have an interest and commitment in working with people with Learning Disabilities. Carers will be assessed for their suitability, offered training and supported by professional staff.

Maureen Hamill from the Respite Care Forum said "The Service will initially be aimed at Adults with Learning Disabilities and their Carers, but if the scheme is successful then we would hope to be able to extend it to other adults with a variety of disabilities."

For more information on the service or details about how to become involved contact Adrian McBride on 01475 714052 or talk to your own Social worker.

Independent Advice on Special Educational Needs

The Scottish Executive has awarded three years funding to 'Children in Scotland' to offer advice and information to parents (whose child may have or require a Statement of Special Educational Needs), professionals, children or young people, who have queries or concerns relating to Special Educational Needs. The project is called ENQUIRE and is run by trained staff who will be able to;

- Give advice on a telephone help line,
 - Produce publications, including guides for parents & young people,
 - Organise training events in every local authority area,
 - Introduce four pilot mediation projects.
- To learn more about the Project contact Carol Moore on 0131 222 2400. TypeTalk 0800 959598 or Email seninfo@childreninscotland.org.uk.

STOP PRESS...!

1. There is currently a similar service in Inverclyde that is well established, aimed at children with disabilities, which operates from the Barnardo's Project in Port Glasgow. Staff involved have successfully recruited Carers to offer parents of children with disabilities a break from Caring. For further information contact Denise Munro at Barnardos Family Support on 01475 741136.

2. The Community Care Section of Inverclyde Council Social Work Department have produced a Directory of Respite Care/Short Break Services which contains comprehensive information that should prove valuable to Carers in finding out about services and how to access them. The Directory is available from the Council on Disability – our address and telephone number are listed on the back page of this edition of *Link-Ability*.

The ScotRail Travel Guide for Disabled Customers

ScotRail has published a booklet on travel information for disabled customers which contains details on all disabled facilities available at Stations throughout Scotland.

Information included within the booklet relates to the availability at each Station of: platform access, staff

assistance, disabled toilets, induction loops, wheelchair access, ramps, parking, taxis and luggage trolleys.

For further information or to obtain a copy of this booklet telephone 0845 605 7021 during office hours, 8am-10pm (Monday to Saturday) and 8am-3pm (Sunday).

ScotRail Overnight Sleepers

ScotRail have also made their overnight sleeper trains between Scotland and London accessible to wheelchair users as well as introducing its new Turbostar trains on the Edinburgh-Glasgow. These new vehicles comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and have a range of features that make them more accessible to disabled people.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT....?

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

What is Carbon Monoxide?

It is the most common household poison. Carbon Monoxide is a colourless, tasteless, odourless gas produced whenever a fossil fuel is not burned efficiently. (Fossil Fuels include coal, oil, charcoal, wood petrol and natural gas.)

How is it produced?

It can be produced from inadequately maintained or badly fitted domestic heating appliances such as wall heaters, fires and boilers. It cannot escape from your home if the flue or chimney has a blockage. Fossil fuels need a lot of air to fully combust so the ventilation in your home must be adequate for your appliance type.

What can it do to my family?

It is well known that Carbon Monoxide in high concentrations can and will

I have stopped being exposed to Carbon Monoxide?

It does not stay in your system once you have stopped being exposed to it. To ensure that the test is accurate it should be taken within four hours of exposure.

Who is most at risk from exposure to Carbon Monoxide?

At most risk of exposure are those who spend more time indoors, such as young mothers, pensioners, pregnant women and those with respiratory or heart conditions which makes them more dependant on oxygen.

How can I protect my family?

A qualified installer should service all fuel burning appliances every twelve months.

Coal burning appliances and natural gas appliances should have their flues and

in your home will help to reassure you that all is well.

Battery operated versions are fully portable and will allow you to take them on holiday to continue your protection from Carbon Monoxide away from home.

Mains powered versions can also be purchased. It is reassuring to know that you don't have to check that the battery is still functioning.

Spot or patch detectors are also available. These are a chemical dot, which will change colour when Carbon Monoxide is in the air. They do not alarm or tell you what level of Carbon Monoxide you are being exposed to.

Carbon Monoxide is the most common household poison.....It cannot escape from your home if your flue or chimney is blocked.....It kills up to 50 people each year in the UK.....and it can be prevented by taking simple precautions.

cause death! Official figures indicate that over 50 people a year die in the UK from exposure to this dangerous poison within their own home. The symptoms of exposure often mimic many other common ailments, which are easily misdiagnosed by the doctor as flu, headache, fatigue or food poisoning.

What should I look out for?

Throbbing headaches, tiredness, muscle pain, drowsiness, nausea and vomiting. Not all members of the family need to be suffering from the same symptoms, so if you suspect that you may have been exposed ask your GP for an urgent blood test to determine the level in your body.

How long do the symptoms last once

chimneys swept regularly. This will ensure that any blockages are identified. Never use a cooker to heat your kitchen! Unvented appliances such as hobs will give off Carbon Monoxide.

Ensure that the vents in your home are kept clear. Many are wallpapered over – check them now – all fuels need air. Buy a domestic Carbon Monoxide detector or ask the Council or Housing Association to fit one for you. Make sure that it carries the BSI Kitemark.

What kind of detector should I have installed?

The best type of alarm is one that can give you a visible and audible alarm in case of an escape of fumes from your appliance. A digital display of the levels

For further information about Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning contact Mary McGregor at Carbon Monoxide Support (COS) on 01475 794580. Mary is the Link Officer for Scotland for COS which meets twice yearly in Leeds. She offers advice and support to people and families who have been effected by CO poisoning or to those interested in preventative measures.

Mary was herself a victim of CO poisoning in January 1997 when she worked in substandard conditions at the Black Cat Pub in Greenock. The cause of the poison came from a faulty boiler in the cellar and as a result Mary along with her co-worker had to undergo treatment in a decompression tank – the tank which is used to revive divers who have undergone severe oxygen loss while under water.

Orange Badges Going Blue?

Orange badges are gradually to be replaced by blue ones from 1 April in line with the European Union recommendations. For further information on how to apply for an Orange/Blue Badge, contact Glenburn Resource Centre - Tel: 01475 637303.

BUDGET NEWS

While the Budget held welcome news for children and pensioners generally, there was little for disabled people to cheer about. What follows is a summary of the Chancellors' measures, confined mainly to in-work benefits, which will impact on disabled people's income and circumstances.

What's In It?

The Welfare to Work initiative continues with more New Deal proposals.

The Budget flags up plans to extend the New Deal for Disabled People by introducing 'rehabilitation and retention tests' pilots examining different ways to help people move into and remain in work via the New Deal. The Government intends to 'test the effectiveness' of job retention and rehabilitation initiatives via the New Deal. These initiatives are however at an early stage and will be trialed, tested and evaluated before being implemented nationally. More immediate measures announced which should have more direct impact in the area and will be introduced in Spring 2001 include:

- ◆ £100 job grant for people who move into work of more than 16 hours per week which is expected to last five weeks or more and have been in receipt of Incapacity Benefit (IB), Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA), Income Support (IS) or Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA) for at least twelve weeks.
- ◆ Increased earnings disregard from £15 to £20 for disabled people, Carers and lone parents on IS or JSA.
- ◆ A new 52 week linking rule for Income Support Mortgage Interest Payments (ISM) for people who take up work but then need to go back on to Income Support (existing claimants must wait nine months to re-qualify for ISM payments).
- ◆ A new four-week run-on of ISM Payments which will continue to be paid after starting in work targeted at people returning to work.
- ◆ Simplified Housing Benefit run-on, a new scheme to make Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) Extended Payment 'as near automatic as possible' to continue to pay HB and CTB for the first four weeks in work.

Other Changes

From April 2002 claimants will be able to suspend Income Support and JSA for twelve weeks to 'streamline' the re-claiming process rather than having to make a fresh claim. The Government is also considering the case for the introduction of similar arrangements for Housing Benefit.

From October there will also be a new fast track to Disabled Persons Tax Credit (DPTC) will give access to the credit to people who have been sick for 20 weeks or more, but can do some work, to remain in their jobs.

Other changes to DPTC include an increase in the credit for children under 16 which will rise in June 2000 to £4.35 per week.

From May 2001 families in receipt of DPTC (and Working Families Tax Credit – WFTC) will be able to make a new claim as soon as a child is born and receive a credit for the new child immediately rather than having to wait 6 months.

Further news for mothers who work 16 hours or more prior to the birth of their child and are in receipt of Statutory Maternity Pay, they will be able to claim DPTC and WFTC (and may also benefit from the increased Maternity Grant).

Disappointing News

The Capital Limits on Income Support (IS) have changed for pensioners but not for disabled people. Since 1988, savings of over £3000 have been considered for means tested Income Support, with all IS withdrawn once savings reached £8000. Pensioners with savings of up to £6000 will now become eligible for the full amount of IS and the benefit will be available up to a threshold of £12000 in savings.

By not applying to disabled people, the change appears discriminatory on grounds of age. Disabled People have a pressing need to accrue savings for adaptations to vehicles or property, equipment and respite.

Given that the Capital Limits have not changed since 1988, extending the changes made for pensioners to disabled people would have contributed to promoting inclusion and independence.

What The Chancellor Could Have Done!

Link-Ability believes that this year's Budget, whilst providing the incentives and higher earnings disregard to get disabled people into work, provides little for disabled people for whom work is not readily available or even an option.

Link-Ability would have wished to have seen the Chancellor use the opportunity to provide 'security for those who can't' in real terms. For example:

1. A 1p increase in Income Tax, as recommended by the Royal Commission on Long-term Care, to provide funding for a national standard on home care services to enable disabled people and older people to remain independent in their own home with dignity.
2. An increase in real terms of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) which goes towards disabled people's extra costs they incur everyday because of their disability.
3. Increases in petrol taxes, for instance, should be offset by an increase in the mobility component of DLA, as should a rise in the care component, in real terms, reflect the increasing charges for home care services by local authorities.
4. The Chancellor should have included disabled people in the raising of the Capital Limits for pensioner's savings.

The Chancellors' Budget failed to acknowledge that many disabled people have to save for large items of expensive equipment e.g. wheelchairs, orthopaedic bedding, Respite Care etc. It also showed that this Budget was more about 'work for those who can' rather than 'security for those who can't'.

TV Shake Up

New rules mean that over 75's will get free TV licences and registered blind people will pay half price. However, deaf people will continue to pay full price.

Campaign groups are calling for a full service for a full licence fee. At present, only 57 per cent of BBC programmes are subtitled, compared to 64 per cent for ITV and 61 per cent for Channel 4. A spokesperson for the Royal National Institute for the Deaf said, "It is unfair that deaf people must pay a full fee for an incomplete service."

But the Government claims new targets for subtitling and the introduction of audio described programmes shortly will mean that more programmes will become accessible.

However, for those blind people who have or would like a 'sound only' TV and, therefore, do not have to pay for a licence at present, the news is not so welcome. Mrs J King from the RNIB said "We welcome the 50% reduction for all registered blind people. However, with the demise of 'sound only' TV due to its unavailability in the shops or through mail order), those wishing to purchase one will be unable to do so and as a result will have to buy a TV licence."

The announcement that over 75's will get free licences from November came from the Chancellor in a recent speech and recommendations to give blind people a 50% reductions were made in the Davies Report, published in August 1999.

BBC2 Ditches 'From The Edge'

BBC2 have shelved From The Edge (FTE) too make way for "a whole raft" of disability programmes in the summer. First screened in 1992, FTE has been the leading national disability TV programme since the end of ITV's 'Link' in 1999. Ian Macrae, editor of the BBC's Disability Programme Unit, said: "There is going to be new disability programming on BBC2. We are currently in discussion about how to take our commitment to disability programming forward."

Link-Ability comments: If disability programmes are going to get more and better, then great; if they are going to get less and worse, then we'd be worried. What do you think? Let us know; contact details on the back page.

Taxi News

With only two accessible taxi firms in Inverclyde on the road, *Link-Ability* was sad to hear that Paul McCluskey who operated under the 'Inverclyde Specialist Taxi Service' banner, had given up his 'run'. However, good news is afoot! Cathal McGhee, an established local businessman has purchased Paul's 5-seater, wheelchair accessible taxi and is up and running in a full 24-hour service. Cathal told *Link-Ability*, "I am operating a full 24-hour Private Hire service. Give me a call anytime and I will do my best to accommodate you." Cathal also told *Link-Ability*, "There is a great demand for this type of service out there. Ultimately I want to make this work, firstly by getting my licence for Public Hire, (a number of people have tried to flag me down but I have been unable to stop because I don't have a Public Hire Licence yet) and then I would like to get a second taxi so that I can widen my field and give a better service to disabled people in Inverclyde."

You can contact Cathal on 0796 732 8483

SPORTS NEWS

Wheelchair Rugby

Ireland has a team, England has a team, Wales have a team, Scotland has a Parliament.

We are the only home team not to have their own Wheelchair Rugby team. Spinal Injuries Scotland members Gordon Rattray and Graham McClounnan want to get a team together. It is hoped that a training venue can be found between Edinburgh and Glasgow so that it is centrally located as possible.

Wheelchair Rugby is a contact sport for those of you who like to rough it – but says Spinal Injuries Scotland "This is a sport specifically for tetraplegics", so paraplegics, find your own sport! Special wheelchairs may be required but once a team is established then say Spinal Injuries Scotland, "we can think about how to fund this aspect of the sport". For further information contact Spinal Injuries Scotland on 0141 314 0056.

Discovery Games 2000

Dundee City Sports Association for the Disabled is hosting the 'Discovery Games 2000' on 19 & 20 August 2000. The event will offer a weekend of events for people with physical, sensory or learning disability, in a range of sports. Contact either Gordon Quinton (01382 434739) or Alison Douglas (01382 434 296) for further information.

Link-Ability

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Similarly if you would like to find out more about the Council on Disability, would like to join us as a member or would like to receive *Link-Ability* on a regular basis then please let us know.

You can contact us at the above address/telephone number. An answerphone is available outwith normal office hours.

BENEFITS UP RATINGS

from 10th April 2000

The following upratings are probably those of most relevance to disabled people.

	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>
Attendance Allowance		
Higher Rate	52.95	53.55
Lower Rate	35.40	35.80
Disability Living Allowance		
Care Component		
Higher	52.95	53.55
Middle	35.40	35.80
Lower	14.05	14.20
Mobility Component		
Higher	37.00	37.40
Lower	14.05	14.20
Incapacity Benefit		
Long term rate	66.75	67.50
Short term rate (under pension age)		
Higher	59.55	60.20
Lower	50.35	50.90
Short term rate (over pension age)		
Higher	66.75	67.50
Lower	64.05	64.75
Age Allowance		
Higher rate (under 35 at time of claim)	14.05	14.20
Lower rate (35-44 at time of claim)	7.05	7.10
Invalid Care Allowance	39.95	40.40
Severe Disablement Allowance		
Basic Rate	40.35	40.80
Age related addition (from Dec 1990)		
Higher	14.05	14.20
Middle	8.90	9.00
Lower	4.45	4.50

For further information on any benefits related issues, contact the Financial Fitness Resource Team, who will be only too happy to give you free, confidential and independent advice on all new and existing Social Security benefits. Telephone the team on 01475 729239.