

# ALLIANCE NEWS

## MAKING SURE VOICES ARE HEARD

Issue 23 - December 2009



### Will Another Bus Pass Change Be Along In A Minute?

Just a few months ago the Scottish Government killed off our hopes of getting everyone with the lower levels of DLA one of the new bus passes. They published a review of the Free Bus Pass Scheme which argued that it would be too expensive to extend it. We didn't agree but it didn't look like we could do much about it.

Now thanks to a motion in the Scottish Parliament by Labour MSP, Des McNulty, there is a possibility that the next few months might see a turn around in the campaign.

At the start of December there was a debate at Holyrood on the bus pass scheme. MSPs were told denying disabled people on the lower rate of DLA access to the scheme prevented access to services, facilities and social networks by free scheduled bus services. The scheme failed to promote social inclusion and failed to improve health by encouraging a more active lifestyle for disabled people.

Charlie Gordon MSP told the parliament, "from 2007 onwards, thousands of people who had been able to travel free in local authority schemes in Strathclyde, the Lothians, the Highlands and Fife were stripped of that benefit."

John Park MSP added, "the motion is not just about doing the right thing; it is about helping disabled people to achieve their full potential."

Even Stewart Stevenson, the Minister for Transport summed up by saying "I whole-heartedly support the point that underlies the motion. It is on that basis that I will recommend to my colleagues that we support it."

With no real opposition, the debate turned on where the money would come from to pay for the change. As a result the motion was passed in the end with an amendment which asked the movers of the motion to come back with suggestions where the money would come from.

If the Labour, Liberal and Green MSPs who support this come up with some ideas on this during the Scottish Budget discussions then we could see this very important change being made.



What's Santa Bringing  
You This Year?

**A MERRY  
CHRISTMAS TO ALL  
OUR READERS**

Unit 12  
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### The Lawyers Take Over In Edinburgh!

The latest twist in the Edinburgh Care and Support Tender saga is that the contract award report was pulled from the Finance Committee at the last minute on December 3rd. Now lawyers, Deloitte are to be brought into to investigate suggestions that there has been a lack of separation in the assessment of quality and price.

For the layman this means did council officials fix the results in favour of price rather than quality in the evaluation process? Deloitte will also examine 3 other current tenders in the city.

People with learning disabilities are now left without any certainty over Christmas and the New Year as the Council tries to claim that it can still award the contracts in the New Year.

At LDAS we remain concerned that this investigation is only looking at the tip of the iceberg in legal problems. George Foulkes MSP is also so concerned that he is planning to raise this in the Scottish Parliament.

## IT'S A LOTTERY—WHAT YOU PAY FOR CARE SERVICES!

New figures produced recently by Jackie Baillie MSP on behalf of the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Group on Learning Disability show there is still a postcode lottery on what people with learning disabilities or other support needs are charged for the care they need. Yet the Scottish Government has failed to use its power to ensure a level playing field for people with disabilities across Scotland.

Each local authority was asked to provide information on what would be charged for three different case studies.

**In case study A,** a single person with 9 hours a week support, the amount charged for care varies between nothing in 16 local authorities to nearly £95 a month in Clackmannanshire.

**In case study B,** a couple needing 25 hours of support a week and also attending day centres could be charged only £38.40 a month in West Dunbartonshire while having to pay £270 a month in Argyll and Bute

**In case study C,** a single parent with learning disabilities and a six year old son would pay £363 a month in West Lothian and nothing in neighbouring Falkirk.

There is no corresponding difference in quality in service. Each local authority sets a standard charging policy to apply to all home care services without assessing quality of services. In each case the same voluntary organisations could be delivering the service with the same staff.

For example, Andrew Gardiner and Donna Marie Hendry both live in the same street in Mossend, North Lanarkshire.



**Donna Marie and Andrew look at their care charges**

They both receive a very similar service from Key Housing Association as they have learning disabilities and require support with some aspects of their lives. Andrew spent his formative years in the South Lanarkshire area before returning to live in Bellshill, Donna Marie has always lived in the North Lanarkshire area.

Both Andrew and Donna Marie make a contribution toward the cost of their care but there is a significant difference in the amount that they pay towards the cost of their care. Andrew pays over £92 per month whereas Donna pays £40 per month.

The reason for this difference is that as Andrew grew up in South Lanarkshire, they pay for his care and Andrew pays his contribution to them. Donna Marie makes her contribution to North Lanarkshire.

In our study South Lanarkshire consistently charged higher rates for care services than neighbouring North Lanarkshire. This is due to different thresholds

and income tapers.

The Scottish Government has had the powers since 2002 to ensure that there is a consistent way of calculating care charges across Scotland. It has neither used this power nor commissioned a study into the varying levels of charges across Scotland.

The Westminster government recognises that this issue poses a serious problem in England with people unable to move house because they cannot find out what support they will get in a new area and what it will cost. They are proposing a "National Care Service" to help.

**Jackie Baillie MSP said, "The Scottish Government must take action to end the postcode lottery for care charges. I want to see a much greater degree of consistency in how charging policies are applied across Scotland.**

**"Ministers should bring forward clear and consistently enforced national guidelines to ensure that people in every part of Scotland are treated fairly."**