

Week of Action: 29 August – 4 September 2013

Disabled People Against Cuts are asking disabled people and disabled people's groups around the UK to join in their week of action:

Thursday 29 August: Online blitz – tweets and emails to targets of your choice, plus a Transport For All action to make Crossrail accessible.

Friday 30 August: Local protests – go to local MPs, Atos offices, schools and colleges which are creating barriers to inclusion.

Saturday 31 August: Disability art and protest exhibition in London.

Sunday 1 September: 'Reclaiming the Social Model: the Social Model in the 21st Century' – speakers and debate. Speakers include Anne Rae, Chair of GMCDP and Colin Barnes, Centre for Disability Studies (Leeds University). To be held in London.

Monday 2 September: Day of direct actions.

Tuesday 3 September: 'I Dare' day – online action.

Wednesday 4 September: Freedom Drive – events around Parliament including launch of the 'Reclaiming our Futures' manifesto.

For much more detail, and resources for actions, go to the DPAC website:
www.dpac.uk.net

(Picture from a DPAC demonstration in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne on 28 August 2012. Thanks to the DPAC website and photographer.)



Update on Atos and the Work Capability Assessment

Atos is the company which undertakes some medical assessments for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Decisions made by Atos based on their medical assessments have been criticised. In a case brought by a person experiencing mental distress, an Upper Tribunal suggested the opinion of a physiotherapist healthcare professional was only useful for recording what the person said and did in the assessment. The tribunal suggested the physiotherapist did not have the correct medical knowledge to assess someone on mental health grounds.

For more detail, and a link to the ruling, go to the Disability Rights web page:

<http://disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2013/july/new-decision-undermines-atos-medicals>

Atos will no longer be the sole provider of the Work Capability assessments, according to a press release from the DWP. The DWP has said that more companies will be contracted to do the work around the different regions of the country.

Atos has also been instructed to re-train and re-evaluate its healthcare professionals. PriceWaterhouseCoopers has been contracted to advise on improving the quality of all 'health and disability assessments.'

For more detail, go to the Welfare News Service web page:

<http://www.welfarenewsservice.com/dwp-statement-on-atos-work-capability-assessment>

In July there was a debate in Parliament about the audio recording of Work Capability Assessments. This debate followed a claim by the Department for Work and Pensions that there is not enough demand for assessments being recorded. This view was based on a pilot scheme in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 2011.

To see a transcript of the debate, go to:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm130612/debtext/130612-0004.htm#13061288000001>

News and Consultations from the Office for Disability Issues

Early in July, the Government produced its latest Fulfilling Potential strategy and action plan for implementing change, which recognises the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People, “to bring about the changes needed in communities that have a real and lasting effect on the day-to-day lives of disabled people.” A Fulfilling Potential Strategy Group will promote the action plan.

Also, on 16 July, the Office for Disability Issues (ODI) published their response to a review of Equality 2025: ‘Fulfilling Potential: Making it Happen - Better Working with Disabled People.’ This also launches a consultation (ending on 16 October 2013) on, “next steps for advice from and engagement with,” disabled people.

The plan seems to be to include non-disabled people ‘with expertise’, rather than, as Equality 2025 has been, a group entirely made up of disabled people.

For links to the Fulfilling Potential strategy and action plan, the review of Equality 2025 and the consultation document, go to:
<http://odi.dwp.gov.uk>

For an article about the changes, go to the Disability News Service website: <http://disabilitynewsservice.com/2013/07/end-of-the-road-for-equality-2025>

There are two schemes promoted by the ODI relating to Remploy closures:

Connect is a scheme to support individuals affected by the closure of Remploy factories.

For more information, go to:

<http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/odi-projects/community-support-fund.php>

The Community Support Fund is funding, “user led disabled people’s organisations,” and voluntary sector organisations in areas affected by the closure of Remploy factories.

For more information go to:

<http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/odi-projects/community-support-fund.php>

Resources and Support

Advice and Legal Resources

Disabled People Against Cuts have updated the list of advice and legal services on their website. To see the list, go to:
<http://dpac.uk.net/2013/07/advice-and-legal-resources>

‘Mental Health Advocacy and Human Rights: Your Guide’

The British Institute of Human Rights has published this guide to representing and protecting the human rights of mental health system users and people experiencing mental distress.

Publicity about the guide says:

“Aimed at both advocates and people who use services, this handy guide explains how the Human Rights Act can be used in mental health settings to secure better treatment and care for people. It draws on real life stories of how laws and legal cases can be used in everyday advocacy practice, providing helpful flow-charts, worked through examples and top tips.”

To download the guide, go to:

<http://www.bihhr.org.uk/media/new-mental-health-advocacy-and-human-rights-your-guide>

For print copies contact Helen Wildbore by:

Email hwildbore@bihhr.org.uk, or phone 0207 882 5851

PA Café – A New On-line Resource

The PA Café is an online resource for Personal Assistance Users and Personal Assistants to explore issues of common interest relating to independent living.

If you have questions you want to share with other PA Users or are looking for different approaches to the issues that are faced by all PA Users, ask the PA Café.

You register by sending an email to PACafe@ILAnet.co.uk with your name, your preferred user name if you have one and your email address. (You can choose your own user name so that your comments are anonymous.)

Access to Work Scheme Expanded

Access to Work, a government scheme which provides support to disabled people in work (for example, providing adaptations, equipment or support workers to remove the barriers to parts of a job which are not accessible), is being expanded to cover disabled people on traineeships, supported internships, work trials and work academies. The scheme is also being extended to cover disabled people who wish to set up their own business through the Enterprise Allowance Scheme.

For more information, go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/drive-to-get-more-disabled-people-into-mainstream-jobs>

To find out about Access to Work, go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview>

or contact your local Jobcentre Plus. GMCDP can help you find this.

New Project around Peer Support and Employment

ASPIRE is a Greater Manchester wide project being run by Breakthrough UK from June 2013 to March 2014. ASPIRE is examining how peer support could help disabled people gain and retain employment.

Aspire is one of 13 peer support projects taking place across the UK, funded by the Office for Disability Issues and Department for Work and Pensions.

Breakthrough UK is interested in working with individuals and organisations on this project, including disabled people, employers and disabled people's organisations.

To find out more, go to:

<http://www.breakthrough-uk.co.uk/aspire>

Or contact Jacqui De La Mazière, ASPIRE Project Co-ordinator by:

Phone 0161 273 5412, Mobile: 07800 557053

Email: j.delamaziere@breakthrough-uk.co.uk

National and International Focus

Disabled Women Represented in Geneva

In July, representatives from Sisters of Frida attended the Committee for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Geneva, as part of a delegation of women's groups from the UK. Their contribution has influenced the Committee's recommendations relating to the government's record on equality for women in the UK.

Sisters of Frida are a co-operative of disabled women. For more information about Sisters of Frida and more information about the CEDAW report, see their website:
<http://sisofrida.org>

Law Commission Consultation on Hate Crime

Some issues covered by the consultation are:
“(a) extending the aggravated offences in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to include where hostility is demonstrated towards people on the grounds of disability, sexual orientation or gender identity;
(b) the case for extending the stirring up of hatred offences under the Public Order Act 1986 to include stirring up of hatred on the grounds of disability or gender identity.”

For more detail, the consultation papers, and a theoretical paper, go to:
http://lawcommission.justice.gov.uk/consultations/hate_crime.htm
Email: hate.crime@lawcommission.gsi.gov.uk
Write to: Criminal Law Team, Law Commission, Steel House, Tothill Street, London. SW1H 9LJ

WOW Petition

Francisca Martinez, a disabled activist and comedian, has set up an petition addressed to the Department for Work and Pensions. The petition, which is open until 12 December, includes a call for:

- a cumulative impact assessment of the effect on disabled people of the welfare reforms;
- an end to the Work Capability Assessment;
- a committee-based inquiry into several issues.

For more information, go to:
<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/43154>

Reports Affirm Inequality for People with Learning Difficulties in Health

Two reports from the Department of Health, the:

- response to the ‘Confidential Inquiry into the premature deaths of people with learning disabilities’ and
- ‘Six Lives Progress Report on Health for People with Learning Disabilities’

have highlighted that people with learning difficulties are still facing inequality in health care.

In response, as well as looking at implementing some of the recommendations in the reports, the Department of Health has asked the National Clinical Director for Learning Disability to look at the feasibility of developing best practice guidelines for the treatment of people with learning difficulties.

To see the press release from the Department of Health, go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/people-with-learning-disabilities-still-face-unacceptable-inequalities-in-healthcare>

The response to the Inquiry, plus the Inquiry Report and Six Lives report are available on the government’s publications website:

www.gov.uk/government/publications

Not-So-Fond Farewell to Liverpool Care Pathway

In July, mainstream media dedicated a substantial amount of space to stories about the Liverpool Care Pathway and the decision to stop using it. The Liverpool Care Pathway was designed as a planned process to follow for withdrawal of medical treatment, food and hydration when doctors consider someone is reaching the end of their life.

For a summary of the findings and an overview of the Pathway, go to the NHS web page:

<http://www.endoflifecare.nhs.uk/care-pathway/step-5-care-in-the-last-days-of-life/liverpool-care-pathway.aspx>

Inadequate Funding for Disabled Students

The Snowdon Trust has released its 2013 report. The trust gives grants to disabled students with physical or sensory impairments, “to assist with equipment and essential study needs.”

The report shows that many disabled students do not receive enough support through the Disabled Students' Allowance to meet their support needs while at university. GMCDP also has evidence of this situation. One of our members was asked by her university to apply to the Snowdon Trust, as the university could no longer top up the Disabled Students' Allowance to meet her communication support needs.

To find out more about the Snowdon Trust, or find the 2013 report, go to the Snowdon Trust web page:

<http://www.snowdontrust.org/news>

Or contact the Trust via: Snowdon Trust, Unit 18 Oakhurst Business Park, Southwater, West Sussex. RH13 9RT

Phone 01403 732 899

Email info@snowdontrust.org

Iain Duncan Smith Defends Using Incorrect Statistics

Iain Duncan Smith, Work and Pensions Secretary, has defended his claim that people affected by the benefits cap are being forced into work. This is despite being criticised by the UK Statistics Authority for using incorrect statistics. For more detail, go to the Guardian web page:

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/jul/15/iain-duncan-smith-statistics-benefits-cap>

Dogs Trained to Work with People Who Have Dementia

Alzheimer Scotland, Guide Dogs Scotland and Dogs for the Disabled have been involved in training the first two dogs to work with people who have dementia. The dogs are trained to prompt their owners to read reminders and take medicine. The idea came from a group of students at the Glasgow School of Art. For more detail, go to the BBC News web page:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-23277537>

Reminder to Keep a Watch on Your 'Fit Note'

This issue has been highlighted on the Disabled People Against Cuts website. The Department for Work and Pensions is no longer automatically notifying people that their 'Statement of Fitness for Work' (or 'Fit Note') is about to expire.

So, if you are providing these in order to receive your benefits, it may be worth you making a note in your diary rather than relying on a reminder from the Department for Work and Pensions.

The matter has also been discussed on the Rightsnet forum:
<http://www.rightsnet.org.uk/forums/viewthread/5101>

10th Strasbourg Freedom Drive

Every year the European Network on Independent Living (ENIL) holds a Freedom Drive, including a march to the European Parliament, their Annual General Meeting and a four-day assembly. This year, the theme is Article 4 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Article 4 says that all states must work to recognise the human rights of disabled people without discrimination, including taking into account the protection and promotion of the human rights of disabled people in all policies and programmes. Article 4 on general obligations is an important article as it supports all the specific CRPD articles and makes Governments responsible for implementing them. It is one of the key articles in helping bring national governments to account.

To find out more, go to the ENIL web page:
<http://www.enil.eu/campaigns/freedom-drive>

International Day of Disabled People: 3 December 2013

A chance to celebrate our lives as disabled people. The official name of the day is now 'International Day of Persons with Disabilities'. The theme this year is: 'Break barriers, open doors: for an inclusive society for all'.

For more information, go to:

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1607>

Disability History Month: 20 November – 20 December

An opportunity to recognize the history of disabled people campaigning for equality and human rights. The theme for this year is: 'Celebrating our struggle for Independent Living: no return to institutions or isolation'. To find out more, go to their website: www.ukdisabilityhistorymonth.com or Facebook page:

<https://en-gb.facebook.com/pages/UK-Disability-History-Month-OFFICIAL/262351827138558>

Greater Manchester Focus

Deafblind UK Events

Deafblind UK are organising a number of events in Greater Manchester, including: Bury, Manchester, Oldham and Stockport. To book a place and to find out more, contact Nikki Spiers by: mobile 07932156373 (text or call) or email Nikki.Spiers@deafblind.org.uk.

Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust Annual General Meeting and 'Hi! Tea' Event

The 'Hi! Tea' event is a tea party at Manchester Town Hall on 11 September, 10.00am – 4.00pm. GMCDP will be having an information stall at this event, so come along and meet us!

Activities at the event include: a 'Hi! Tea' lunch time tea party/picnic; information stalls; health bus conducting health checks; baby massage session; tea and cake; video room; smoothie bike; music; memory Pods; and the Annual General Meeting at 2pm.

For more information, go to the web page:
<http://www.mhsc.nhs.uk/about-the-trust/news-and-events/hi-tea!-and-annual-general-meeting.aspx>

or contact Ben Curley: by phone on 0161 882 1138 or email ben.curley@mhsc.nhs.uk

Disabled Artist's Exhibition in Sale

Andy Wild is presenting an exhibition of his work, called 'The Patient Experience', at the Waterside Centre, 1 Waterside, in Sale. The exhibition is running until 14 September 2013, and Andy will be at the exhibition on Saturday 7 September between 2.00 – 4.00pm to discuss his art with visitors. This exhibition is informed by Andy Wild's experience of illness, and seeks to question people's perception of illness and death.

For more detailed information, go to:
http://www.disabilityartsonline.org/?location_id=10&item=4134

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Community Leaders Sought

The Lesbian & Gay Foundation has been funded for the next three years by the Department of Health to support at least 40 LGB Community Leaders across Greater Manchester.

These Community Leaders will help to ensure that health and social care services are designed and commissioned around the real needs of LGB people.

For more information, go to the Lesbian and Gay Foundation website:
<http://www.lgf.org.uk/news-articles/lgb-community-leaders-the-voice-of-our-communities>

Or email: Andrew.gilliver@lgf.org.uk

The LGF phone number is: 0845 3303030

'Get Me Toasty'

A scheme is running throughout Greater Manchester until January 2014, to assist some owner-occupiers and private tenants to improve the warmth of their houses. It includes loft insulation, cavity wall insulation and boiler replacement.

The scheme is only available in some postcode areas, so you need to check if your area is covered. The scheme is also only for people on certain benefits. The eligibility criteria are, unfortunately, too detailed to list here.

For more information:

Ring the Greater Manchester Energy Advice Service free on 0800 009 3363

Or go to the website:

www.getmetoasty.com

Peer Reviewing Project for Mental Health Services in Stockport

A small team of peer reviewers is being sought for this new project in Stockport. Peer reviewers will visit mental health services and gather information about the experiences of people who use the service. Training is being organised in October for the team of peer reviewers.

For more information, contact Judith or Louise: phone 0161 429 9744

Email: Judith@sparc4me.org.uk

New GMCDP Projects

Manchester Disabled People's Project

This is a new three year project for disabled people of all ages who live in Manchester. The project will provide a range of information and support on independent living and other disability related issues. We will provide one-to-one support, small group workshops, training and information. The project will also offer some volunteering opportunities, awareness raising sessions for service providers around disability equality and transition issues and host an annual event celebrating the achievements and contribution of young disabled people in Manchester.

Young Disabled People's Forum (Manchester)

Self Developed Project: this project started on 1 August 2013, for young disabled people aged 13-25 who live in Manchester. The project will be open two days a week for young disabled people to seek information, one-to-one and group support. It is for young disabled people who want to work out what they would like to achieve in their life, and to support young disabled people to gain the skills and confidence to live their lives how they wish to.

Well Aware: this project supports young disabled people to explore a range of health and well-being topics including healthy eating, relationships, managing stress, accessing leisure opportunities, dealing with bullying, etc.

Next Information Bulletin

Please send any news or events by 18 September.

If you need assistance accessing any of the websites or information given in this bulletin, please contact the GMCDP office.

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