

# ALLIANCE NEWS

## MAKING SURE VOICES ARE HEARD

Issue 26 - April 2010



### VOTES MATTER

In the next few weeks far more attention will be paid to politics than is normally the case. The phones will be ringing with staff from Call Centres asking if the relevant parties can rely on your vote, the postie will be delivering election leaflets and candidates will be knocking anxiously on a few doors in some parts of the area.

We think it is important that issues that matter to people with learning disabilities and their carers get heard and there is no better way to do that than face to face.

In Edinburgh, at our election hustings meetings, Ronald challenged the panel with his story about being bullied, hit in the street and s\*\*t being put through his letter box. Soft words and fine sentiments wouldn't cut it for Ronald, he

wanted to know exactly what could be done to help him be safe in his own house.

This is the challenge that we should be putting to all the prospective candidates over the next few weeks. Whatever the issue you are concerned about, corner a politician and ask them what they will do.

It's easy to be cynical about politicians – but there is one fact you have to admit – one will be elected for every constituency so get speaking to them now and afterwards they will know a little more and be a bit better educated about the issues that matter to people with learning disabilities.



Explaining concerns to the panel at the meeting

Unit 12  
Hardengreen Business Centre  
Eskbank,  
Dalkeith, EH22 3NY  
079 201 418 23  
Email: [office@ldascotland.org](mailto:office@ldascotland.org)  
Web: [www.ldascotland.org](http://www.ldascotland.org)

You can see highlights of the Edinburgh hustings on YouTube if you follow the link at [tinyurl.com/hustings1](http://tinyurl.com/hustings1) and [tinyurl.com/hustings2](http://tinyurl.com/hustings2)

### The Election Issues That Matter

The Learning Disability Alliance Scotland has put together a manifesto on the important issues that Westminster politicians can help with. We think there are three main areas that they can help – Employment – Benefits – Better Information and Advice

#### Employment

Most people with a learning disability want to work in ordinary jobs. But in Scotland it is estimated that only one adult in 20 with learning disabilities has any form of paid work.

In an equal opportunity society, if any adult wants to work, support

should be provided to make this possible. This is still not happening for people with a learning disability. There needs to be a more consistent approach to employment that is integrated into mainstream services.

Among the things that could be improved by the government include;

1. The DWP and Job Centre Plus recognise "learning disability" as a distinct group of people requiring support not just part of a wider group of people with mental health issues

2. Developing a strategy for public authorities to employ more people with learning disabilities and to publish their progress in absolute numbers and as a percentage of their workforce.

#### Benefits

Most people with a learning disability do not have the opportunity to work and live on benefits and so tend to be poor. They have too little money to enable them to do the things they want to do. They also have extra costs because of their disability – paying for things like support workers and door-to-door

Visit [www.ldascotland.org](http://www.ldascotland.org)



transport, such as taxis. We believe there is a need for significant benefit reform.

Some of the things that the government could improve are

- The level of disability benefits to be sufficient to cover the additional costs of disability
- The benefit claims process is easier through the use of simplified forms and more advisers having undergone learning disability awareness training.

**Information:**

Among the things the government could do here is where there is either a pre-natal or post natal diagnosis of a condition associated with a learning disability such as Down's syndrome, accurate and up-to-date information and support should by law be available to parents at this point

You can read more on our website.

## ILF CHANGES THREATEN THE MOST VULNERABLE

Grave concerns have been expressed by LDAS, PAMIS and SCLS over the changes to the eligibility criteria for future applications to the Independent Living Fund which will limit new applications to those in employment for more than 16 hours.

**According to the Scottish Government it is likely only 4 people in the whole of Scotland will become eligible under the new criteria in the current year.**

This decision will have long term implications for social care funding in Scotland. Further pressures will be placed on local authorities and it is unlikely that any money saved will be transferred back to Scottish budgets.

The Independent Living Fund has supported thousands of disabled people to live better lives in the community for over 20 years. Traditionally it has supplemented local authority services to deepen and enrich the experience of disabled people within the community. Now proposed changes will restrict this to a handful of working disabled people.

We are aware of pressures on ILF budgets in recent times. The latest announcement, however, which

limits eligibility to, we believe, a relatively small number of people with a disability, is both alarming and unexpected.

Until now, ILF has positively transformed the lives of hundreds of people with learning disabilities known to us throughout Scotland. It currently enables recipients to access services and support that they need, in order that they can remain living in their communities either with family or in supported living settings

It is our view that the realities that may result from this move by ILF are that Local Authorities will be unable to meet the costs of providing services to many people, including those with PMLD, who by nature of the complexity of their holistic needs, require intensive and often costly supports.

Given the high profile and priority that Individualised Budgets and Self Directed Support have been given by the Scottish Government as a way of offering disabled people more choice, flexibility and control over their lives this is all the more alarming.

We want the next administration in Westminster to reverse this decision.



### Older Families Charter for Change Conference

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

**Minister for Public Health SHONA ROBISON MSP**

CARERS GROUPS from across Scotland

Voluntary Organisations

Wednesday 16th June, 10.30am - 1pm

lunch from 1pm to 2pm

Full details at [www.charterforchange.com](http://www.charterforchange.com)