



**Compass  
Disability  
Services**

Pointing you in the right direction

June 2011

# NETWORKER

## Disability Somerset makes its mark!

THE first Disability Somerset exhibition on May 19 proved to be a resounding success.

Around 1,000 disabled people, carers and professionals attended the event, which was organised by Compass Disability Services. Over 100 exhibitors showcased a superb range of equipment, information and services – from all terrain wheelchairs and police car-styled mobility scooters to daily living aids.

Disability Somerset, which took place at the Junction 24 Sedgemoor Auction Centre, was the county's first major disabilities exhibition.

The event was officially opened by BBC Radio Somerset presenter Emma Britton, hosting the morning show live from the exhibition, including interviews with exhibitors and visitors.

Compass Disability Services' CEO

Richard Pitman described the exhibition as a huge success and aims to make it an annual event.

He said: "We are delighted with the way the first Disability Somerset exhibition went. It was extremely well supported by exhibitors and visitors and I'd like to thank everyone who supported it.

"Somerset has always lacked an event like this and we hope Thursday's success will establish Disability Somerset and help make it an annual event."

As well as exhibitor stands, those who attended were also able to visit the 'Compass Disability Services zone', to view its many projects and services.

Workshops and networking activities for professionals working in the disability or care sector were also well attended.

■ **For a Disability Somerset picture special, see pages 12 and 13.**

## Fund-tastic!

COMPASS Disability Services looks set for a bright future after securing a Transition Fund grant.

The charity has been awarded £125,430 to enable it to adjust to cuts in funding. **For the full story, turn to page three.**

■ **RIGHT: Staff celebrate after the award of the grant.**



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Website: [www.compassdisability.org.uk](http://www.compassdisability.org.uk) Registered Charity Number: 1099376.



# Supporter turns banger into cash for Compass!

A GENEROUS supporter has turned a banger into cash for Compass Disability Services.

The supporter in question donated an unwanted Toyota Corolla as part of the 'Giveacar' charity fundraising scheme, raising £204 for Compass Disability Services.

Regardless of their condition, cars are collected free-of-charge by Giveacar and sold through an auction, or disposed of at an authorised treatment facility.

Proceeds from the sale are then donated to a charity registered with the scheme, such as Compass.



Compass Disability Services Operations Manager Michelle Edwards said: "If you or anyone you know is thinking of getting rid of their car, please think of us.

Many car owners want an easy and completely free way to get rid of their old car.

"Giveacar will help them to do this in a legal and environmentally-friendly way, while raising crucial funds for charity."

To donate your car, call the Giveacar Team on 020 0011 1664, quoting Compass Disability Services as your chosen charity.

## Donating easier than ever with new TextGiving service

COMPASS Disability Services has introduced a 'Text to Donate' service which makes donating quicker and easier than ever.

All you need to do is text COMP11 then space and then the amount you wish to donate (either £1, £2, £3, £4, £5 or £10) to



70070. You will receive confirmation of your donation to your mobile. All of your donation will go directly to Compass Disability Services and you can also add 25% Gift Aid at no extra cost.

In some instances, standard text charges may apply.

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### ABOUT COMPASS DISABILITY SERVICES

Compass Disability Services is an innovative, enlightened and positive organisation. Our mission is 'to enable disabled people to have equality of opportunity'. Our values, beliefs, and mission have allowed us to spread our influence not only in Somerset but also into North Somerset and Wiltshire.

Compass Disability Services is a user-led organisation and our Board of Trustees is comprised of at least 80% disabled people. Our guiding principles give us the authority to explore options to give a voice to disabled people. Compass Disability Services works through consultation, representation and service delivery, facilitating various projects.



## Future bright after award of Transition Fund grant

COMPASS Disability Service can look towards a bright future after securing a grant from the £100 million Transition Fund.

The charity has been awarded £125,430 from the fund, which is designed to help charities, voluntary groups and social enterprises survive and grow in the face of cuts in funding.

Compass Disability Services CEO Richard Pitman (**pictured**) is delighted to receive the funding, which he believes will enable the organisation and its services to expand. Mr Pitman said: "This is fantastic news for Compass Disability Services.

"In this harsh economic climate, many organisations such as ours have been hit hard by cuts in spending.

"However, this funding will enable us to not only continue providing high quality support for disabled people but to strengthen and increase the services we are able to offer.

"A large proportion of the finding will go towards establishing a Compass Disability Services trading arm, to support our core



funding and ensure the long-term sustainability of the organisation."

Minister for Civil Society Nick Hurd said: "The £100m Transition Fund is recognition of how important civil society organisations are in supporting people and communities, from providing shelter

to homeless people, to delivering meals for the elderly, to training the unemployed.

"The £100m Transition Fund will help charities, voluntary groups and social enterprises to be in a position to take advantage of future opportunities.

"It is about helping them become stronger, more agile and less dependent.

"This will ultimately help civil society to grow and develop so that it can play an even bigger role than it does today."

The award of Transition Fund grant follows hot on the heels of news that Compass Disability Services has achieved a prestigious quality accreditation.

ISO 9001:2008 is an internationally-recognised quality mark for company management systems and was awarded after a stringent assessment.

## Helping your organisation take a user-led approach

COMPASS Disability Services has launched a 'user-led toolkit' to enable organisations to reflect the needs of users and involve members in decisions.

The document – 'Taking a user-led approach: A toolkit to inform organisations about the user-led model and enable them to take steps towards adopting a user-led approach' – formed part of the ULO (user-led organisation) project that ran during 2010/11.

Compass Disability Services was established in 2000 by a group of disabled people who identified a need and set up an organisation to provide a service to

fulfill this need. Since then the organisation has developed and grown but remained staunchly committed to reflecting the needs of users and involving members in decisions.

The toolkit aims to provide an insight into the importance of ULOs and includes tools to enable other third sector organisations to take a user-led approach.

You can view the toolkit on our website ([www.compassdisability.org.uk](http://www.compassdisability.org.uk)) by clicking on the 'Resources' tab, or please contact Nat Stevens on [nats@compassdisability.org.uk](mailto:nats@compassdisability.org.uk) or 01823 282823.



# Richard joins the 'Hardest Hit' in London

COMPASS Disability Services CEO Richard Pitman joined forces thousands of disabled people on May 14, at the Hardest Hit protest in London.

With around 8,000 people attending, it was the largest march by disabled people in living memory.

The demonstration and march was organised to protest against cutbacks to disability benefits and services that will leave disabled people without

vital support.

It was covered by BBC, ITV and Channel 4 news, and received attention in the Guardian and the Independent.

Richard, who provided live updates to the Compass Twitter and Facebook pages, said: "It was essential the views and feelings of disabled people in Somerset were represented at an event which sent a clear message to the government."



■ Richard takes a photo of the speakers just before the start of the march.

## Hub members review staff learning materials

SIX members of Compass Disability Services' Somerset Adult Social Care Learning and Development Hub took part in a national social care project.

Hub members reviewed staff learning materials, based on the Skills for Care/Health 'Common core principles to support self care'.

It involved producing participatory case studies and exercises to encourage staff to think about the work that they do to enable people to be independent.

Some of these materials were then used in a pilot training session with staff who have a lead role in Learning and Development at Somerset County Council.

The Hub brings together disabled people interested in the learning and development of adult social care staff in Somerset.

## VIP group learns about workings of Parliament

**EIGHT** members of the Voice and Influence Project (VIP), run by Compass Disability Services, have learned how to get their voices heard in Parliament on issues that are important to them.

The group attended a Parliamentary Outreach Service workshop which highlighted how Parliament works, its powers and limitations, and how to get MPs to take up your case.

The group found the workshop useful, easy to understand and informative.

Naomi Kent, Parliamentary Outreach Officer, gives free talks and workshops anywhere in the South West and can be contacted on 07917 488148 or [kentn@parliament.uk](mailto:kentn@parliament.uk)

The VIP provides training for volunteers to enable them to represent disabled people on relevant panels and boards in Somerset.

# All the latest news from the



**Compass  
Disability  
Network**

## Join the Network today and have your say

THE Compass Disability Network brings together disabled people, their carers and organisations that represent disabled people, to access views on various topics.

It works with local authorities and other agencies to ensure the views of disabled people can be used to shape and influence the way services and facilities are developed.

This may take the form of focus group meetings, questionnaires, interviews or other means, whatever is appropriate to the piece of work that is being undertaken.

There are currently two Networks operating in different areas.

The Network in **Somerset** was formerly known as the Somerset Access and Inclusion Network (SAIN) and was established in May 2000.

The Network in **North Somerset** was started in 2010 and is still in the early stages of development.



Membership of the Network is **free**. All members receive a free copy of the Networker newsletter and can be involved in as many or as few of the projects as they wish. So, why not join today?



Anyone interested should contact us on 01823 282823 for an information leaflet and membership form.

You can also complete an online form by going to

[www.compassdisabilitynetwork.org.uk](http://www.compassdisabilitynetwork.org.uk) and following the links for membership.

The Compass Disability Network also aims to bring together groups, organisations and professionals that work with or represent disabled people.

Contact us if you would like your organisation to become an associate member of the Network.

■ **CATCH up with the latest news from the Compass Disability Network Somerset and North Somerset on pages six and seven.**



# Members have their say in annual evaluation

DATES and times of events were among the items raised in the Compass Disability Network Somerset Annual Membership Evaluation.

Network co-ordinator Mandy Seaman said: "Thank you to our members for completing and returning this year's Annual Membership Evaluation.

"It really does help us to understand what we need to do as an organisation to meet our member's needs.

"The full report will shortly be available on our website or you can contact the office and we can arrange for a copy to be sent to you."

■ Feedback received include:

**Date and Times of events** – This was raised by those who were unable to get involved and is something we continue to evaluate as an organisation.

Although some members said they would like meetings to be held in the evenings and in other areas, in the past when we have responded by taking events to different locations and holding them at different times we have received a very low response.

When arranging events we have to consider the resources we have. We are currently developing other opportunities and ways for people to get involved such as the internet (Compass Insight). We are

committed to developing services and projects that support improvements in this area.

The number of people that are happy with their involvement has remained around 87% year on year.

**The Networker** – It is pleasing to see that over 90% of our members continue to feel that this is a useful publication. The specific comments received from members regarding the Networker will be used as part of the development of the publication.

■ The main concerns that disabled people have that affect their daily living in Somerset include:

**Access** – To shops, parking and buildings, misuse of facilities designed for disabled use, ie blue badge bays, access slopes etc.

**Attitudes and Behaviour** – Lack of understanding of people's conditions.

**National issues** – Changes to Disability Living Allowance and changes to qualifying criteria for disability benefits.

**Highways problems** – Unevenness of pavements and pedestrian crossings.

This information will be used to inform our consultation and research work and highlight key areas which need to be considered to improve equality of opportunity for disabled people.

# Sedgemoor Forum discusses Bridgwater regeneration

THE latest Sedgemoor Disability Forum took place on June 8 at Victoria Park Community Centre in Bridgwater.

Speakers attending the Forum discussed regeneration in Bridgwater, Disabled Facility Grants and the new care and repair service in Somerset – Ridgeway Care and Repair.

The group also discussed a recent survey they participated in regarding buildings which are

inaccessible for disabled people.

The next Sedgemoor Forum takes place on September 15 at St Andrews Church Hall, Cheddar. Topics to be discussed will include the Council's annual budget consultation and local community safety. Transport can be provided, for more information please contact us .

The following meeting is on Tuesday November 15, on Benefits and Highways, at The Princess Hall, Burnham.

## Have your say on how Council funds are spent

THERE will be a chance to have your say on how Taunton Deane Borough Council should spend your money over the next three years at the next meeting of the Taunton Deane Disability Discussion Group on Tuesday, June 28 (10.30am to 12.30pm).

Members will also have the opportunity to give views on the Council's aims and priorities and what they can do to reduce inequalities and make life fairer for disabled people. Taunton Deane Borough Council and Ridgeway Care and Repair will also give an update on the new Care and Repair service in the area and Disabled Facility Grants.

The Taunton Deane Disability Discussion Group meets four times a year at Compass Disability Services' offices in Taunton.

Mandy Seaman, coordinator of the Compass Disability Network, said: "The group gives local disabled people and carers a chance to engage with local service providers and raise issues that

affect their day-to-day lives.

"If you haven't attended before why not come along and give it a go. The group would welcome new members of all ages and backgrounds to attend and share experiences."

Lisa Redston, equalities and diversities officer at Taunton Deane Borough Council, said: "We would love to hear your views about the services the council provides, and what it's like to live, work, or be educated in Taunton Deane.

"We have learnt so much from the group as well being able to open the eyes and ears of other service providers to the problems faced by many disabled people in Taunton Deane.

"The group gives you the opportunity to challenge us or ask for more information on the services available to you. I look forward to seeing you at the meeting."

Future meetings of the Group will take place on: Tuesday, September 27 10.30am to 12.30pm; Tuesday, November 29, 10.30am to 12.30pm.

● For more information on the **Compass Disability Network Somerset** or to advise us that you will be attending an event, contact Mandy Seaman on 01823 282823 or email [mandy@compassdisability.org.uk](mailto:mandy@compassdisability.org.uk)

## DIAL can provide advice and support on any subject

DIAL (Disability Information and Advice Line) covers the whole of North Somerset.

It gives information on any subject – advice and support to disabled people, carers and associated groups.

DIAL provides a 'hands on' welfare rights service and attends

surgeries/community cafes throughout North Somerset. It has a Quality Standard and is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11am to 3pm.

Contact DIAL – Tel: 01934 419426; email: [mail@westondial.co.uk](mailto:mail@westondial.co.uk).

Website: [www.westondial.bravehost.com](http://www.westondial.bravehost.com)

● Anyone interested in becoming an individual or associate member of the **Compass Disability Network North Somerset** should contact Nat Stevens on 01823 282823 or email: [nats@compassdisability.org.uk](mailto:nats@compassdisability.org.uk)

## iPhone app will locate nearest disabled toilet

The Royal Association for Disability Rights (Radar) has developed an iPhone application, which will allow disabled people to use to almost 9,000 accessible toilet facilities across the country.

The application features include locating the nearest toilet facility and giving directions by road or foot.

The app – an electronic version of Radar's National Key Scheme (NKS) Guide – will also allow a community to rate and review facilities across the country for other users to view.

The new Radar iPhone app promotes Independent Living for people with disability or health conditions.

The application will initially be released for the iPhone, with a Blackberry and Android version to follow.

The app is priced £4.99 from the App Store. For more information, email [Peter.Harvey-George@radar.org.uk](mailto:Peter.Harvey-George@radar.org.uk)

## South Somerset group

THE South Somerset Disability Forum is an independent group of people with experience of and an interest in disability.

Volunteer members are vital to the ongoing work of the Forum, which raises awareness of disability and equality with service providers, employers and members of the public. New volunteers are always very welcome.

It works to improve access in terms of public buildings, dropped kerbs, transport and parking; checks planning applications and sits on the Local Authority Steering Group Panel, NHS and Police Disability Independent Advisory Group panels.

Contact Sallie or Nathan for further info on 01935 706766.

## Jill designs jewellery to promote fingerspelling

A PROFOUNDLY deaf woman has designed a range of items to help promote fingerspelling.

Jill Nicholls used to carry a clipboard and pen around in order to communicate. Even after being introduced to sign language, Jill remained frustrated at the invisibility of her deafness.

After joking with husband Graham that she would have the ABC tattooed on her arm – comparing it to blind people carrying a white stick – Jill struck upon the idea.

Jill said: "First I designed a fingerspelling t-shirt, but this was not visible with a jacket so a fingerspelling necklace and bracelet was the answer."

The jewellery was initially made from cardboard but, with the help of a local craft centre, Jill applied the traced handshapes on to plastic. She also designed clocks and watches in 'signed' numerals.

Jill's international fingerspelling jewellery, t-shirts, watches and clocks are available to buy, with some of the proceeds going towards having the bible translated into sign language.

For more information or to buy any items, email Jill on [graham.jill@virgin.net](mailto:graham.jill@virgin.net)

**Fingerspelling is the representation of letters, and sometimes numeral systems, using only the hands.**



■ Earrings and a bracelet from Jill's jewellery collection.

# Helping people remain independent at home

AN established service to help older people remain independent has now launched its new Home from Hospital scheme in Somerset.

Ridgeway Care and Repair expanded its services into the county in December, in partnership with local authorities and NHS Somerset, providing worry-free repairs and adaptations in the home.

Its services include its new Home from Hospital service, which aims to make sure that homes are safe to return to, along with its HandiHelp service, offering adaptations from a small ramp to an extension, including a variety of repairs.

Katie Chesher, Care and Repair Manager, said: "I'm delighted that Ridgeway Care and Repair has been chosen to provide a quality service for Somerset residents.

"We look forward to working with local communities to improve the homes and lives of older and disabled people."



■ Pictured (left to right) at the launch of Ridgeway Care and Repair's new service are: Elspeth Bridges (Lead OT for Somerset County Council), Marilyn Dyson (Compass Disability Services member), Steve Warran (Ridgeway Care and Repair), Janet Grant (Compass Trustee), Cathy Magill (Compass Chair of Trustees).

To be eligible for the service, residents must be aged 60 or more, or at least 18 and with a disability.

To find out more, contact 01823 692900 or visit [www.ridgewaycommunity.org.uk](http://www.ridgewaycommunity.org.uk).

# Mendip Mallards take first prize in annual gala

THE MDA (Mendip Disabled Association) Mendip Mallards help their annual swimming gala at the Strode Pool, Street.

The gala was opened by John Dando, a senior member of the Glastonbury Carnival committee, who makes regular donations to local charities including the MDA.

The gala included Yeovil Apollo, Keynsham Seals, Plymouth Pisces and Mendip Mallards teams, with Mallards coming first in the senior event and Seals taking the junior gala.

The David Ripley Trophy, generously provided by Strode Pool/Avalon Leisure,

was shared by Keith Friend of the Mallards, Linda Ward (Pisces) and Pat Wills (Pisces), who all secured 18 points.

A great time was had by all and thanks go to Strode Pool staff, friends of Street ASC, everyone who donated raffle prizes, to Burns the Bread for supplying the bread rolls and to all the Mallards helpers who did a fantastic job.

■ THE MDA organises swimming and social activities for people with impairments in mobility, sight, hearing and learning difficulties in Somerset.

For more info ring Norman on 07774 111825.

## Disabled and older people warned after scam attempt

DISABLED and older people in Somerset are being urged to remain alert after the attempted scam of a woman in Bridgwater last month.

A man claiming to be from a company called Leicester Mobility tried to sell a mattress worth over £500 to a 90-year-old woman at her house in Bridgwater.

The man actually wrote out the cheque for the woman concerned to sign but, fortunately, she decided not to and at that point the man left the house.

The case has been referred to Trading Standards.

## Self-management courses

EXPERT Patients Programme is running Self-Management Courses in Somerset.

The courses are for anyone with any long-term health condition – arthritis, diabetes, heart problems, stroke, asthma, irritable bowel syndrome or depression.

They also run courses for carers and courses specifically for people living with chronic pain.

The six-week courses cover the basics of self-management enabling participants to take more control of their symptoms, enjoy an improved quality of life and meet others who live with similar experiences.

They are run by tutors who live with long-term health conditions.

Courses for 2011 will be running in: Taunton – June to July 2011 (for anyone with any long-term condition); Frome – July to September (persistent pain course); Chard – August to September (carers course); Wincanton – September to October; Taunton – November to December (persistent pain course).

To book a place, call

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freephone 0800 9885520.

## Get Health and Social Care Legal Advice in Somerset

A NEW project that provides health and social care legal advice in Somerset launches this month.

Somerset Community Care Matters will provide specialist advice and casework regarding the NHS, social care, social services, disability rights and entitlements.

If you, or someone you care for, have difficulty accessing these services, the project can advise on how to take the first steps to obtain the help you need.

This may be to help find your way round the health and social care system or question a decision you think is wrong.

The project provides advice on access to: help at home; disability aids, adaptations, services and facilities; mental health care in the community; NHS continuing care and hospital discharge procedure; younger or older people's, care choices, accommodation and care charging; care and support for learning disabilities; autism and Asperger's syndrome; drug and alcohol abuse; advice and support for carers.

The project launches on Thursday, June 16, between 1pm and 3pm at the Albermarle Centre, Taunton. For more information, call 01823 334906 or email [sccmenquiries@mindtws.org.uk](mailto:sccmenquiries@mindtws.org.uk)

**■ FAMILIES with a disabled member are being given the opportunity to let an accessible holiday chalet in Blue Anchor, near Watchet.**

**The chalet, which is sited near the sea and the West Somerset Railway, sleeps four people.**

**For details, call 01984 633398.**



Link up with Compass Disability Services on Facebook and Twitter!



## Make a difference in your community

IF you have a skill or knowledge that you would like to share with others in your community, then a new project from ViSTA could be for you.

Community Learning Clubs will enable people to try their hand at community tutoring, help organise a group or take part as a learner.

ViSTA will provide you with support to get your group going or put you in touch with a community learning club near you. The project is currently only running in Bridgwater and Frome.

ViSTA is a learning and development charity working with individuals, communities and organisations to support charitable enterprise and voluntary action. Community Learning Clubs are part of Neighbourhood Learning projects supported by Somerset Skills and Learning.

There are some eligibility criteria but if you are interested call Tina on 08453 580372 or email [tina@vistaproject.org.uk](mailto:tina@vistaproject.org.uk)

## Charity's tandem offer

A CHARITY is looking for more people to borrow their tandem bicycles for free.

Charlotte's Tandems lends tandems to disabled people and those with additional needs. Borrowers so far have been mainly children but anyone is welcome to use the bikes.

The Gloucestershire-based charity do not charge for their tandems, but welcome donations and any spare parts, cycle clothing or merchandise to give to borrowers.

Tandems are a fun and safe way to get out and about as friends, a couple, family or group.

## West Somerset Patient Representative wanted!

SOMERSET LINK is looking for someone to represent them on a new Health Forum in West Somerset.

The forum is being set up by NHS Somerset – the Primary Care Trust – to enable patients and health service providers to discuss important issues.

Meetings will be held quarterly in the evenings at Minehead Hospital.

If you are interested in attending as the LINK Patient Representative, please call Lucy Nicholls on 01458 250674 or email [lucy.nicholls@helpandcare.org.uk](mailto:lucy.nicholls@helpandcare.org.uk)

The Somerset LINK is the patient voice organisation for Somerset.

For more information, see [www.somersetlink.org.uk](http://www.somersetlink.org.uk)

## Take part in the first UK Dementia Awareness Day

THE first UK Dementia Awareness Day takes place on Saturday, September 17.

The day has been organised by Norman McNamara, who was diagnosed with the early onset of Alzheimer's three years ago.

Norman said: "Dementia is the biggest crisis in our health service at this time and is only going to get worse unless we all address the problem and talk about it openly.

"So please join me and others all around the country on this day and help raise awareness of this disease by holding a tea party, stalls, bring and buy, jumble sales – anything you want. All I ask is that you put a table to one side with lots of leaflets and information about dementia."

Information is available from Dementia UK or The Alzheimer's Society. To contact Norman, email [normmc1957@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:normmc1957@yahoo.co.uk)

# DISABILITY SOMERSET EXHIBITION IN PICTURES



■ Compass Disability Services staff at the end of the exhibition.



■ A member of the RNC Football Academy shows off his skills

## Disability Somerset makes its mark!



■ ABOVE: Compass Disability Services CEO Richard Pitman is interviewed by BBC Somerset's Emma Britton, who officially opened the event.

THE first Disability Somerset exhibition on May 19 proved to be a great success.

The event, organised by Compass Disability Services, received excellent feedback from visitors and exhibitors alike.

It was attended by over 1,000 visitors who were able to view a superb variety of equipment and services on over 100 exhibitor

stands.

Visitors also enjoyed demonstrations from Canine Partners, Royal National College for the Blind Football Academy, Somerset Visually Impaired Cricket Team and High Spirits Wheelchair Line Dancers.

If you were unable to attend, see what the exhibition had to offer with our picture special from the day.

■ BELOW: The High Spirits Wheelchair Line Dancers strut their stuff!



■ The BBC Somerset Bus.



■ ABOVE: An impressive variety of motorised scooters on the Mini Crosser stand.

■ LEFT: An aerial view of the main exhibition hall.



■ ABOVE AND BELOW: The Canine Partners assistance dogs and trainers put on a great display.



■ ABOVE: The stairclimber on the AAT (GB) Ltd stand was popular with visitors.

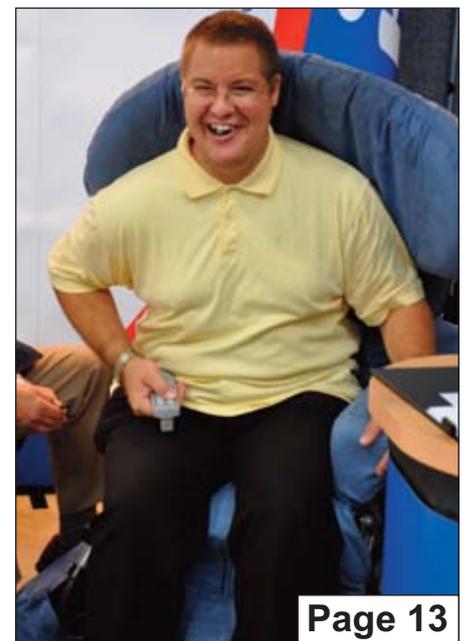


■ ABOVE: Staff members Sara and Richard with visitors at the 'Compass Zone'.

■ BELOW: A visitor tries out a chair on the Symmetrikit stand.



■ ABOVE: An exhibitor models a chair on the HMS Mobility Stand!



# Low seats are a right pain in the behind!

**Dear Orchard Shopping Centre Manager,**

We wonder if you have ever tried to sit on the seats provided by your company in the Orchard Shopping Centre in Taunton.

We rather think not, for if you had you would have realised they are not suitable for the majority of people wanting to have a brief rest before going on to shop in The Orchard Centre or elsewhere.

In other words they are much too low. Fine for young children perhaps, but not for the older person, particularly someone who may find it difficult standing up from a sitting position as quite a few do.

From the low seat, quite a few people feel that when they press against the bench they are more likely to fall forwards rather than stand upright.

The benches which were there previously were just right – strong and firm and high enough that one only needed ‘a slight push’ to be quickly upright.

We very much hope that it may be possible to remedy the situation so that everybody may feel quite safe in stopping for a rest.

**Compass member**

## Centre manager response

The seating we have installed is intentionally contemporary but compliant with current rigorous standards.

There was no intention to disenfranchise any of our shoppers or visitors in any way.

The post refurbishment softening process is ongoing therefore all feedback is most welcome in order to assist us in any future review of soft furnishings and further improvements.

Thank you for your comments.

Regards,

**Keith Lowe, Centre Manager**

■ WITH summer on its way, I have been fortunate enough to get out and about, which is great.

However I, like most of us, often have difficulties when it comes to seeking out disabled toilets. Here is a run down of my recent experiences.

As it was our wedding anniversary, we shot off to Cornwall in search of sunshine.

On our first evening we went to a great eatery called Frankie and Benny's. It was well geared for disabled people and, therefore, I was not surprised the disabled loo was nearby, clean and roomy.

Saturday found me using the loo in Rick Stein's Fish and Chips in Falmouth, and the toilet was good but the journey to it was a real obstacle course.

On Sunday we went to Lanhydrock, a National Trust property, where the loo was clean spacious and well monitored.

On Wednesday, I was at an event with Compass Disability Services at Taunton Rugby Club. It's modern and well equipped for disabled people so, it was surprising when there was a problem with the internal lift. However, staff there are great and I'm sure it has been resolved.

Finally, on Friday, I met friends for lunch at the Harvester in Taunton, which is normally very disabled friendly. This is a shared facility with young families and, on this occasion, I was appalled as the whole toilet was very dirty.

So come on everyone let's let people know when it's right and more importantly when it's good, as when you've got to go you've got go!

**Sandie Downer.**

■ **Do you have an opinion or view on any disability-related issues in the news? As a disabled person, are there any experiences or incidents you want to let people know about or get off your chest? If so, write to us (address on the front cover) or email [greg@compassdisability.org.uk](mailto:greg@compassdisability.org.uk)**

# New project is launched!

COMPASS Disability Services is launching an exciting new project this summer – **Compass Equality Network.**

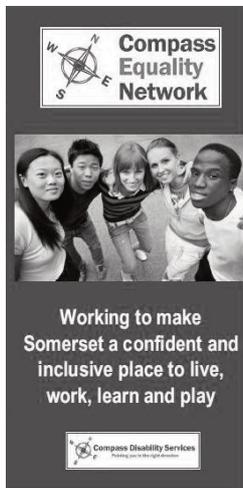
The aim of this project is bring individuals and organisations together who represent the diverse communities within Somerset to promote equality issues.

Membership of Compass Equality Network is free and any individual, organisation or professional with an interest in equality and diversity issues in Somerset is welcome to join.

Benefits of being a member include:

- Networking opportunities
- Training sessions on current topics
- The potential to influence equality and diversity issues in Somerset
- The potential to influence the development of the project.

Compass Disability Services is currently developing a dedicated website and will be organising a launch event in the summer – so watch this space! For more information, contact Nat Stevens on [nats@compassdisability.org.uk](mailto:nats@compassdisability.org.uk) or phone 0330 333 0089.



■ **The Compass Equality Network leaflet.**

## USEFUL CONTACTS



### Somerset Direct

PO Box 618, Taunton, TA1 3WF  
Tel: 0845 3459133 Minicom: 0800 7834518  
Email: [adults@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:adults@somerset.gov.uk)

### Care Connect North Somerset

North Somerset Council, Town Hall,  
Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1UJ  
Tel: 01275 888801 Minicom: 01275 888805  
Email: [care.connect@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:care.connect@n-somerset.gov.uk)

### Somerset Primary Care Trust

Wynford House, Lufton Way  
Yeovil, Somerset, BA22 8HR  
Tel: 01935 384000 Fax: 01935 384079  
Email: [headquarters@somersetpct.nhs.uk](mailto:headquarters@somersetpct.nhs.uk)

### Somerset Patient Advice & Liaison Service

NHS Somerset, Freepost RRKL-XKSC-ACSG  
Yeovil, BA22 8HR Tel: 0800 0851067  
Email: [pals@somerset.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@somerset.nhs.uk)

### North Somerset Primary Care Trust

Waverley House, Old Church Road,  
Clevedon, North Somerset, BS21 6NN  
Tel: 01275 546770 Fax: 01275 546769

### North Somerset Patient Advice and Liaison Service

Waverley House, Old Church Road,  
Clevedon, North Somerset, BS21 6NN  
Tel: 0800 923 2222 (Freephone)  
Email: [pals@nsomerset-pct.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@nsomerset-pct.nhs.uk)

**NHS Direct** Tel: 0845 4647

### Equality and Human Rights Commission Disability Helpline

FREEPOST MID02164,  
Stratford Upon Avon, CV37 9BR  
Tel: 0845 6046610  
Textphone: 08457 622644  
Website: [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

### RADAR

12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London,  
EC1V 8AF Tel: 020 7250 3222  
minicom: 020 7250 4119  
Email: [radar@radar.org.uk](mailto:radar@radar.org.uk)

**Crimestoppers** Tel: 0800 555111



# Compass Equality Network

# What's been making news?

Catch up with the disability-related stories that have been hitting the local and national headlines



## Documentary reveals abuse

A TELEVISION documentary, screened on May 31, revealed shocking levels of abuse at a residential hospital in Bristol.

During five weeks of undercover filming, a BBC Panorama reporter captured footage of some of the most vulnerable patients at the Winterbourne View being pinned down, slapped, dragged into showers while fully clothed, taunted and teased.

The hospital, which is a privately owned, purpose-built, taxpayer-funded, 24-bed facility, treats people with learning disabilities and autism.

Police have since arrested four people while the hospital's owners, Castlebeck, has suspended 13 employees.

Castlebeck has apologised, while NHS South West said it was "appalled" by the issues raised surrounding the care home.

## Cheap tickets are scrapped

**CHEAP tickets for carers of disabled people visiting the Royal Bath and West Show have been scrapped.**

**In previous years, disabled visitors have been able to buy one ticket and receive another discounted for a carer.**

**The move has been criticised by Somerset charity Compass Disability Services.**

**The charity's chief executive officer, Richard Pitman, said: "We are disappointed that organisers have introduced this policy that may prevent many disabled people from attending."**

**A show spokesman said: "Regrettably, the carers concessionary rate has had to be withdrawn because of misuse."**

**For the full story see the BBC Somerset website – <http://bbc.in/in14P0>**

## Letter slams Government

**THE government's changes to the welfare system are having a "devastating" impact on hundreds of thousands of people with mental health problems and have driven some of the most vulnerable to try to take their own lives, according to charities and medical experts.**

**An open letter published in the Guardian branded the government's drive to reassess 1.5 million people receiving incapacity benefit as "deeply flawed" and warned that the rapid pace of change is having dire consequences.**

**The letter was signed by leading mental health charities and a senior consultant from the Royal College of Psychiatrists.**

**For the full story, see <http://bit.ly/l1m6KZ>**

## Are Paralympics losing focus?

DAME Tanni Grey-Thompson has written a blog asking whether Paralympic sport is losing its focus?

The 11-time Paralympic champion said: "We have to be careful we are not in danger of discriminating within disability sport by picking those events which appear to be the most aesthetically pleasing and least likely to make the public feel uncomfortable watching."

Read the full blog at <http://bbc.in/jMIWIk>

## Accessible woods and forests

**THE Spinney, near Kingston St Mary, is among the ten best woods and forests in Britain for wheelchairs and buggies, according to a Guardian feature.**

**For the full article, go to <http://bit.ly/fDU5Um>**