



**Compass
Disability
Services**

Pointing you in the right direction

February 2011

NETWORKER

Have YOUR say on the crucial issues

DISABILITY-related issues have dominated the national agenda since the Coalition Government's Comprehensive Spending Review in October.

The limiting of Employment Support Allowance (formerly Incapacity Benefit) to one year and the removal of the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance for people living in care homes caused anger among disabled people, charities and campaigners alike.

The Coalition have since unveiled new schemes – such as Work Choice – to help disabled people into work, while vowing to press ahead with the previous Government's 'Personalisation' agenda, aimed at allowing disabled people more control over their own lives and the services they choose (see pages 10 and 11).

Compass Disability Services wants to know what YOU – disabled people, carers and organisations representing disabled people in Somerset and North Somerset – feel about the issues affecting your lives.

Do you feel spending cuts have unfairly targeted disabled people? Will the new work-related schemes succeed?

We also want to hear about other barriers faced by disabled people in their everyday lives. Which town centres and venues are accessible to wheelchair users or people with sensory impairments? Which are not? What



● Disabled people protest in response to the Government spending cuts. Photo: Dave Swinnerton

www.flickr.com/photos/54520312@N02/

forms of transport are accessible? Which do you avoid? Are sufficient resources available for people with learning disabilities?

From April, the Networker will include a 'Have your say' section which is an opportunity for local people to get their opinions and experiences into the public domain. You are free to comment anonymously or leave your name and location if you wish.

Post your views to 'Have your say' at Compass Disability Services at the address below or email greg@compassdisability.org.uk

If you can't wait until the next Networker to get something off your chest, you're welcome to start a thread or comment on our Facebook page, which is updated daily with the latest disability-related news, events and topics.

To receive updates to your Facebook profile, find our page – <http://on.fb.me/ccLZAA> – and click 

● Would you like to be part of the first Compass Insight group? Turn to page two for more details.

The Networker is produced by Compass Disability Services, Unit 11-12 Belvedere Trading Estate, Taunton, TA1 1BH.
Tel: 0330 3330089 or 01823 282823
Email: info@compassdisability.org.uk
Website: www.compassdisability.org.uk
Registered Charity Number: 1099376.

COMPASS POINTS

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.

An insight into views of disabled people

COMPASS Disability Services is establishing a new project to provide a snapshot of opinion on disability-related issues.

Compass Insight will enable the organisation to gain a local perspective on issues ranging from the accessibility of local travel routes to the impact of public spending cuts on disabled people.

This information can then be passed on to commissioners – the local authorities, health service and police force for example – to use when developing services and facilities or formulating policy.

We will compile a database of disabled people in Somerset and North Somerset, who will be asked to complete regular, simple surveys – of no more than five questions – at short notice.

For example, a question might ask: Are transport routes in Somerset accessible?



Compass Insight

Compass Disability Services CEO Richard Pitman thinks the service will give disabled people an invaluable opportunity to make a difference.

He said: "We believe Compass Insight will provide disabled people in Somerset and North Somerset with a simple but effective way to communicate their views on important local issues.

"Surveys will take no more than a couple of minutes to complete but, as long as enough people take part, will produce an accurate measure on a range of disability-related issues. Remember, this is your chance to make a difference."

Anyone, living in Somerset and North Somerset, who would like to become a member of Compass Insight should email greg@compassdisability.org.uk and provide your name, age, address, phone number and disability. Internet access is preferable, as the surveys will be completed online, but not essential as we can contact you by phone.

Please note, members may receive more than one survey a week and be asked to respond within 24 hours. We hope members will be able to fill in 50% of surveys throughout the year.

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Disability Somerset plans in full swing!

PREPARATIONS for Disability Somerset – our independent living exhibition – are now in full swing.

Exhibitor packs were distributed in December and there has been an excellent response from companies and organisations wishing to attend.

The event will promote independent living and anything related to disability and takes place at the Sedgemoor Auction Centre (near North Petherton), on Thursday, May 19th from 10am to 6pm.

It is a great opportunity for anyone wishing to promote services, products, equipment, mobility aids or anything at all that relates to disability.

Disabled people, carers and professionals

will be able to view the wealth of equipment, information and support available to enhance their quality of life.

Organisations who would like to exhibit can download an exhibitor pack from

www.disabilitysomerset.org.uk

or email

greg@compassdisability.org.uk
for more information.



Visitors can register for free

tickets by filling in the form on the

website. Tickets are not required to attend, but will entitle visitors to priority admission and a free goody bag on arrival.

A full Disability Somerset preview will appear in the April edition of the Networker. However, you can keep up to date with Disability Somerset news by logging on to the website or our Facebook and Twitter pages.

April re-launch planned for Equality Network

AS reported in the last edition of the Networker, the Forum for Equality and Diversity (FEDS) has been informed that, due to the local government budget cuts, there will be no future funding for the project.

Compass Disability Services has managed FEDS since 2006 and been involved since its inception.

We consider it important to maintain a pan-equality network for Somerset and are committed to developing an project under the Compass Disability Services umbrella on a permanent basis.

In line with the re-naming of other projects, it will become known as the Compass Equality Network.

We will be busy over the forthcoming months promoting membership and planning a re-launch of the project in April 2011 ... so watch this space!

Support daredevil duo's sky dive for

The dystonia society

COMPASS Disability Services employee Dominic Brown and his

partner Zoe Bush will be jumping out of an aeroplane and plunging 10,000 feet to the ground in April, in order to raise money for The Dystonia Society.

The couple have been involved in many previous fundraising events, with Zoe having raised over £2,000 for different charities. However, she admits this is her biggest challenge yet!

Dystonia is an incurable and disabling neurological movement disorder that affects more than 40,000 people in the UK. Even though dystonia is estimated to be about ten times more common than motor neurone disease, and the third most common neurological disorder, many people have never heard of it.

The Dystonia Society, a registered charity, devotes much time and many resources to fund research and promote awareness among medical professionals and public alike. If you would like to sponsor the daredevil duo, please send your donations to Compass Disability Services, care of Dominic, with any cheques made payable to The Dystonia Society.



Compass Disability Network Somerset

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

It is commissioned by various agencies who would like to understand the requirements of disabled people when developing their services or facilities.

The Network gathers the views of our members in various ways including invites to participate in focus groups, disability forums, questionnaires and site visits. We encourage the commissioning body to fund transport, care and communication support so that our events are fully inclusive.

The views gathered are fed back to the commissioning body who are then asked for their response. Some groups and forums

meet on a regular basis, some are one-off events. We hope that by adopting this cooperative approach with those commissioning our services that we are able to encourage their understanding of the needs of disabled people.

In return we are able to see services and facilities around the county become more and more inclusive.

Membership of the network is free, all members receive a free copy of the Networker and can be involved in as many or as few of the projects as they wish.

So, why not join the network today? Anyone interested should contact us on 01823 282823 or complete an online form by going to www.compassdisability.org.uk and following the links for membership.

Reminder over Disability Network name change

AS reported in the December edition of the Networker, the Somerset Access and Inclusion Network (SAIN) has changed to Compass Disability Network Somerset.

You will now see the new name appear on all correspondence you receive from us.

If you have access to the internet you will also now see the new name on the website.

However, we want to reassure members that even though the name has changed, the work of the Network and its related projects will remain the same.

Find Compass Disability Services
on Facebook and Twitter

YOU can now keep up to date with Compass Disability Services and the latest national and local disability issues, by finding us on Facebook and Twitter. Go to our Facebook page – <http://on.fb.me/ccLZAA> – and click on ‘Like’ to receive updates to your own profile or search for us on Twitter and click follow.

● For more information on the Compass Disability Network Somerset or to advise us that you will be attending an event, contact Mandy Seaman or Sadie Bull. Tel: 0330 3330089 or 01823 282823. Email: mandy@compassdisability.org.uk or sadie@compassdisability.org.uk
Compass Disability Services, Unit 11-12 Belvedere Trading Estate, Taunton, TA1 1BH

Questionnaire info passed to commissioners

THE Compass Disability Network has recently distributed two questionnaires covering different topics.

The first, distributed in December, concerned Disability Equality and covered many topics to try and understand the issues for disabled people living in Somerset.

We have now sent all completed questionnaires to Somerset County Council who will be using the information to form part of their objective setting for 2011.

The second questionnaire, distributed in January, surrounded the issue of Age Equality, as part of a review being carried out by NHS Somerset and Somerset County Council.

Feedback was received from Network members concerning the wording of this questionnaire and we are grateful to those that took time to do this. Comments have now been passed on to the commissioners.

The questions were pre-set by the Department Of Health and were aimed at internal staff as well as individuals. However, as they acknowledged, this meant the

statements were long and wordy.

We are very grateful to Network members that took time to go through this and respond.

We appreciate that both questionnaires were sent in a short space of time and will endeavour to try and space them out a bit more in future.

In addition to this, in future we will only send information to those of you that have told us that you want to complete questionnaires.

Please contact us and let us know if you want to change the way you get involved with the Network.

For example, if you only want to receive the Networker and attend events, we can update the membership database to ensure this happens.

As always we are grateful for our members' involvement and commitment to our organisation.

If you do not have access to the internet and would like to receive copies of any information we publish on our website surrounding the above please let us know and we can arrange this.

Council Leader to attend Deane Discussion Group

THE next meeting of the Taunton Deane Disability Discussion Group will take place on Tuesday, March 29th, from 10.30am to 12.30pm at Compass Disability Services offices in Taunton.

Cllr John Williams – Leader of Taunton Deane Borough Council – will be attending to discuss feedback from the meeting which took place in September.

Further information will be sent to all members living in the Taunton Deane area shortly.

If you are a disabled person (or a carer) living in Taunton Deane, transport can be



● **The Panel take a question during the last Taunton Deane Disability Discussion Group in September.**

provided to enable you to attend this meeting.

If you would like to attend, please contact us for more details.

Boost for Countryside Mobility SW

COUNTRYSIDE Mobility South West (CMSW) have received a boost following exciting news that Natural England have extended their Big Lottery funding for an extra year, until February 2013.

The extension gives them more time to find new sites and will enable many more people to explore the fantastic South West countryside using their Trampers (all-terrain scooters) and Wheelyboats (wheelchair accessible boats). It will also ensure they have plans in place to keep the project going when Lottery funding stops in two years time.

Meanwhile, CMSW's sixth Trampler site has been launched on Exmoor thanks to financial support from the Exmoor National Park Authority Sustainable Development Fund. Members can now explore two trails in the National Trust's stunning Heddon Valley, near Parracombe. From March, another seven CMSW sites will begin hiring Trampers – The Royal Horticultural Society Rosemoor Gardens in North Devon, Crickley Hill Country Park in Gloucester, Castle Drogo on Dartmoor, Batsford Arboretum in the Cotswolds, Seale Hayne in Newton Abbot, The Granite Way in Okehampton and the Grand Western Canal in Tiverton.

VISTA offer free courses this Spring

VISTA is offering a number of free courses in the Spring.

They are aimed at people in communities and organisations who want to become more empowered to: Influence decisions and change, share their positive experiences of learning, understand more about citizenship, develop skills to support and understand people with visual impairments.

The courses are:

- **Parliamentary Outreach**, Wed, Feb 16th, at the Albemarle Centre, Taunton;
- **Community Learning Champions**, Tuesdays, Feb 8th, 15th, 22nd, March 1st, 8th, 15th at the Recreation Centre, Bridgwater;

- **Getting Started with Post 16**

Citizenship, Mon, March 14th in Bridgwater;

- **Diversity, Community Cohesion and Post 16 Citizenship**, Tues, March 15th in Bridgwater;

- **Citizenship and Learner Voice**, Tues, March 22nd in Bridgwater;

- **Understanding Visual Impairment**, Mondays, March 7th, 14th and 21st at Northfield House, Taunton, cost £89.

To book visit www.vistaproject.org.uk or call 0845 3580372.

The therapeutic benefits of nature

'GO Wild, Stay Well' is a collaboration between Mind in Taunton and West Somerset and Somerset Wildlife Trust, through which people experiencing mental distress can feel the therapeutic benefits of nature by taking part in ten weekly sessions of conservation work on several stunning nature reserves in the Blackdown and Quantock Hills.

Each session also includes a walk around the reserve with a member of the Somerset Wildlife Trust staff.

As with all Mind projects it is designed to help people who can feel marginalised by society to participate fully in life.

The project began in July 2010 and immediately received positive feedback from the group. There was great camaraderie between the group and a number of people said the sessions helped them sleep better.

In an interview with The Ecologist website, project manager Dave Topham said: "Ecotherapy is just a posh way of saying 'get into the natural environment, do something physical and you'll feel better about yourself'.

"It's not complicated but it's very effective."

The project is part-funded by Ecominds, a scheme managed by Mind on behalf of the BIG lottery fund.

It funds local environmental projects that support thousands of people with direct experience of mental distress, involving them in outdoor projects to improve confidence and self-esteem.

Helping those with eating disorders

SOMERSET and Wessex Eating Disorders Association (SWEDA) is supporting Eating Disorders Awareness Week February 21st to 25th.

Eating disorders, which include anorexia, bulimia and compulsive eating, are often misrepresented as 'faddy' dieting but the truth is they are devastating and potentially life-threatening psychological conditions – anorexia nervosa has the highest mortality rate of any psychological disorder.

However, with support many people go on to lead fulfilled lives, free of eating disorders.

SWEDA, based in Street but serving the whole of Somerset, offers help and support to anyone – sufferers or carers – affected by eating disorders.

It offers a wide range of accessible services, with a person-centred ethos. SWEDA's services include telephone and online support, face-to-face community support, support groups, life skills and specialist one-to-one counselling.

If you are affected by an eating disorder, you can find out more about SWEDA and their services at www.swedauk.org

Inclusive first aid course

THE British Red Cross is running a unique, inclusive first aid course for people with disabilities and mental health issues.

The free course, funded by the Somerset Learning and Skills Council, is designed to include groups or individuals who may require a more flexible approach to learning first aid skills.

The Red Cross wants to work with organisations whose clients are disabled and/or have learning difficulties and mental health issues. Learning first aid skills isn't just about making someone a potential life saver – it helps increase their confidence, independence and self-esteem."

For further Information, contact Suzi White 01823 273712 or email susanwhite@redcross.org.uk

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Patient transport views wanted

THE Somerset LINK (Local Involvement Network) is asking all patients who have used patient transport in the last year to pass on their views – whether they used community transport, a voluntary car scheme or a booked ambulance.

The LINK has heard from local residents that transport to hospitals and health clinics is an issue that is of particular concern to them, and have been asked by NHS Somerset and Somerset County Council to find out patients' views about transport services, so they can be improved.

They have therefore launched a Patient Transport Survey which will run until the end of February to give patients the chance to have their say.

You should find a copy of the Transport Survey enclosed with this edition of the Networker. You can complete the survey online, by post, or by email.

For more information about this project, or to take this survey online, visit www.patienttransportsurvey.org.uk

You can also contact Lucy Nicholls at the Somerset LINK office on 01458 250674 or email lucy.nicholls@helpandcare.org.uk

● THE Somerset LINK (Local Involvement Network) is a network of Somerset people and community groups who want to feed back their experiences of health services and social care and suggest improvements to how they are run.



NEWS from the



Compass Disability Network North Somerset

About the Network

THE Compass Disability Network North Somerset started in April 2010, as the North Somerset Disabled People's Network.

It is a network of disabled people, carers and organisations that represent or work with disabled people.

Membership of the network is free for individuals and organisations.

The project's aim is to gain people's views on a wide range of topics and issues to help organisations understand the needs and wants of disabled people when they are designing or developing services in North Somerset.

The project has just undergone a change of name from the North Somerset Disabled People's Network to the Compass Disability Network.

Compass Disability Services has therefore expanded its Somerset newsletter, *Networker*, to incorporate North Somerset news and information, to reflect this wider

geographical area.

We hope that members of the new project will find this information both useful and informative.

Improving access and inclusion

One of the main aims of the Compass Disability Network North Somerset is to improve inclusion and access to services for disabled people in North Somerset.

We will conduct research and consult disabled people to enable the network to become a strong voice for disabled people in North Somerset.

We are working with North Somerset Council and as the network develops we will strive to work alongside other service providers and organisations that can benefit from the network's knowledge and expertise.

We will aim to include members in consultation projects and feed back views and opinions on a wide range of topics to the various bodies that are looking to develop or improve services and facilities in the area.

Council undertakes Social Care Survey

NORTH Somerset Council are undertaking a Social Care User Survey.

It is part of their annual programme of statutory returns to government and the information will be used locally to help improve services.

The survey has several changes from previous ones, the most notable being the focus moving away from experience of a specific service to an outcome-based survey that evaluates the effect that social care

provision has on people's quality of life.

It will include a random sample of people using all types of social care services, including homecare, meals-on-wheels, learning disability provisions and residential homes. The council will be taking extra care when contacting people who are vulnerable or who have complex needs.

The survey closes on March 11th and the results will be published by September 11th.

Network members feed back views

THE report from the Compass Disability Network North Somerset's consultation activities last November has now been completed.

Everyone who took part in the meetings and requested a copy of the questionnaire has been sent one. It has also been sent to our contacts at North Somerset Council.

The purpose of the consultation was to meet with our members and offer the opportunity to voice their opinions on issues affecting disabled people in the area.

The report includes information on the process we undertook as well as the findings we gathered.

If you would like to read this report and you have access to the internet you can go to our website

www.compassdisabilitynetwork.org.uk and click on 'The Network in North Somerset' on the left-hand side of the page or contact network coordinator Nat Stevens on 0330 333 0089 and a copy will be sent to you.

In summary, the network engaged with 23 people through meetings and postal questionnaires and a number of issues arose as priorities including:

- **Transport accessibility.** A recurring theme throughout the consultation process was the issue of physical access relating to transport, particularly bus services. A number of times this was in relation to wheelchair access, but not exclusively.

- **Accessible taxis.** Many people felt that even if they wanted to use a taxi, it was still not an option as the provision of accessible taxis across the whole area is poor.

- **Blue badge parking.** Lack of allocated blue badge parking spaces and apparent lack of monitoring of abuse of the system was one of the focal points of discussion at the Weston-super-Mare meeting, which was

echoed at other meetings and throughout several of the questionnaires.

- **Access to premises.** This issue was mentioned several times, as was general pedestrian access, including limited provision of dropped kerbs, which was described by someone as "insufficient".

- **Lack of influence over services provided by public authorities.** People felt that as individuals they had little chance of having their voices heard.

- **Access to information.** Some people thought that access to information was good whereas others thought it was lacking. However a common theme was that people said they did not know where to start when looking for information.

- **Health services.** On the whole people thought their health services were good although some access issues were identified, and several services were cited as "missing".

- **Consultation.** Many people wanted to be consulted over a number of issues, but do not have a representative body to facilitate this.

Overall people were glad of the opportunity to meet the Network and be given the opportunity to express their views.

Network coordinator Nat Stevens said: "We certainly felt that we gathered a great quality and quantity of information.

"There is obviously lots of work that could be done in North Somerset although in the current time of budget cuts we cannot assume that Compass Disability Network will be able to proceed with addressing these issues straight away.

"However, we should not allow the current economic climate to be used as an excuse by the public authorities not to respond, and to this end, Compass Disability Network in North Somerset will continue to raise these issues on behalf of our members."

● Anyone interested in becoming an individual or associate member of the Compass Disability Network North Somerset should contact Nat Stevens or Steven Aughton on 0330 3330089 or email: nats@compassdisability.org.uk

February Focus: Personalisation

WHAT IS PERSONALISATION?

PERSONALISATION in social care is the process of enabling people to have maximum choice and control over the services they receive.

Personalisation means starting with the person, not the service.

It recognises that the individual is best placed to decide what they need and how those needs can be met.

The Department of Health described personalisation as meaning that “every person who receives support, whether provided by statutory services or funded by themselves, will have choice and control over the shape of that support in all care settings”.

In 2007, the Government paper ‘Putting People First’, set out a vision for personalisation.

The Coalition Government has vowed to press ahead with the policy.

Different councils are at different stages of implementing personalisation and each council will have a personalisation lead who should be contacted for further information.

WHAT DOES PERSONALISATION INVOLVE?

USERS can either take their personal budget as a direct payment, or – while still choosing how their care needs are met and by who – leave councils with the responsibility to commission the services. Or they can have a combination of the two.

As a result, they provide an option for people who do not want to take on the responsibilities of a direct payment.

A **Direct Payment** is a cash payment from Adult Social Care made to individuals which is based on an assessment of the amount of support they are judged to need.

The person can use the cash payment to

meet their support needs. This may include employing personal assistants, buying special equipment or accessing activities.

With direct payments the person has the full responsibility of spending the money including the responsibilities of employing and paying their staff, for which Compass Disability Services provide support.

For a **Personal Budget**, an assessment of support needs is made, following which a payment is made by Adult Social Care Services for the purpose of meeting those needs.

A person can choose to either take their personal budget as a Direct Payment or by letting the council purchase your support from an agency who you choose.

Individual Budgets also involve an assessment of needs, but an overall budget is set for a range of services with money coming not just from Adult Social Care but also from a number of benefits and grants.

HOW CAN PERSONALISATION WORK FOR YOU?

WHILE some people will choose to plan and manage their own support, others may find this too difficult or too time consuming.

Similarly some people will want to manage their own money (their personal budget), while others would like somebody else to look after it.

If an individual isn't ready to take full control of their money and support plan, help will be available in the form of the local authority, service providers and brokerage services.

For example, Compass Disability Services is contracted to provide Direct Payment Support Services in Wiltshire.

This support involves a payroll and banking service for people who choose to employ their own care staff which is available to anyone funding their own care – see page 11 for more details.

February Focus: Personalisation

Want to employ your own staff? We can help!

ONE of the fundamental principles of personalisation is enabling people to choose the care they receive.

This could involve employing your own care support staff to help with a range of requirements from meal preparation to full-time live-in care.

However, it can be quite daunting having to deal with the paperwork and responsibilities involved, such as paying staff and dealing with tax and National Insurance.

That's where Compass Disability Services can help. We offer an affordable payroll service which can produce payslips and

keep all the necessary records such as income tax and National Insurance, Statutory Sick Pay, maternity pay and holiday pay. We can also complete year end returns and submit them to the tax office.

And, if you don't want the fuss of sorting out the payments to your staff and the tax office, you can give us one payment each month and we will make the separate payments on your behalf.

If you are interested in using our payroll service, please contact us on 01823 282823 or email info@compassdisability.org.uk for more details.

Personal Health Budgets piloted in Somerset

COMPASS Disability Services is supporting patients of NHS Somerset in a pilot for Personal Budgets and Direct Payments for health care.

Until now these forms of self-directed support have only been available for social care. However, NHS Somerset is taking part in a national pilot for Personal Health Budgets and are one of the first nine health authorities in the country to be allowed to use direct payments.

A Personal Health Budget will allow patients to plan and manage their own care, though people who are not able to do this will be able to appoint a nominee.

They will be able to choose the people that deliver their care and the times it is done.

Patients will also be able to purchase some things that the NHS can not provide. The important thing is that the individual's 'personal health outcomes', which will be agreed with NHS Somerset, are met.

When a Support Plan has been agreed, the patient can decide whether to have a 'direct payment' to manage the budget themselves, or to ask NHS Somerset to manage a

'notional budget' on their behalf.

Compass Disability Services' involvement in this project is to support the patient to draw up their support plan and manage the Direct Payment.

Its aim is to encourage people to be as independent as possible, enabling maximum choice and control, while removing the stresses involved in such matters as employing your own staff.

To join the pilot you must be eligible for Continuing Health Care and, either an adult with a long term neurological condition or learning disability, or be in transition from children's to adult services.

Anyone interested in taking part in the pilot should contact Liz Little at NHS Somerset on 01935 384015.

Central Government strategy states that Personal Health Budgets will be rolled out to all in the future, so whilst this is a pilot it should determine how they are made available to all, rather than if.

This means that more of us should be able to exercise control over our ongoing health care in the future.



● **Brian Knight (second from left), of Roadwater Post Office and Stores, receives the Overall County Award.**



● **The 2010 Accessible Somerset Award winners are pictured with Compass Disability Services CEO Richard Pitman (centre front).**

Accessibility rewarded

WINNERS of the 2010 Accessible Somerset Awards received their prizes at a special ceremony held ahead of the United Nations International Day of Disabled People in December.

The Awards, run by Compass Disability Services, recognise businesses and services that have gone the extra mile for disabled people,

not simply in terms of physical accessibility but by providing an excellent all-round service.

Roadwater Post Office and Stores was named Overall County Winner and also won the West Somerset Service Award, while Dillington House and Somerset Rural Youth Project picked up the other county-wide awards.

● **More photos on page 13**



● **Annie Diffey (second from left), of Somerset Rural Youth Project, receives the 'Nominated by a Young Person' Award.**

ACCESSIBLE SOMERSET FULL LIST OF WINNERS

Overall County Winner: Roadwater Post Office and Stores. **CEO's Award:** Dillington House. **Nominated by a Young Person Award:** Somerset Rural Youth Project. **Sedgemoor awards:** Service – Somerset Rural Youth Project; A Place to Eat – The Dunstan Inn, Burnham. **Mendip:** Service winner – BIBIC. **South Somerset:** Recreation – The Balsam Centre, Wincanton; Service – Long Sutton Post Office and Stores; A Place to Eat – The Secret Garden, Chard. **Taunton Deane:** Recreation – Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership (SASP); Service – Taunton Rugby Club; A Place to Eat – Piazza Coffee House, Taunton. **West Somerset:** Accommodation – Primrose Hill Holidays, Blue Anchor; Recreation – Orchard Social Club, Timberscombe; Service – Roadwater Post Office and Shop; A Place to Eat – Brambles Coffee Shop, Minehead.



● **Jacinta Elliott, of Dillington House, receives the CEO's Award.**



● The winners in the West Somerset District are pictured with District Council Chairman, Cllr Eddie May and Compass Disability Services CEO Richard Pitman.



● District and County Councillors who attended the awards ceremony are (back from left) Cllr Damon Hooton, Cllr Roy Mills, Cllr Eddie May, Cllr John Edney. Front: Cathy Magill (Trustee and Chair of Compass Disability Services), Taunton Deane Mayor Cllr Jefferson Horsley Richard Pitman (CEO), Cllr Jane Morton.



● The Taunton Deane District winners are pictured with Taunton Deane Mayor, Cllr Jefferson Horsley, and Compass Disability Services CEO Richard Pitman.

Prestigious accolade for Winford Manor

WINFORD Manor Hotel won a prestigious award for accessibility at the South West Tourism Excellence Awards.

The accolade for Winford Manor, based near Bristol Airport, comes just after finishing second in the Sian Lloyd-Jones Business Enterprise Awards.

Winford Manor scooped the Bronze 'Access for All' Award at the regional awards, which are known as the 'tourism Oscars,' and aim to promote and reward excellence in the industry.

The winners went through an exhaustive judging process, consisting of detailed entry forms and mystery visits and were whittled down from over 300 entries.

Tracey Beck, general manager of Winford Manor, said: "We are delighted and very proud to receive a bronze award and recognition for our accessible facilities and services.

"At Winford Manor, we are passionate in making all our services accessible for everyone who visits. Winning awards such as this pays testament to the hard work by everyone involved with Winford Manor since its opening in 2008."

Free course for carers

'LOOKING After Me' is a free course for adults who care for someone living with a long-term health condition or disability.

The course, run by Expert Patients Programme Community Interest Company aims to help carers make more time to look after their own health and feel more in control.

The course is led by trained tutors who have experience of caring and runs over six weekly sessions. The next course in Somerset starts on Thursday, February 24th in Yeovil, from 10.30am to 1pm. Courses are funded by NHS Somerset and Somerset County Council.

To book a place, call freephone 0800 988 5520.

What's been making news?



Catch up with the disability-related issues that have been hitting the headlines

Disability organisations press for reversal over mobility cut

LEADING disability organisations have joined forces to produce a report – ‘Don’t Limit Mobility’ – urging the government to reverse the decision to cut mobility allowance.

Plans to axe the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for care home residents were announced as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review in the autumn.

Government cuts to funds which help disabled people get around will take those hit “back to the dark ages”, charities have warned.

The removal of the money is now under fire from a group of 27 organisations representing disabled people, including Mencap, Scope and the Royal National Institute of Blind People.

The groups argue the cuts will hit about 80,000 people and have submitted the report to MPs and urged them to reconsider.

For the full Press Association article, see <http://bit.ly/gMq7E3>

To download the ‘Don’t Limit Mobility’ report, go to <http://bit.ly/fionHu>

Government warned cuts could breach human rights laws

PLANS to cut disability benefits could breach human rights laws, the government has been warned.

Ministers want to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) with a new Personal Independence Payment.

The government says the changes are designed to streamline the system as well as make cuts of 20%.

From the BBC News website – <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12141725>

Campaigners protest over Work Capability Assessment

DISABILITY rights campaigners have protested outside the London HQ of Atos Origin against the medical testing of those claiming disability and sickness benefits.

Campaigners claim the Work Capability Assessment, which is carried out by Atos, is deeply flawed.

See full story – <http://bit.ly/fKEEq>

Travel industry failing to cater for disabled people

THE British travel industry is not doing enough to meet the needs of disabled people, according to a study.

The study, carried out by Tourism for All, a British-based charity that specialises in travel for the disabled, found that 85 per cent of respondents did not believe travel agents understand the needs of disabled travellers, and 78 per cent did not feel they were catered for by high street agents.

The survey also found that 35 per cent would not consider booking with a mainstream travel agent.

For the full story from the Daily Telegraph, see <http://bit.ly/igv04N>

CEO airs views on rail travel for BBC Radio news feature

ON the subject of travel, Compass Disability Services CEO Richard Pitman aired his views on rail travel on BBC Radio Somerset last month.

The news feature was in response to a network-wide mystery shopping exercise by rail watchdog Passenger Focus, assessing the quality of help given to disabled

passengers who book through the Assisted Passenger Reservation System (APRS).

The study found that, while many disabled customers experienced some excellent examples of service, some are still being left stranded on the train or waiting on the platform without help, despite booking assistance from rail companies.

Richard said: "Generally the (APRS) system works very well, but I've had instances of getting to Paddington Station and having to set my wheelchair foot plate out of the door so no-one can shut the door and drive off again.

For the full article go to: <http://bit.ly/faQ2Yt>

Surf's up for youngsters

A CORNWALL charity has teamed up with ITV Fixers to encourage young disabled people to have a go at surfing.

With this aim in mind, Freedom Surf, based in Newquay, enlisted the help of ITV Fixers to build a website – Surf4Freedom.

The website provides information on the best beaches to visit with disabled access and facilities, links to useful organisations, a forum for users to share experiences and information and an events page.

View the website at www.surf4freedom.com and for the ITV Fixers article, go to <http://bit.ly/hl32L9>

Shuker denied by injury

SOMERSET'S Lucy Shuker made a winning start to the 2011 NEC Wheelchair Tennis Tour, but subsequently had to withdraw from the Queensland Open in Brisbane due to injury.

The British No. 1 and world No. 8 comfortably defeated Australia's Luba Josevski 6-1, 6-1 but unfortunately had to pull out of her semi-final against Dutch second seed and world No 5 Aniek van Koot.

■ IF you have an opinion or view on the issues highlighted in the Networker, we want to hear them.

■ GET in contact by calling 01823 282823 or emailing Greg Jackson on greg@compassdisability.org.uk

USEFUL CONTACTS



Somerset Direct

PO Box 618, Taunton, TA1 3WF
Tel: 0845 3459133 Minicom: 0800 7834518
Email: 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

Somerset Primary Care Trust

Wynford House, Lufton Way
Yeovil, Somerset, BA22 8HR
Tel: 01935 384000 Fax: 01935 384079
Email: 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

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

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

RADAR

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

Crimestoppers Tel: 0800 555111

VAT concessions for disabled people

WITH value added tax (VAT) going up from 17.5% to 20% at the start of 2011, disabled people should be aware that they are entitled to concessions over VAT on a range of products and services.

VAT is a tax that you pay as a consumer when buying goods and services.

Concessions for disabled people

Disabled people do not have to pay VAT when they buy equipment that has been designed for disabled people or when they have equipment adapted so they can use it.

Examples include wheelchairs, some medical and surgical appliances (eg artificial limbs), electrically or mechanically adjustable beds, chair or stair lifts, computer software or hardware designed for disabled people and gadgets and devices designed to make everyday tasks easier.

VAT is also not charged on some services provided to disabled people, including the servicing, maintenance and installation of disability equipment, adaptation work on equipment or appliances so a disabled person can use them, and building work to adapt to a home.

VAT law states that you must be 'chronically sick or disabled' to qualify for VAT relief.

How VAT reliefs work

Before you pay for any product or service, check that it qualifies for 'zero-rating' and that the supplier is registered for VAT.

When you buy a zero-rated product or service, you may have to sign a form declaring that you have a chronic illness or disability and what it is.

Withdrawal of disability related VAT concessions

HMRC has given notice of the withdrawal VAT concessions which will affect disabled people. These relate to the payment of VAT on motor vehicles.

Previously the purchase and adaption of a car, where the car is adapted after it is acquired, would have been VAT zero-rated, but this will no longer be the case.

However, VAT zero-rating is still available on motor vehicles that are adapted before the vehicle is supplied, provided all other qualifying conditions are met.

● **To read the full report, which gives details of these changes, see the HMRC website (page 11 has the specific information relating to this concession): www.hmrc.gov.uk/menus/extra-stat-con-tn.pdf**

Donate your scrap car to Compass Disability Services

COMPASS Disability Services is serving up a 'bangers and cash' initiative as part of a novel fund-raising drive.

We have become one of the first charities in the county to team up with Giveacar, a

social enterprise which collects unwanted cars for charity – turning scrap into cash.

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

Proceeds from the sale are then donated to Compass Disability Services. Even if the banger is scrapped, it still raises between £40



and £160 for us.

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.