



**Compass
Disability
Services**

Pointing you in the right direction

October 2010



NETWORKER

Disability Somerset 2011 to take place in May

COMPASS Disability Services has announced that its 2011 independent living exhibition, Disability Somerset, will take place on Thursday, May 19th.

Disability Somerset will cover the entire spectrum of disability. It will provide a great opportunity for groups, businesses, and organisations to promote services, products, equipment, mobility aids or anything that relates to disability and independent living.

Our mission at Compass Disability Services is to enable disabled people to have equality of opportunity. The event has been organised with this in mind and to help promote disability awareness in Somerset and the South West.

Disability Somerset will take place at

Junction 24, Sedgemoor Auction Centre.

More details of the event will be included in forthcoming issues of the Networker and exhibitors invitation packs will be sent out shortly. However, if you would like to register your interest now, please email greg@compassdisability.org.uk and you will be added to the distribution list.

Accessible Somerset Awards

A BIG thank-you to everyone who took the time to fill out an Accessible Somerset nomination form.

The awards are run by Compass Disability Services to recognise businesses and organisations which have gone the 'extra mile' for disabled people. The awards will be judged by a panel of disabled people and the presentation ceremony will take place on December 1st, two days before 'International Day of Disabled People.'

The nomination period is due to close soon but there might still be time for you to nominate. You can fill out a form online at www.accesssomerset.org.uk

The Networker is produced by Compass Disability Services

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Registered Charity Number: 1099376.

■ HELLO readers, my name's Greg Jackson and I'd like to introduce myself having just taken over production of the Networker from Michelle Edwards.

I was appointed Media Officer at Compass Disability Services in June after spending ten years at the Somerset County Gazette, where I was sports editor.

I'm very much looking forward to working on what I'm sure readers will agree is a hugely interesting and informative



publication. I hope to continue the excellent work of Michelle, who remains Operations Manager at Compass Disability Services. I'm interested to hear from readers and members of our various projects, so if anyone has an article they would like to submit, please email greg@compassdisability.org.uk

Likewise, if anyone has an opinion on any articles that appear in the Networker, or on the newsletter itself, please let us know. Enjoy the October edition!

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 and beliefs, combined with our mission, have allowed us to spread our influence not only in Somerset but also in 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 various options to give further voice to disabled people.

Compass Disability Services works through consultation, representation and service delivery, facilitating various projects including the Somerset Access and Inclusion Network (SAIN), the Forum for Equality and Diversity in Somerset (FEDS) and the Wiltshire Direct Payment Support Service.

Raise funds for Compass simply by surfing the web!

YOU can now raise funds for Compass Disability Services simply by surfing the web or shopping online.

By making just ten searches a day through free charity search engine 'easysearch', you should generate around £20 a year for our charity. All you have to do is use the Compass Disability Services 'easysearch' page (<http://cds.easysearch.org.uk/>) for your web searches or set it up as your browser's default search engine.

AND, you can also help Compass Disability Services by shopping online through easysearch's easyfundraising site.

easysearch
.org.uk

You still shop directly with each retailer as you would normally, but by using links from the easyfundraising site,

each purchase you make will generate a cashback donation to Compass. For example, if you spend £25 with WH Smith, 3.5% (£0.88) will be donated to Compass at no extra cost to your purchase.

You can shop from 2,000 of the UK's best-known retailers, including Amazon, M&S, Argos, John Lewis and HMV. All you have to do is click on the easyfundraising tab on the Compass easysearch site, sign up and search for the store you want.

facebook

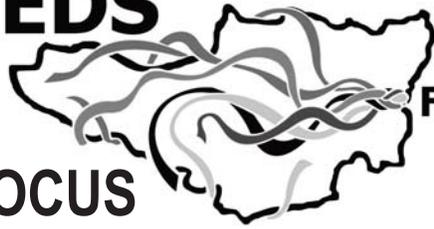
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on Facebook and Twitter**

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■ **ABOUT FEDS:** The Forum for Equality and Diversity in Somerset (FEDS) is a network established to promote equality and diversity in Somerset, through consultation, monitoring and support to all sectors. The Forum is managed by a steering group made up of representatives of organisations

from the voluntary and community sector that work within each of the six equality strands, the public sector Somerset Equality Officers Group and the business sector. Compass Disability Services manages the Forum and is funded to provide a development worker.

FEDS Governance Review

AS reported in the August FEDS Focus, we are undergoing a review of the way FEDS is governed and structured.

We hope to report the Steering Group's conclusions in our next update.

The Equality Act 2010

THE over-arching aim of the new Equality Act is to simplify discrimination legislation.

The majority of the Act came into force on October 1st, but the Government is still considering the implementation of the remaining provisions, and decisions will be announced in due course.

Some of the rights and responsibilities remain the same within the Equality Act. For example, direct discrimination still occurs when 'someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic'.

Among changes made, employees will now be able to complain of harassment even if it is not directed at them, if they can demonstrate that it creates an offensive environment for them.

The Act also extends protection to include associative discrimination – direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

New to the Act is the concept of discrimination arising from disability –

protection from discrimination that occurs because of something connected to a person's disability.

The Act defines nine 'protected characteristics' – age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, gender and sexual orientation.

There have also been changes made in the definitions of:

■ **Disability** – The Act is designed to make it easier for a person to show that they are disabled and protected from disability discrimination.

■ **Gender reassignment** – The Act will provide protection for transsexual people, someone who is 'proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex'.

The Act defines discrimination by reference to direct, associative, perceptive and indirect discrimination, harassment, third party harassment and victimisation.

■ **For more on the Equality Act 2010, visit the Government Equalities Office website: www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_bill.aspx**

For more information on FEDS contact Nat Stevens on 0330 3330089 or email nats@compassdisability.org.uk



THE Somerset Access and Inclusion Network's (SAIN) aim is to bring together disabled people, their carers and organisations that represent disabled people, to access their views on various topics.

We are commissioned by various agencies who would like to understand the wants and needs of disabled people when developing their services or facilities.

We gather 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.

Why not join the network today? Anyone interested in joining should contact us on 0330 3330089 or 01823 282823 or complete an online membership form at www.compassdisability.org.uk

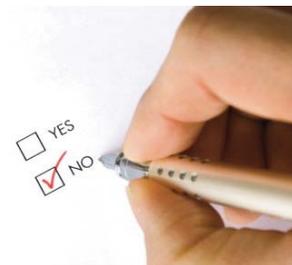


You can now link up with Compass Disability Services on Facebook!

- **Log on to Facebook and search for Compass Disability Services.**
- **Click on the  icon to become a fan and receive updates about our organisation to your own Facebook profile newsfeed.**
- **We also want your feedback so post comments about any of our projects or news items on our wall.**

Library Service questionnaire

WE were recently approached by Somerset County Council's Heritage and Library Service to distribute a questionnaire to all our members with a hearing impairment.



The survey asked what improvements people would like to see in terms of communication and what methods of contact people preferred. This is part of a piece of work, which also involved the County Council consulting with focus groups.

Thank you to everyone that took time to answer the survey. We received 54 responses which we were really pleased with. The information compiled will now be sent to the library service to help them with future planning of the service.

FOR more information on any of the SAIN projects or to advise us that you will be attending an event please 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

SAIN Membership Evaluation

WE have continued to analyse the comments received from our members in the Annual SAIN Membership Evaluation.

We want to take this opportunity to respond to some of the comments received concerning the consultation meetings and events which take place.

Attending meetings – Some members commented that they were unable to attend meetings due to their disability, distance or transport. We understand that it is not always possible for members to attend a meeting. But for those who may wish to do so in the future we wanted to make you aware of the support and transport options available.

■ Communication support can be provided free of charge for people who are hard of hearing or deaf, such as an electronic note taker or a British Sign Language/English interpreter.

An electronic note taker provides a clear account of a meeting, using laptop computers and special software.

They use two laptops, one for the user and one for the operator. The operator types a summary of what is being said into the computer and the text appears on the user's screen.

■ Free transport is now provided for the majority of our events. This is, of course, dependent on funding but in most cases we can arrange all your transport needs to get you to and from a meeting. This can include the need to have a tail lift vehicle for powered wheelchair users.

In addition, we are usually able to reimburse members with mileage expenses if you use your own transport to travel to meetings.

■ Other support, which you may need, can also be provided such as a sitter/carer to stay

with the person you care for to enable you to attend, a guide for a visually impaired person or someone to assist you to get a drink.

In all cases we would encourage you to ask as we will always do our best to meet our members' needs.

There is often a misunderstanding that our meetings are for people with physical impairments only. This is not the case – we encourage people with all impairments and backgrounds to take part.

These include – but are not limited to people with – experience of mental distress, learning disabilities, visual and hearing impairments and people with physical impairments.

The Networker newsletter –

Many members said they would like to publicise a particular group in the Networker or see an article from a member sharing their experience.

We actively encourage individuals to submit articles to share their experiences and would welcome articles on clubs or groups that you may be involved with that would be of interest to other members.

We do not provide articles advertising items for sale because we do not wish to duplicate what's already available through the Livewire publication. You can contact Livewire by calling 01278 451738 or emailing

liverwire.somerset@btopenworld.com

If you would like to receive your copy of the Networker on CD, please contact the office and we will arrange it.

Events diary

Following your requests, we have added an events diary to the newsletter with information on what's coming up. **You can see the diary on page 7.**



New beginning for leading Somerset charity

INTERNATIONAL Older People's Day on Friday, October 1st heralded a new beginning for Somerset's leading charity dedicated to making later life better for local people.

Age Concern Somerset changed its name and branding to become Age UK Somerset at a celebration led by Lady Gass, Lord Lieutenant of Somerset and Patron of Age UK Somerset.

Lady Gass was joined by clients, stakeholders, volunteers and staff to launch the charity's new name and officially open new offices in Taunton.

Age UK Somerset's Chief Executive Libby Lisgo, said: "We are delighted to be part of the new Age UK family. Working closely with the national charity will mean we can continue and improve the great work we already do for people in later life in Somerset and North Somerset."

This move follows the launch of national charity Age UK, the new force combining Age Concern and Help the Aged. Age UK Somerset will continue to provide tailored support and services including advocacy, information and advice, and fitness activities.

Libby Lisgo added: "Older people's day is about encouraging us to prepare well for and



make more of later life to the benefit of us as individuals and society as a whole.

"We decided to mark this focus on older people to launch our new name, new offices and remind people about our services.

"Although on the surface we may look slightly different now, we still provide a wide range of support to help people get the most out of their later years and we are still only a phone call away."

Helena Herklots, Services Director at Age UK, said: "We are delighted that Age UK Somerset has joined us as one of our key partners. Age UK Somerset is a fantastic charity and we look forward to working with and supporting them in all that they do for people in later life in the years ahead."

Visitors are welcome at the new offices at Ash House, Cook Way, Bindon Road, Taunton, TA2 6BJ or can call on 0845 643 4621.

Raise awareness of equality and diversity issues

A TRAINING course that raises awareness and knowledge on issues relating to race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief in a diverse workforce takes place in November.

The Equality and Diversity Awareness Training aims to enhance professional performance by enabling staff to understand the role equality and diversity plays in delivering effective services to all communities.

The course, delivered by Neil Jobes of CMS Training, consists of four modules – Attitudes

to Diversity and Equality; Equality and the Law; Prejudice and Discrimination; Cross Cultural Communication.

The training, which costs £90 person and includes refreshments, lunch, a handbook and certificate, takes place on Monday, November 22nd from 9.30am-4.30pm at Compass Disability Services, Mendip Room, Unit 11-12 Belvedere Trading Estate, Taunton, TA1 1BH.

To reserve a place email michelle@compassdisability.org.uk or phone 01823 282823.

Events Diary

■ **Sedgemoor Disability Forum.** When – Tuesday 19th October 10.30am-3pm. **Where** – The Princess Hall, Burnham-on-Sea. **Other information** – Transport is provided for people living in the Sedgemoor area. For more information, contact Mandy on 01823 282823 or mandy@compassdisability.org.uk

■ **The Voice and Influence Project.** When – Tuesday, 4th November 10am-3pm. **Where** – The Brendon Room, Compass Disability Services offices, Taunton. **Other information** – Contact Rachel on 01823 282823 or rachel@compassdisability.org.uk

■ **Somerset Adult Social Care Learning and Development Hub.** When – Wednesday, 17th November, 11am-3pm. **Where** – The Brendon Room, Compass Disability Services offices Taunton. **Other information** – Contact Rachel on 01823 282823 or Rachel@compassdisability.org.uk

■ **Taunton Deane Disability Discussion Group.** **What** – Speakers attending from the Economic Development team at Taunton Deane Borough Council. **When** – Tuesday, 30th November 10.30am-12.30pm at the Mendip Room, Compass Disability Services offices Taunton. **Other information** – Transport, care and communication support is provided for this meeting for disabled people living in the Taunton Deane area. Contact Mandy on 01823 282823 or mandy@compassdisability.org.uk

Triumph for Taunton Paralympian

TAUNTON-based Deb Criddle secured the top spot in her disability grade at the Dressage Deluxe National Dressage Championships.

The two time Paralympian clinched the top spot in grade III of the KBIS British Equestrian Para Dressage Championships with a score of 69.11% from fellow Paralympian Simon Laurens.

R J Powell Home Improvements

Experienced in disability adaptations including ramps, kitchens, bathrooms, Showers and other general works

14 Highgrove Cl, Bridgwater TA6 6UF
Tel: 01278 459151 Mob: 07767252547
E-mail: Highgrove14@sky.com



LIVEWIRE is a free, not-for-profit magazine for anyone interested in disability in Somerset.

- Local events
- National disability news
- Benefit updates
- Personal experiences
- Small ads

It's delivered free to your door, four times a year, or read it online.

www.livewire-somerset.co.uk

Tel: 01278 451738

Livewire, PO Box 314, Bridgwater TA6 7ZX

Also available in large print, audio cassette, braille or by email.

Therapeutic dance classes

THREE dance classes for all abilities are being held every Wednesday at Glastonbury Town Hall.

The classes are taken by Ramona Belcher, who has trained in exploring dance and movement for therapeutic work in care setting. Ramona has also taught adults with mild and severe learning disabilities.

Infinite Rhythms Dance Yourself Awake takes place from 9.15-10.15am; Danceability mixed ability from 10.15-1pm and Infinite Rhythms Lunchtime Mini Wave from 12-1pm.

For more information contact Ramona on 01458 830490 or email ramona@ramonabelcher.me.uk

News from the North



North Somerset Disabled People's Network

COMPASS Disability Services' project in North Somerset started in April 2010.

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.

For the moment, this project has been named the North Somerset Disabled People's Network.

Compass Disability Services has therefore expanded its Somerset newsletter 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 North Somerset Disabled People's Network 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.

Presently, 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.

Network Meetings

We are holding our first meetings of the North Somerset Disabled People's Network during the first week of November.

Individual members have recently been sent invitations and we are looking forward to hearing from you.

The meetings will take place in four parts of the district – Weston-super-Mare, Portishead, Clevedon and near Nailsea – so hopefully there will be less travelling for most people.

The aim of these meetings is to meet you and give you the opportunity to meet us.

We are looking forward to being able to tell you a bit more about Compass Disability Services and how the North Somerset project is developing.

We will also be asking for your views and opinions on the priorities of work for the project and how you would like to see the project develop.

The information we gather from you at these meetings will be written up into a report and presented to North Somerset Council and any other relevant bodies, so that your views are fed back and we can start working towards our aims. From the network membership we are looking for volunteers with a range of skills to become part of the Steering Group

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direction of the project in North Somerset.

Compass Disability Services' mission is to "enable disabled people to have equality of opportunity" and we are looking for individuals that are committed to this ethos, and will help to drive the work of this project in North Somerset.

These roles are all voluntary. If you would like to find out more about becoming a Steering Group member for North Somerset Disabled People's Network please contact Nat or Steven, who will send you some more information – see below for contact details.

How do you want to be involved?

WE sent a questionnaire to all members with the last newsletter, asking for some further information about yourselves, your interests and how people want to be involved, so that we can send correspondence and involve people appropriately.

If you haven't yet completed this form, it would be very helpful to us if you did and sent it back. If you haven't got the form anymore, you can either download one from the web-page (details below), complete one at the meeting in November or call the office and we

which will lead the

can complete the form over the telephone.

There are a variety of ways in which members can be involved and no matter how you choose to be involved, membership is free to everyone.

If you would just like to receive the newsletter for your own information this is perfectly acceptable too, but having this information certainly helps us to make sure we send information to people that might be interested and do not send it to people that are not!

New web-page

WE now have a new web-page dedicated to the North Somerset Disabled People's Network on the Compass Disability Services' website.

At present we have only uploaded some basic information about the project but over time we hope we can use these pages as a place where people can go for up-to-date information about the project and be able to see what we are working on at present.

You can find the page on our website www.compassdisability.org.uk by clicking on 'North Somerset Disabled People's Network' – underneath 'Our Projects' on the left-hand menu near the bottom of the page.

Become an Associate Member of the North Somerset Network

IN addition to individual involvement of the Network, we also offer Associate Membership to organisations, groups and professionals working within the disability field.

As an Associate Member you will be sent a free copy of our bi-monthly newsletter, 1,500 copies of which are distributed across Somerset and North Somerset to disabled people, Care Professionals, Care Homes, Libraries, Community Centres, doctors surgeries and other interested parties.

Becoming part of network helps inform

people about your work and there are regular opportunities to submit articles about your work, upcoming events or meetings, to our newsletter and Facebook page.

We also publish links on our website to all Associate Members' websites.

We want to bring together organisations that work with and represent disabled people, to create a strong and empowered network.

There may be opportunities to get involved in representing the views of your organisation or your service users at events and meetings.

ANYONE interested in becoming an individual or associate member of the North Somerset Disabled People's Network should contact Nat Stevens or Steven Aughton on 0330 3330089 or email: nats@compassdisability.org.uk

News from the North

LINK up with the Local Involvement Network

THE North Somerset Local Involvement Network (LINK) is set up to give local people a voice in how their health and social care services are delivered.



North Somerset LINK
Your partnership for health and social care

The LINK would like to hear from anyone in the community and our committee meeting is an opportunity to get your views heard, meet the LINK committee and hear about their current activities.

All are welcome to attend on Wednesday, November 24th from 10.30am-12.30pm at Clevedon Town Council, Room 1,

44 Old Street, Clevedon.
BS21 6BU.

If you have any access requirements please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate them.

If you can't make it to the committee meeting but are interested to learn more about the LINK, please email contact@nsomerset.co.uk, phone 01934 876806, or write to 23 High Street, Yatton, BS49 4JD.

Thanks and we hope to see you there!

The LINK team

Have your say on health and well-being issues

THE North Somerset Health and Well-Being Partnership and NHS North Somerset are holding a joint conference.

'Working together for health and wellbeing: A conference for you to have your say', is being held on Monday, October 18 at the Winter Gardens, Weston-super-Mare, starting at 1pm.

The event is designed to hear about the achievements and progress on health and

well-being issues over the past two years, and seek views on priorities for the future.

It will involve a mixture of exhibition speakers and workshops, and anyone living or working in North Somerset with an interest in health and well-being is welcome to attend.

You will need to book to attend. For a booking form or further information please contact Alun Davies on 01275 546757 or Marilyn Edwards on 01275 884033.

Are you eligible for a disabled parking permit?

NORTH Somerset Council are responsible for awarding disabled parking permits.

You may be entitled to a disabled parking permit if you:

- Receive the higher rate of the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance;
- Receive a War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement;
- You use a motor vehicle for disabled people supplied by a government health department;
- Are registered as blind;
- Have a severe disability in both upper

limbs, regularly drive a motor vehicle but cannot turn the steering wheel by hand even if the wheel is fitted with a turning knob;

- You have a permanent and substantial disability which leaves you unable to walk or have difficulty in walking.

For more information and an application form contact the council's Care Connect service on 01275 888 801 or care.connect@n-somerset.gov.uk



SAIN helps Westhay Moor become accessible

IN July 2007, members of the Compass Disability Services project SAIN gathered at a sunny Westhay Moor National Nature Reserve, in the heart of the Somerset Levels, to review the suitability of facilities of the Somerset Wildlife Trust site.

It was not an entirely comfortable meeting. The site was hopelessly inaccessible and this was borne out through the struggles of SAIN members to physically get between the car park and the two main hides.

The suggestions for improvements however, were positive and all entirely practical. The list of improvements developed on the day formed the basis of an application to Viridor Credits and we were incredibly fortunate to receive substantial support from them.

Three years later all the works have been finished and we officially opened them in September.

There are now two car parks – one reserved for disabled visitors – linked by a wide and level path with especially created views over a large lake and conveniently located benches. A new board walk transports visitors through the willows fringing the lake and in a wide sweep continues out across the water and back to the main path.

Sculptures of local wildlife and the creative work of local primary schools ornament this area. The main path leads to two hides – one now revealing the hidden underwater world with a frog's eye view of a local heron.



■ THE new board walk and bench looking out over the lake at Westhay Moor NNR.

The other, via a wide board walk leads over water, through a dense reed stand (with great views of singing warblers and dragon and damselflies) to a tucked away hide overlooking reeds, water and the Mendip hills beyond.

We hope that members of Compass Disability Services and readers of Networker will now make use of these new facilities.

Westhay Moor is a wonderful place to spend time watching and listening to the birds sing and the bitterns boom.

You can find out more by visiting www.somersetwildlife.org/westhay_moor.html

If you do go please remember to take your camera as we would love to receive any photos you take of your visits and welcome comments. Enjoy the wildlife!

By Janet Keeble, Director of Communities and Learning, Somerset Wildlife Trust (01823 652406).

■ A TEN-week 'Confidence through Drama' course begins in the New Year.

The course, run by the Workers' Educational Association, will practically explore why we have problems with certain situations and examine ways of dealing with these. Tutor Lesley McDowell aims to find

methods and approaches that will help the learner become more confident.

The ten weekly meetings start on Tuesday, January 11th and take place at Compass Disability Services, Taunton. To enrol call 0845 458 2758 or go online at www.wea-sw.org.uk

When deciding about the future, help is at hand

YOUNG people with learning difficulties or disabilities in Somerset can now access an excellent resource aimed at helping make decisions about their futures.

'My Plan, My Future' has been developed by Somerset's leading careers education, information, advice and guidance service Connect South West.

The resource's aim is to collate all the information needed to inform future options and ideas from Year 9 onwards.

Topics covered include education, work, money, leisure, housing and health and care.

'My Plan, My Future' gives detailed information on important issues such as what you can expect from your Transition Plan Review Meeting and finding out if you are eligible for help and support from Adult Social Care Services.

The resource, which is produced in point size 14 and includes Somerset Total Communication Symbols throughout, has



Connect
South West Ltd

been designed to help parents and carers of young people with learning difficulties or disabilities to have one document detailing all the things they need to be aware of for their child's future.

Angie Gray, Connect South West Contracts and Operations Manager said: "We hope that 'My Plan, My Future' will be welcomed by all who use it and that it enables more young people with

learning difficulties or disabilities to make a successful transition to adulthood."

If you would like to obtain a copy of 'My Plan My Future', which is free to young people with learning difficulties or disabilities and their parents or carers in Somerset, please contact Angie Gray on 01935 381802 or email agray@connectsw.co.uk

Anyone living outside Somerset who would like more information on 'My Plan, My Future, can also contact Angie Gray via the contact details above.

Training courses provided by

THE Voluntary Sector Training Alliance (ViSTA) is a learning and development charity that provides a wide range of specialist services for individuals, communities, groups and organisations.

Our main areas of work are Community Learning, Community Development, Training, Business Support Services, Room Hire and an online jobs board for the Voluntary and Community sectors.

ViSTA offer in-house training – designed to meet your organisation's needs – and also have a published programme of free or subsidised training courses which you can access by going to www.vistaproject.org.uk

Our training can vary in length and level –

from one day courses to courses that run over 12 months. We recently ran an accredited Certificate in Leadership and Management course which several CEO's from voluntary organisations attended and completed.

Another of our successes was a young mum who attended a 'Getting Started in Early Years' course. After completing the course, she was offered an apprenticeship. She now has new qualifications and a career change with further career development possibilities.

One of our current projects is to train and support Community Learning Champions – people who have had a positive experience of learning are happy to share their

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Training courses provided by



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experience to get others back into informal learning and overcome any barriers they may face. One Community Learning Champion, originally from Burma, has set up an ESOL (English as a second language) course for a group of non-English speakers and has persuaded somebody to be a volunteer tutor.

Another group have developed a 'body parts sheet' for use in GP's surgeries for non-English speakers. This has been trialled and they have just received their first enquiry!

The Voice and Influence Project involves working with small groups on all sorts of

issues and skills development through interactive training sessions. We've been looking at things like skills for representing communities and the issues that our communities face, how to influence the decision makers and communication.

We can also offer a one to one career guidance session and basic IT and communication for work.

Training can be life changing – whether within your organisation or in the world beyond. For more information about any of these projects, or to find out more about training, please call us on 08453 580372.

Guide to Employment and Support Allowance

IF you cannot work because of illness or disability you may be able to get Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

Employment and Support Allowance was introduced on October 27th 2008.

It replaces Incapacity Benefit and Income Support, paid because of an illness or disability.

If you already receive Incapacity Benefit, you will continue to receive it as long as you are eligible.

About Employment and Support Allowance

Employment and Support Allowance offers you personalised support and financial help, so that you can do appropriate work, if you are able to.

Employment and Support Allowance involves a new medical assessment called the Work Capability Assessment.

This assesses what you can do, rather than what you cannot, and identifies the

health-related support you might need.

Helping you into work

If you are in the Work Related Activity Group, you will regularly see your personal adviser to discuss your work prospects.

They will give you help and advice with your job goals; your skills, strengths and abilities; steps you can take to help find suitable work; your ideas, problems and any other work related issues you want to talk about.

If you refuse to go to the work-focused interviews, or to take part in them fully, it may affect your entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance.

If you are in the Support Group you do not have to go to interviews, but you can ask to talk to a personal adviser if you want to.

To find out more about financial support for disabled people, go to

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/index.htm>

What's been making the local and national news?



In this section of the Networker, we highlight the disability-related issues that have been making local and national news headlines

Startling survey from Scope

A SURVEY commissioned by disability charity Scope reveals 91% of people in Britain believe disabled people should have the same opportunities as everyone else.

That's an encouraging statistic on the face of it but as Compass Disability Services CEO Richard Pitman states: "That means, of the 64 million people who are living in Britain, there are still six million who don't think disabled people should have the same opportunities."

The survey also reveals a startling nine out of ten people in Britain have never had a disabled person over for a social occasion and that 40% don't know a disabled person.

Mr Pitman said: "As Nicola Jacobs stated in her Guardian blog (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/sep/06/disability-we-can-all-do-better>), do people really know if they have had a disabled person over for dinner?

"We must always remember disability does not just exist in terms of wheelchairs and white sticks."

Firms warned over chip and sign

BUSINESSES are being warned they must allow disabled people to use their signature to make payments by card after Compass Disability CEO Richard Pitman was refused by two major national firms.

Richard had his chip and signature card refused by two Bridgwater firms – both claimed they had been instructed by head office to refuse payment by signature.

The chip and PIN initiative was introduced in 2006 to reduce fraud when people use a signature to pay for goods and services by card. But disabled people whose impairments mean they are unable to or find it difficult to

use a PIN can apply to their bank for a chip and signature card.

Mr Pitman said: "It was very clear when chip and PIN was introduced that disabled people unable to use a PIN or finding it difficult due to their impairment could apply for a chip and signature card. It's extremely disappointing that local outlets of two major chains are unaware these cards are valid, as this service is crucial in helping disabled people live independent lives."

Sandra Quinn, of the UK Cards Association, said: "All shops and restaurants that accept chip and PIN must accept chip and signature cards."

Blue badge fraudsters targeted

FOURTEEN people in Gloucestershire could be facing jail for allegedly using blue parking badges falsely (report from Gloucester Mail).

Gloucestershire County Council launched a campaign earlier this year to end the illegal use of the permits, which allow people to park for free in disabled spaces or on yellow lines for up to four hours.

Councillor Stan Waddington, cabinet member for the environment, said: "Using a stolen or fake blue badge, or allowing a family member or friend to use them, is fraud and it prevents drivers with a genuine need being able to find a space to park."

AND a report in the Daily Mail revealed officials are warning more than half of disabled parking badges are being used fraudulently in some parts of the country.

According to the report, thousands of motorists are abusing the blue badges to dodge parking fees and get bays close to the

■ From page 14

entrance of supermarkets, shopping centres and stations.

Ministers are now planning a crackdown on the offence which costs taxpayers £14.7million a year.

Richard Pitman, CEO of Compass Disability Services, said: "It will be good to see police taking similar action in Somerset, to deter those using disabled parking permits illegally."

Public transport troubles

DISABILITY campaigners have blasted slow progress towards making public transport fair after revealing nearly half of Haringey's bus stops cannot be accessed by disabled passengers (Hornsey Journal).

According to the campaigners' report only 54 per cent of the borough's bus stops are fully accessible.

Compass Disability Services CEO Richard Pitman said: "We're aware that work is being undertaken to make some of the main routes between Somerset's major towns accessible and in Taunton there are some buses that are accessible on local routes. However, it would be good to have a picture of where Somerset is in terms of access to bus routes."

Meanwhile, the Dumfries and Galloway region of Scotland has been criticised after a study revealed just 2% of its taxi cabs have access for disabled people (Dumfries and Galloway Standard).

Regarding the situation in Somerset, Mr Pitman said: "Over the past few years, district councils have shown a commitment to increase the number of accessible Hackney carriages. However, with many taxi firms threatening to become private hire companies – particularly in a rural county like Somerset, where street pick up probably isn't the largest source of business – are they going to find this difficult to continue?"

■ **DO you have an opinion on the issues highlighted on these pages? We want to hear the views and experiences of disabled people in Somerset. Get in contact by emailing greg@compassdisability.org.uk**

USEFUL CONTACTS



Somerset Direct

PO Box 618, Taunton, TA1 3WF

Tel: 0845 3459133 Minicom: 0800 7834518

Email: caredirect@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: 08457 622 633

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

Panel grilled at Deane Discussion Group!

THERE was a bumper turn out for the Taunton Deane Disability Discussion Group meeting which took place at Compass Disability Services' Mendip Suite on September 28th.

The group, which is run by Compass Disability Services' SAIN project, saw a variety of questions put to a panel of representatives.

The panel was made up of Cllr John Williams (leader of Taunton Deane Borough Council) Chris Hall (Taunton Deane Borough Council's Highways and Cleansing department), Simon Bawler (Taunton Town Centre Police Sergeant), Graham Love

(Taunton Town Centre Manager), John Lewis (Taunton Deane Borough Council's Parking and Civil Contingencies Manager) and Jane Creagh-Osborne (Somerset County Council, Senior Transport Planner).

Questions covered a range of accessibility issues, including cobbles and advertising boards in the town centre, parking, pavement safety, cycle paths, bus accessibility and the Orchard Shopping Centre lifts.

SAIN Project co-ordinator Mandy Seaman thanked the panel and visitors for making the effort to attend and will be producing a report on the topics covered.

The next Taunton Deane Disability Discussion Group meeting takes place on November 30th.



■ THE panel take a question from the floor.



■ VISITORS listen to an answer from the panel.



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Other catering and equipment charges available on request

11-12 Belvedere Trading Estate, Taunton, TA1 1BH

Tel: 0330 3330089 or 01823 282823

Email: info@compassdisability.org.uk

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