



FAREHAM ACCESS GROUP

DISABILITY DOESN'T
STOP US!

August 2009

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**Our next meeting at Portchester Parish Hall is
at 11.15am on Tuesday 8th September 2009**

A Word from our Chairman

Welcome back to the FAG Newsletter. We are sorry that we have been unable to produce it for quite a while but hopefully, we are now back on track to give you a regular update. Hopefully, you will find something of interest within these pages and always feel free to send your contribution to our new editor Norman at pondprice@btinternet.com or by post to Joan Searle (secretary) at 68 Windmill Grove, Portchester, Fareham PO16 9HH.

Alan (Chairman)

Oh dear

A lorry driver was driving along. A sign comes up that reads "low bridge ahead."

Before he knows it the bridge is right ahead of him and he gets stuck under the bridge. Cars are backed up for miles.

Finally, a police car comes up. The policeman gets out of his car and walks around to the lorry driver, puts his hands on his hips and says, "Got stuck?"

The lorry driver says, "No mate, I was delivering this bridge and ran out of petrol."

Immediate Action is Required

A government green paper has revealed proposals to stop paying 'disability benefits', for example, attendance allowance" and hand the cash over to social services instead.

Under the plan, current claimants would have their disability benefits converted to a 'personal budget' administered by local authorities and used to pay for services and not to spend as they wish.

Once the green paper consultation period ends, if an almighty row has not been raised, it is likely that both major political parties will see the lack of outrage as a green light to end both DLA and AA.

Find out how you can take part from this link:

[www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/disability-living-allowance-\(dla\)/dla-aa-cuts](http://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/disability-living-allowance-(dla)/dla-aa-cuts)

We know that many people will take false comfort from the fact that, unlike AA, DLA is not specifically named as being for the axe. But if the government was planning only to abolish AA it is extremely unlikely that they would refer constantly throughout the green paper to 'disability benefits', a term which includes not just AA but also DLA. Others will dismiss this as just another idle discussion document and our concerns as scare mongering.

But it's much more than that. 36 meetings have already been organised around the country for people working in government and the caring professions to meet to be told about the setting up of a new National Care Service which would oversee the system. In addition, a stakeholders panel of more than 50 voluntary sector organisations, trades unions and academics has been established to offer advice to the government.

Some organisations and individuals, such as RNIB and welfare rights worker Neil Bateman writing for Community Care magazine, have already voiced their alarm. But not every disability organisation is opposed to the proposals and some even agree with them. In a press release, Disability Alliance has welcomed the publication of the green paper and said that it 'looks forward to working alongside Government and all the other stakeholders in bringing these plans into fruition'. They have even said that they agree that there is a case for 'integrating disability benefits such as attendance allowance' into the new system.

One thing everyone does seem to agree on, is that huge cuts in public spending will have to take place in the next few years as a result of the credit crunch and global recession.

Political parties are desperately looking for the softest targets to be the victims of these cuts. Dismissing the green paper's proposals as hot air and not worth worrying about could be the costliest mistake you ever make.

Find out more about the proposed abolition of DLA and AA and how you can join our campaign to fight back:

[www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/disability-living-allowance-\(dla\)/dla-aa-cuts](http://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/disability-living-allowance-(dla)/dla-aa-cuts)



Methinks
a bit of an access issue
here !

Swine Flu

For any member that may have concerns, we are reprinting below, an extract of information that was last updated on 19th August 2009.

For the latest information, please check the website:

<http://www.nhs.uk/news/2009/04April/Pages/Swineflulatest>

The secretary of state for health has confirmed which priority groups will be given the first doses of swine flu vaccine, which is expected to arrive in October.

While the government has ordered enough vaccine for the entire population this will take time to produce, and so the most vulnerable groups will be given priority to receive initial stocks of the jab.

Andy Burnham said that the earliest doses of vaccine would be given to at-risk groups in the following order:

- People aged between six months and 65 years in the clinically at-risk groups for seasonal flu
- Pregnant women, subject to licensing by the European Medicines Agency, which will indicate whether it can be given throughout pregnancy or only at certain stages of pregnancy
- Household contacts of people with compromised immune systems
- People aged 65 and over in the current seasonal flu vaccine clinical at-risk groups

The health secretary said: "Although the virus has so far proved to be mild in most people, for others it has been more serious. By vaccinating high-risk groups first, we

aim to protect those most vulnerable to this virus". He also confirmed that frontline health and social care workers will also begin to be vaccinated at the same time as the first at-risk group.

At-risk groups

At-risk groups will be the same as for seasonal flu vaccination, and include people with serious heart disease, diabetes, and those with weakened immune systems due to cancer treatment.

The list has been drawn up according to advice from independent experts at the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, which reviewed the evidence and advised the Department of Health on the crucial risk groups to be offered vaccination to help prevent serious illness.

A vaccination programme for the rest of the population will be based on the evolution of the pandemic as well as new clinical data on the use of the vaccine.

People in the priority groups outlined above do not need to take any action yet. Further announcements will be made as the vaccination strategy progresses, and those who need a vaccine will be contacted.

Weekly pandemic flu update

Other key points made in the latest briefing by the chief medical officer (CMO) included:

- There has been a further reduction in the rates of flu-like illness and related activity this week. There were an estimated 25,000 new cases last week compared to 110,000 new cases two weeks before.
- Weekly GP consultation rates decreased over the last week in England.
- There are 371 patients in hospital with swine flu, 39 of whom are in critical care.
- There have been 44 confirmed deaths in England, bringing the UK total to 49.
- There is still no sign of the virus mutating into a more dangerous form, or developing resistance to drugs.

Driving Licences

When photocard driving licences were introduced ten years ago it was recognised that they would have to be updated and that like it or not, our faces change over time and this has to be reflected on the licences. Therefore, if you have a photocard driving licence, you have to change it, and update the picture, every ten years. Now that the first photocard driving licences are ten years old, everybody that has one needs to check to see if it needs renewing.

Inevitably there's a cost to produce a new licence and the government has decided that the DVLA should re-coup this from drivers rather than from taxpayers. Therefore, at the moment, renewing a photocard driving licence is going to cost you £17.50.

Nobody likes to pay again for something we thought we had already paid for, but this going to have to be the case with the photocard driving licence, although the AA believes that the DVLA should have made drivers much more aware that licences were going to expire and were going to cost money to replace.

When does my licence expire?

The front of a photocard licence carries two dates:

4a – the date that the licence is valid from

4b – the date by which the licence needs to be updated



The **4b** renewal date is generally ten years after the licence was issued but for car drivers nearing or over 70 years of age, or with medical restrictions it is the date at which entitlement to drive ends.

If the **4b** date has passed, or is getting close you will need to act. You can find details of what to do, on the website

www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring/DriverLicensing/NeedANewOrUpdatedLicence

Will I get a reminder? The DVLA will send a reminder to drivers whose photocard driving licences are about to need updating. However, if you have changed address and not told DVLA then you won't get the letter. You should always advise the DVLA of a change of address, as to not do so, is a criminal offence and liable to prosecution.

Quiz

A deaf quiz team have beaten the **BBC's Eggheads** and won £23,000. The five challengers, called **One Less Sense**, were given questions in sign language on the hit teatime show. They went on to defeat the **Eggheads**, and is only the 38th time they have lost in 554 games.

Blue Badge Map now available on mobile

Blue Badge holders can now use a mobile phone to find disabled parking spaces, local council parking rules, Service Call, petrol stations and accessible toilets, with the Blue Badge Map on mobile service from the Direct Gov website: www.direct.gov.uk/ and then search on **Blue Badge**.

A video starring Paul Henshall and Mark Benton, from the BBC comedy "I'm with Stupid", demonstrates the service. You can watch it online at the www.direct.gov.uk website.

In order to get the Blue Badge map on your internet-enabled mobile phone, text **BLUE** to **83377**.

Home Safe

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) may be able to provide you with a free home safety visit. If you are in one of their target groups, they can visit your home, fit smoke detectors and provide safety advice.

To be considered for a home safety visit, visit the website: www.hantsfire.gov.uk and click on the section for **Home Safety Visits**.

Alternatively you can contact the Community Fire Safety Department,
Telephone: 023 8062 6809

or write to: Community Fire Safety Team
 HFRS Headquarters
 Leigh Road, Eastleigh,
 Hampshire, SO50 9SJ

Bus Pass Scanners

On two recent issues of Playback, an audio magazine produced in Scotland, we heard about the concerns of blind and visually impaired people concerning a scheme which had been introduced by First Bus.

This requires that a person places their bus pass on a screen and then a ticket is automatically produced. According to these reports the bus pass has to be placed on the screen exactly so that it can be read. The positioning of the device is such that the bus driver is unable to help whilst sitting in his seat.

Needless to say, on busy city centre routes, this is causing problems. The latest edition of Playback identified other areas in Scotland which had introduced the same equipment. If this scheme is introduced nationally then it could cause considerable problems. If this is to be implemented locally it would be much appreciated if the Bus Company would discuss its implementation with those parties that it will have the most negative impact on.

Extra Loud Sirens on Emergency Vehicles

One morning we heard, on Radio Solent, that extra loud sirens are to be trialled on emergency vehicles in Hampshire. This is because drivers are not allowing them through. The report indicated that sirens were so loud that they would cause a vehicle impeding the progress of an emergency vehicle to shudder.

If this report is correct then any BLIND pedestrian would find the use of such equipment very disorientating. Are you aware of any such trial? If so could you bring this concern to the appropriate authority.

Hampshire Gardening Service

Launched in July 2009, Hampshire Over 60's Gardening Support Service assists Hampshire residents over the age of 60 to maintain their gardens.

Hampshire County Council has commissioned this service following consultation which identified garden maintenance support as a key factor that could assist people to stay in their own homes and maintain independence.

How the service works:

- If you are over 60 and receive a means-tested benefit, the service is available at a reduced rate.

- It is also available to those who do not receive a benefit, at the standard rate.
- It is a year-round gardening support service, with up to six visits per year, each visit lasting up to four hours.
- One-off visits can also be arranged.

Shaw Trust's fully qualified and experienced team, who are supported by volunteers, provide a professional garden maintenance service. Shaw Trust has over 20 years' experience of delivering horticultural services and all staff and volunteers are checked by the Criminal Records Bureau.

The service is available whether you rent or own your own home and covers the Fareham area

If you do not live in the area listed above, or are under 60, Shaw Trust also provides a range of domestic gardening services at competitive rates throughout Hampshire and the surrounding areas.

To find out more: Telephone: 0845 6044 643
Email: grounds.maintenance@shaw-trust.org.uk

Disability News - OUCH

Check out the regularly updated news headlines page here
www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/news

The Big Stress Experiment

This aims to be the largest ever scientific investigation into the causes of stress. Take part to get your stress rating and personalised tips about how to relieve stress.
www.bbc.co.uk/labuk/experiments/stress

Fareham Easy Access Trail

We have met our fundraising target of £120,900. Work is expected to commence on the site on 14th September 2009, with a predicted finish date of 4th December 2009.