

Disability Cambridgeshire

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Directions Plus is now called **Disability Cambridgeshire**.

Disability Cambridgeshire will continue to

- provide free, confidential and impartial information and advice on every aspect of disability and access to the people of Cambridgeshire
- assist with disability and age related benefit claims
- lead training sessions on Disability Discrimination Act compliance and disability equality
- provide access surveys for existing and planned premises and services
- champion the interests of disabled people, older people and carers in the government, healthcare, private and voluntary sectors at local, regional and national level
- offer a complete disability management service

Carers UK welcomes rise in earnings limit on main carer's benefit

Carers UK welcomed the Government's announcement that the earnings limit on Carer's Allowance rose to £95 on 1st October 2007, after listening to Carers UK's concerns that carers were losing out because of rises in the National Minimum Wage.

Imelda Redmond, Chief Executive of Carers UK said, "Every time the National Minimum Wage rose, carers were often forced off benefit or forced to give up work because the rise was out of step with the rise in how much they were allowed to earn and still keep Carer's Allowance. We are delighted that

Government has listened and come up with this sensible interim measure whilst the review of carers' benefits is being conducted as part of the National Carers Strategy. We are greatly heartened by this measure and the recognition that the benefit, introduced in 1976, is no longer in keeping with changes today."

Carers UK launched a research report in May 2007 as part of its Real Change not Short Change campaign which showed that carers were struggling to make ends meet, were having trouble juggling work and care and felt undervalued and unrecognised by the different rules that existed for carers' benefits and taxes. The campaign is calling for an overhaul of carers' benefits and financial situation to try to make ends meet.

Increased mileage allowance for Motability customers

The mileage allowance for Motability customers has increased by an additional 15,000 miles to 60,000 miles for a three-year contract. This means that drivers can now travel further during their three year lease, without incurring any excess mileage charges.

Mike Betts, Mobility Operations Chief Executive, explained. "The increased mileage allowance has been introduced to improve the worry-free nature of the Motability Car Scheme and is being extremely positively received by customers. Those who live in rural areas, or who use their Motability car for frequent hospital visits, will find the additional mileage allowance particularly useful. The more-miles policy applies to both existing customers and new. We hope that anyone who has found the mileage allowance a barrier in the past will reconsider the Motability Car Scheme."

In addition to the mileage allowance increase from 45,000 miles to 60,000 miles for contract hire users, customers with a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) on a five year agreement can now enjoy a total of 100,000 miles over the period of their contract.

New Highway Code

The latest edition of the Highway Code, which was launched in September 07, includes a new safety code for users of powered wheelchairs and scooter-users as well as advice for novice drivers. There have always been rules and regulations governing powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters ("invalid carriages" in law) but this is the first time they have been included in the Highway Code.

The Official Highway Code is published by The Stationery Office and is priced at £2.50.

Visit www.tsoshop.co.uk/highwaycode or Tel: 087- 600 5522.

Copies are also available from high street and online bookstores, and it is available free at www.direct.gov.uk/highwaycode.

A new, interactive version, The Official Highway Code on CD-ROM, will be launched this month.

New guidelines for Driving Lessons

Financial help for driving lessons is now only available from Motability for young drivers (aged 16-24) who receive the Higher Rate Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance.

Blue badge spaces at London 2012

The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games have been declared car-free destinations, with all spectators having to travel by foot, public transport or bicycle – except for some disabled people with blue badges.

In March, Disability Now reported how plans for the Olympic Park had placed blue badge parking up to 250 metres away from the entrance to the park, with a “games mobility service” in operation alongside rest stops and a “range of accessible seating”

The Olympic Delivery Authority now says there will be at least 550 blue badge parking spaces, although plans have not yet been finalised. There will also be accessible tube, bus and rail travel, and direct coach services.

Inside the Olympic Park, a mobility service will include a manual wheelchair and electric scooter loan scheme, and an internal electric vehicle escort system.

Cambridge OnLine

Many of you will already be aware of local charity Cambridge OnLine, and the work they do helping people with any kind of disability to access computers and the internet. Their service for disabled users used to be called Pathways – but that name has now been dropped to prevent confusion with other groups using the same name.

Cambridge OnLine is currently looking for partners under the Switched On Communities project. This new initiative, funded by PC World, means that Cambridge OnLine is able to provide some additional alternative computer equipment and additional training for 32 other voluntary sector groups in the region. Ten groups have already signed up and received the training and equipment.

Cambridge OnLine’s main service is based at the Hester Adrian Centre in Hawthorn Way, Cambridge - where they have a fully accessible training room with ten computers and a full range of alternative computer hardware and software to enable everybody, including people with any kind of disability, to use computers. Amongst other things, they have a range of screen readers, screen magnifiers, voice recognition software, high visibility keyboards and mice for people to try, and they have trained staff on hand to carry out full computer accessibility assessments and advise people which alternative software and hardware would best suit their needs. They also provide weekly one-to-one tuition in a friendly and informal setting. All services are provided free of charge.

For further details, please contact Andrew Entecott using the details below:

Cambridge OnLine
Hester Adrian Centre
Hawthorn Way
Cambridge CB4 1AX

Phone 01223 300407

Email andrew@cambridgeonline.org.uk

www.cambridgeonline.org.uk

Got computer problems? Difficulty getting support? What is ITCH network?

ITCH stands for Information Technology Can Help. Founded in 1994, we are a network of volunteers who provide FREE computer support to disabled people. We visit people in their own homes and at other locations such as residential homes and day centres.

In the past three years alone, volunteers made 3,000 visits, solving many hardware and software problems, and helping people to gain confidence using a computer.

ITCH Network and AbilityNet are working in partnership to provide the most effective service possible to disabled people. AbilityNet (www.abilitynet.org.uk) is the UK's leading provider of expertise on computing for people with any type of disability.

To learn more about the work of ITCH Network, please visit our website at: www.itcanhelp.org.uk or write to them at ITCH Network, BCS Block D, North Star House, North Star Avenue, Swindon. SN2 1FA or e-mail them at: info@itcanhelp.org.uk or telephone them on (mobile) 07985 779071

Safer Homes Service in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire

The purpose and aim of the service is to keep the older person's home safe, to highlight risks then work with partners to modify, free of charge, minor hazards that might contribute to falls, accidents and preventable hospital admissions. The service has recently been redeveloped with Age Concern Cambridgeshire offering the free assessment service to older people living in Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire area.

Examples of help might be, installing a second banister rail, securing mats and carpeting, fitting security chains and smoke alarms. Following the assessment, Age Concern will arrange for a contractor to call and complete the works recommended as a result of the assessment visit.

The service can also make onward referrals, with permission, for other more specialist assistance and support. If you think you could benefit from this

service please contact 01223 506061 and talk to the project worker. Anyone can make a referral, self, neighbours, family and friends. We will always make an appointment before we come and visit you.

There will sometimes be an answer machine on if the staff member is out of the office – visiting individuals. Please leave a message and your call will be returned.

Employment – Increase in the national minimum wage

From 1st October, 2007 the National Minimum Wage increased as follows:-

Adult rate (workers aged 22 and over) increased to £5.52

Development rate for 18-20 year olds increased to £4.60

Development rate for 16-17 year olds increased to £3.40

These rates are effective until 30th September, 2008. It is a criminal offence for an employer to pay below the new minimum wage, carrying a fine of up to £5,000.

Revised Holiday Entitlement

The minimum holiday requirements for full-time employees are set to rise from 24 to 28 days from April 2009 as The Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform has now completed its consultation on the plans. The plan follows a recent increase from 20 to 24 days, which took effect on 1st October 2007

Audiobooks

Disability Now's 'Arts Review' section suggests that one of this season's audiobook hits is Will Young reading Roald Dahl's "Danny the Champion of the World". This is one of 10 Roald Dahl's popular stories which have been released by Penguin at £12.99 each.

If short stories are more your cup of tea – household names such as Martin Jarvis, Hugh Laurie and the late Sir Nigel Hawthorne bring to life a whole range of listening in "Short Stories – The Timeless Collection" (CSA Word, £19.99). Stories range from the humour of Jerome K Jerome to the macabre tales of Edgar Allan Poe.

Free Dial-a-Ride for disabled people (in London)

The Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, announced that Dial-a-Ride fares for disabled and older Londoners are to be abolished from 1st January 2008.

The door-to-door transport service is provided by local councils, with major funding from Transport for London, and is used by disabled and older people who cannot access the city's buses, trains or the tube.

The move will benefit around 50,000 Londoners who currently pay to take 1.2 million journeys a year, and is the first in a series of plans to improve transport for disabled Londoners.

The mayor told the Disability Capital conference in east London recently that he would like to move towards also making the Taxi Card service free.

The mayor announced that, over the next two years, City Hall plans to take over Taxi Card and Dial-a-Ride from councils and provide a single uniform service across London.

He said he was struck by the number of unacceptable travel experiences relayed to him by disabled people, particularly when using assisted services like Taxi Card and Dial-a-Ride.

Preventing falls by drinking sufficient water

An article on the Caredirections website says:-

Every day in the UK 8,000- older people will have a fall – with falls accounting for 10% of all acute hospital admissions. A broken hip can lead to a reduced quality of life – over and above the trauma and hurt of the accident itself. Indeed, people suffering a broken hip rarely get back to the same degree of independent living they enjoyed before they fell. It's not surprising, therefore, that for many older people the absolute fear of falling severely limits what they do in their daily lives.

Dehydration – the lack of water intake – has been identified as a critical risk factor for falls in older people. This is because it can lead to a deterioration in mental state and an increase in the likelihood of dizziness and fainting. As part of an effective falls prevention strategy, the maintenance of adequate levels of hydration in older people can have a highly significant contributory effect.

Not getting enough water can quickly result in tiredness, headaches and constipation – developing into more worrying conditions, such as increased heart rate and breathing rate, dizziness, confusion and eventual coma. A recent BMA study has also found that people who stint on drinking water do markedly less well in tests for concentration, short term memory and the mobility co-ordination needed to avoid falls. On the other hand, it has been established that people drinking adequate levels of water will benefit in a number of ways.

There is a recommendation that the daily intake of fluids for older people should not be anything less than 1.6 litres. Unfortunately, many older people do not achieve anything like this. Indeed, it has been shown that, thirst, the body's natural response to dehydration is impaired in older people – with stroke victims or those suffering from Alzheimer's disease being particularly insensitive to thirst.

Many older people 'restrict' their water drinking, wanting to avoid difficult, inconvenient toilet visits. Older people may also be losing out on their 20% of water intake normally contained in food – when appetite may be diminished and diet poor.

As we get older, our body's needs and health concerns change, due to an increased susceptibility to degenerative conditions. Revitalising, refreshing and calorie-free, water can make such an easy and valuable contribution to better health in older age.

Two useful websites for clear, easy to use mobile phones

www.silverphone.co.uk

www.doro.com

Look good, feel good and help Macmillan Cancer Support

Fancy getting your hands on some stylish leisurewear and supporting people living with cancer at the same time?

You can by heading to JJB Sports. That's because Macmillan Cancer Support will receive 20% of the retail price of every item sold from a range of women's clothing specially produced by JJB for them. The range includes a grey hooded sweater, white, grey and green T-shirts, a green pair of jogging bottoms and a pair of grey jogging shorts.

The range is available in selected stores nationwide and on the JJB website – www.jjbsports.com

Disability Forums

Cambridge Forum of Disabled People

Campaigning for equality of opportunity for people in Cambridge.

Contact:

Gerri Bird on 01223 569601

E-mail: thecfdp@yahoo.co.uk

If you are interested in joining the Cambridge Forum please contact Gerri.

South Cambridgeshire Forum of Disabled People Sawston Branch

Gerri Bird has set up a forum in Sawston with the help of local residents. The forum, which meets once a month, has been running since February 05. If you have a disability, are a carer or are an older person or an organisation working with or for disabled/older people or carers and are interested in joining, please contact Gerri.

One of the things the forum is involved with is campaigning for better access in all areas.

Contact: Gerri Bird
Tel: 01223 569601
E-mail: gerri@disability-cambridgeshire.org.uk

Cambourne Forum of Disabled People

Coming soon: Cambourne forum – if you know an older or disabled person who may be interested – please contact Gerri.

Contact: Gerri Bird
Tel: 01223 569601
E-mail: gerri@disability-cambridgeshire.org.uk

East Cambridgeshire Access Group

The group looks at all issues to do with disability e.g. access to shops, buildings etc. They also have a sub group for plan vetting of new buildings and alterations to older buildings. If you are interested in joining or would like more information – please contact Gerri.

Contact: Gerri Bird
Tel: 01223 569601
E-mail: gerri@disability-cambridgeshire.org.uk
Gerri is looking into setting up a forum for the Chatteris/Littleport area. Anyone interest should contact her as above.

Charity Flowers Direct

Charity Flowers Direct is the UK's only flowers-by-post service to be wholly-owned by a major national charity, Age Concern. Every time you choose Charity Flowers Direct, you will be making a valuable contribution to important charity work. You will be giving more than just beautiful flowers, you will also be helping both Age Concern and Disability Cambridgeshire/ Directions Plus. Prices start at just **£13.99 for a Seasonal Bouquet including delivery**

Please quote DTP each time you order them and Disability Cambridgeshire will receive 15% of the order price.

So whether it's Happy Birthday, Happy Anniversary, Happy Christmas, Happy Easter, Congratulations, a present for Mother's Day or just to show you care, order from Charity Flowers Direct.

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