

The newsletter of Community Living
the magazine committed to equal citizenship for people with learning difficulties

A warm welcome to EQual Citizens

A warm welcome to this issue of EQual Citizens, the newsletter of *Community Living*. Our aim with this newsletter is to bring you the latest news about learning difficulties and, in accordance with the reputation *Community Living* has earned, we try to represent the perspective of people with learning difficulties themselves.

The newsletter is designed so you can follow up the stories. Wherever possible, links are provided to larger documents or web sites.

In this issue:

- * People of working age could be the main victims of spending cuts
- * Will the ILF survive?
- * A wild night at the Hackney Empire
- * Call for more health checks
- * Jo Williams to chair Care Quality Commission
- * A moving programme about sterilisation
- * Interested in helping a charity? Respond is looking for another trustee
- * Stephen Fry heads the 'Sticks and Stones' campaign
- * Enter the David Brandon Essay competition and you could win £1,000 – the theme is 'The person who has most inspired me'



In the autumn issue of *Community Living*:

- **Balancing risks and rights**

Commissioning staff and local authorities have been unwilling to take risks to avoid potential fall-out if things go wrong. Staff need skills and knowledge to make good balanced judgements that consider both risks and rights, says Rose Trustam.

In his continuing series for students, Paul Williams looks at assessing risk and planning for contingencies, a crucial part of training for a career in learning difficulties.

- **The benefits maze – in this 4-page pull-out section Charlie Callanan guides us through our complicated benefits system**
- **We need a national advocacy group – now more than ever**
- **Shaping the new reality – Paradigm has innovative projects to help you through challenging times**
- **Mum doesn't always know best. In the second in her series about 'hidden people' Gill Levy tells the sad story of a young woman who was virtually a prisoner in her own home.**
- **Managing change: how we can help service user trustees to cope. Tracy Hammond shares some of KeyRing's experience of significant change**
- **The legal framework of personalisation. Belinda Schwehr looks at recent case history of assessment and support planning**
- **Andrea realises her dream. Andrea Munn told Jo Clare about her joy at living in her own flat**

COMING SOON

How will the cuts affect people with learning difficulties?

Could GP commissioning undo progress in getting better health care?

Why not take out a subscription? It costs only £27 a year for individuals, £23 for students, £45 for authorities. Get TWO subs for the price of one (delivery to one UK address).

STUDENTS - when you take out a subscription you can get all four issues in Volume 23 for only an extra £10. These include articles written by Paul Williams, who recently retired as social work lecturer at Reading University. These cover: the rewards of a career in learning disabilities; building a positive value structure; assessment; and communication.

By subscribing you can support our aim – to achieve for people with learning difficulties everything we would want for ourselves.

To subscribe online log onto

http://www.elfrida.com/comweb/subscription_online.htm

or download a form from the web site: www.communityliving.co.uk

Would you like to write for *Community Living*? Email your ideas to the editor: elinor.harbridge@virgin.net

Community Living is published quarterly by the pioneering charity The Elfrida Society with support from KeyRing, Three Cs, Integrate (Preston & Chorley), Generate, Southdown Housing Association and Respond.

People of working age could be the main victims of spending cuts

Although £2 billion a year has been committed to lessen the impact of cuts for social care support, most of this is likely to be targeted towards support for older people. Organisations representing people with learning difficulties fear that those of working age could be the main victims of the cuts.

In a letter to *The Guardian* (22 October), the Learning Disability Coalition appealed to the government to exercise care in its reform of welfare to ensure people with learning disabilities are not disadvantaged.

Pressure on local authorities, already dealing with a growing demand for services for older people, will increase substantially as 7 per cent a year is to be withdrawn from their funding over the next four years.

Changes to incapacity and housing benefit will also affect some people with learning difficulties. In the current issue of *Community Living*, you can find out how our present system of welfare benefits works and in subsequent issues we will be analysing the effect of the changes.

• Mencap has launched a website to enable debate about how planned cuts will affect people with learning difficulties and their families. Go to: www.mencap.org.uk/talklearningdisability

Will the ILF survive?

The future of the Independent Living Fund remains uncertain after the government announced the scrapping of over 100 quangos. Its status as 'under consideration' is shared with, among others, Remploy Ltd.

Organisations that will definitely be axed include the General Social Care Council (responsible for monitoring social work standards), the Disability Employment Advisory Committee and the Disability Living/Attendance Allowance Advisory Board.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission, sited in the list of quangos facing the axe in a leaked document to the BBC, is to be retained, as is Equality 2025.

Where now for the Independent Living Fund? In the summer edition of *Community Living* (Volume 23, No. 4) Andrew Holman took a critical look at the ILF and its ambivalent role in funding support.

A wild night at the Hackney Empire

African Congolese band Staff Benda Bilili is wowing audiences round the country. Louise Wallis spoke to two lucky people who went to one of their gigs at the Hackney Empire in London.



This acclaimed African 8-piece band is fronted by five middle-aged wheelchair users (one of them a champion arm wrestler).

“The atmosphere was electric” “The guy on crutches – he can do some movements he can!” Read more about what Paula and Yvonne from the Elfrida Society said about their experience in the autumn edition of *Community Living*.

Call for more health checks

A systematic review of the effectiveness of health checks for people with learning disabilities commissioned by the Department of Health is now available on the web site of Improving Health and Lives: Learning Disabilities Observatory.

Eric Emerson, co-director, says that the introduction of health checks for

people with learning disabilities nearly always leads to:

- the detection of unmet, unrecognised and potentially treatable health conditions (including serious and life threatening conditions such as cancer, heart disease and dementia);
- targeted actions to address these health needs.

“Given the specific difficulties faced by people with learning disabilities, we believe that targeted health checks are an effective and important ‘reasonable adjustment’ to primary health care services in the UK”, he says. “It is the legal duty (under the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995, 2005 and the Equality Act 2010) of primary care services to make such adjustments.” More information on the impact of health checks is available in their report.

http://www.improvinghealthandlives.org.uk/uploads/doc/vid_7646_IHAL2010-04HealthChecksSystemticReview.pdf



Jo Williams to chair Care Quality Commission

After eight months acting as chair to the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Dame Jo Williams’ appointment as its chair has been confirmed by Health Secretary Andrew Lansley.

Dame Jo Williams was previously the Chief Executive of Mencap and a former President of the Association of Directors of Social Services.

A moving programme about sterilisation

The history of the sterilisation of women with learning disabilities is highly controversial and remains, to a large extent, a secret. Preventing intellectually disabled women from having children was actively canvassed across the Western world in the early 20th century as a solution to the ‘problem of mental deficiency’. In some countries, dark, forbidding institutions enforced sterilisations and actively prevented social and sexual activity among residents. In this moving podcast, produced by the Open University and presented by Liz Tilly, we learn about the reasons – often complex and sometimes unexpected – behind decisions to sterilise these women. As new research is being published and the decision-making capacity of people with learning disabilities is being taken more seriously, women have started to tell their own stories. We hear the voices of the survivors themselves, in particular Leilani Muir, who brought a landmark case against the Province of Alberta, Canada, in the 1990s for

wrongful sterilisation in the 1959 – and won.

It is available at: <http://sn.im/15a62j>

Interested in helping a charity?



Respond provides therapy to people with learning disabilities who have been abused and/or have abused others.

We are looking for another Trustee with a learning disability (this position is not paid).

You need to be free for a few hours every month for meetings in central London.

For an application pack, contact Amanda Maffett on 020 7874 5482 or email admin@respond.org.uk

Closing date for applications: Monday 22 November.



Stephen Fry heads the 'Sticks and Stones' campaign

Stephen Fry is spearheading a campaign calling for people to pledge 'not to use words that can hurt, offend and stigmatise' people with learning disabilities or mental health problems. The 'Sticks and Stones' campaign was launched by the 5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, a provider of mental health and learning disability services in Cheshire.

You can pledge your support by visiting: www.stampoutstigma.co.uk

Enter the David Brandon Essay competition and you could win £1,000

The theme is 'The person who has most inspired me'

This competition is in memory of *Community Living's* first editor who died in 2001 and whose ideas inspired the editorial principles on which this magazine is based.



The competition is open to everyone – people with learning difficulties, carers and those studying or working in learning difficulties.

The theme of the essay is the person who has most inspired you. Entries should be between 3,000 and 3,500 words.

David Brandon was an outspoken advocate for the rights of people with learning difficulties. Among his many publications was 'Zen in the art of helping', which has had a profound influence on many in the caring professions. Learn about David's work at:

http://www.infed.org/thinkers/david_brandon_zen_helping.htm

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