

EQ News Notes 6 February 2012

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Eight ways for the Government to do things better

At the House of Lords on Monday 12 March, the Campaign for a Fair Society will be launching a Manifesto for change setting out eight proposals for a fairer welfare and tax system.

The House of Commons has rejected the Lords' amendments to the Welfare Reform Bill which will now be returned to the Lords under a rarely-used procedure known as a financial privilege making it difficult for the Lords to make changes.

Other organisations are staging events to draw attention to the iniquities of the Government's welfare policies. On Tuesday 6 March Mencap and the Care and Support Alliance will hold a lobby of Parliament. People from all over the country will be travelling to the Houses of Parliament to present their concerns and lobby their MP.

The Alliance wants to ensure that all 650 MPs are lobbied on that day. You can participate by lobbying your own MP. Information from:

<http://www.mencap.org.uk/socialcare>

Welfare Reform – the dread of things to come, edited by Sally Davison and Jonathan Rutherford, is a short e-book challenging the way both Labour and the Coalition governments have designed and implemented welfare reforms. Five essays written in the context of current events, they expose the impact these reforms are having on the most vulnerable in society. Go to:

<http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/ebooks/WelfareReform.html>

The ultimate betrayal - moving people out of their homes

In the face of financial pressures authorities seem prepared to trample over the rights of vulnerable people, *Rosemary Trustam writes*.

As reported in *Community Living* (Volume 25, No. 2), the family of a woman with severe learning disabilities was excluded from a discussion between the Western Trust and Apex Housing about plans to evict her from her home.

At the end of October, Vivienne Peoples was given seven days notice to leave her home while she was in hospital. The family believe this is because they have raised concerns about the home, Belmont Cottage, sheltered accommodation in Londonderry.

With the number of voids increasing, providers are either moving someone into a void without ensuring they are compatible with others in the house, or even moving people between houses to reduce voids or empty a house. Some authorities want

four or more people in shared tenancies.

Authorities which refuse to meet the extra costs of support to someone in their own home during whatever period of voids are risking legal action.

Read the full article in the current issue of *Community Living*.
Charlie Callanan will be looking at changes to housing benefit in the next issue.

Social care staff can now use whistleblowing helpline

Staff and employers in the social care sector can now access the whistleblowing helpline, previously only available to NHS staff. There is also a new number for the service, which encompasses all of the elements of the current helpline service and is free, independent and confidential.

The new helpline number is 08000 724 725. It can be accessed on weekdays between 08.00 and 18.00 with an out-of-hours answering service available at weekends and on public holidays. A web-based service is also being developed.

You can contact the helpline if you have concerns but are unsure how to raise them or simply want advice on best practice.

The service was previously funded by government but is now a free-phone service provided by Mencap.