

Information and news for disabled and older people and family carers

Independent Living News



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Edition 140 – March 2021

#partofthesolution - 1996-2021, celebrating 25 years of promoting independent living

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If you would like a regular copy of the SIL newsletter, and to help us adhere to our environmental policy to reduce production and postage costs, please forward your email address details to shelagh.callaghan@s4il.co.uk

Deadline for article contributions in the Summer newsletter is Friday, 30th April 2021. Email to shelagh.callaghan@s4il.co.uk or post to the address on the back of this newsletter. Don't forget the prize for every star letter/article printed is £25.



Hello and welcome to the latest edition of the SIL newsletter, I hope you find it interesting and informative.



The start of 2021 has seen significant challenges for SIL, being exposed as we were to a Covid-19 outbreak in our Homecare service. This was a difficult period for all concerned and even though our staff were using the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), it still managed to spread rapidly and unfortunately infected both customers and staff.

However, as a result of the sheer hard work and dedication of our Homecare staff and management we managed to continue to provide all essential services throughout the outbreak; a remarkable achievement given that at one point over 60% of the staff were unable to work, either through infection or self-isolation rules.

The outbreak was a stark lesson in just how virulent the new variant of Covid-19 is and even though by the time you read this the majority of our staff will have been vaccinated, or will have immunity following a Covid-19 infection, we still cannot be complacent. We do not know yet just how much the virus will still be transmitted by people who have been vaccinated or have immunity and as a result we will maintain all of the PPE and hygiene tasks you have got used to over the past year.

I hope that many of you will have had vaccines or that you will be able to get them shortly, but please help us by following the guidelines regarding social contact and distancing until we are told we can relax.

I am sure the summer of 2021 will be a better time for us all and I look forward to seeing you face to face again before too long.

Stay safe, Euan

Office Opening



SIL's Leominster office remains closed until further notice. It is currently only accessed for two hours each day for Business Support officers to redirect answerphone messages and distribute postal mail. Any correspondence sent to us in this way will reach the appropriate person - it may just take a little longer to respond.

Our main switchboard telephone number, 01568 616653, continues to be answered between 9am and 5pm, Monday – Friday.

Caveat: Please note we print articles provided by third party organisations in good faith. SIL takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the information or content. Dates and times of events and activities are correct at the time of going to print.

Samaritans



Every six seconds somebody in the UK contacts Samaritans for help. Whether by phone, email or letter (and in non Covid times face to face) Samaritan volunteers are available to support anyone struggling to cope. Most people go through difficult times, but for some the pressures they are under can lead to thoughts of suicide. Speaking to someone who is non-judgemental can really help. No matter how big or small the problem may seem, Samaritans are there 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to offer emotional support.



During 2020 the number of people needing support and suffering with poor mental health has risen considerably. If you need to talk to someone call free on 116 123, email jo@samaritans.org or write to: Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK, Chris PO Box 9090, Stirling FK8 2SA

If you find it difficult to talk or write about yourself, Samaritans have a free Self-Help app which helps access support without direct contact. To find out more about the app, visit: selfhelp.samaritans.org

Rejuvenate!



Rejuvenate! is the only creative carers' group in Herefordshire.

Their aim is to inspire creativity and improve wellbeing. They produce a monthly newsletter for carers,

The Rejuvenation, which is packed full of creative ideas, supportive and inspirational articles on wellbeing and healthy recipes. To subscribe email: rejuvenate@creativecarergroup.co.uk



Lockdown Support



Staff at SIL have had feedback from lots of people about how difficult the Covid-19 restrictions have been for everyone, but particularly for those who live with or support someone with additional needs.



Euan McPherson, SIL's award winning mental health champion is hoping that SIL can go some way to help with the increased pressure and isolation for disabled people, family members, carers and partners by setting up some online peer support sessions. He would be really interested to hear if you would like to take part in some zoom video meetings with others in a similar position. It would be an opportunity to talk about how you are coping (or not), share ideas with others and generally support each other.

SIL could facilitate sessions on a regular basis if required – perhaps weekly or fortnightly. If you would be interested in this type of opportunity, let Euan know by emailing him at: ewan.mcpherson@s4il.co.uk or call 01568 616653.

Free Wheelchair Hire



The team at TPG DisableAids is committed to supporting the local community and so they are offering free short term hire to anyone that may need a wheelchair to attend their appointment for a Covid 19 vaccination. As seating is limited at most vaccination centres and waiting times vary, this offer is an opportunity to attend without having to worry about whether or not you may need to stand or have difficulties walking any distance.



If you would like to arrange a free hire, call them on 01432 351666.

Snippets



Donations Needed – Staff at Megan Baker House, the Herefordshire charity that provides conductive education sessions for children and adults with motor disorders, are supporting front line hospital workers in Hereford County Hospital with a collection of hand cream, face wipes, snacks, soft drinks, chocolate and tea bags. Items can be dropped off at their HQ in Ledbury, or donations can be made via Amazon Smile. For more information email: zoe@meganbakerhouse.org.uk



Pen Pal – Connect with other carers who understand first hand what it's like to be a carer. Crossroads Together are putting people in touch through their Pen Pal Scheme. To find out more call 0333 323 1990 or email: penpal@crossroadstogether.org.uk



Citizens Advice Torfaen Need You – If you have time to spare and would like to help others with information, advice and guidance while making new friends and learning new skills, then contact Citizens Advice, Torfaen about volunteering. To find out more, visit www.volunteercitizensadvicetorfaen.org.uk



Look UK 4sight – is a national charity that mentors young visually impaired people and supports their families using transformational events, youth forums and parent support groups. From offering parent Braille clubs and supporting home schooling through adapted means for VI students, Look offers a range of support. The charity mentors children and young people, aged 11 – 29 years. If you are aged 18 – 29 and have a passion to help others, you could become a mentor. Visit www.look-uk.org to find out more about the charity and its work.



Emergency Card



The Carers Emergency Card Scheme is a free service provided by Herefordshire Carers, in partnership with Worcestershire Carers. If you worry what might happen to the person you care for if you had an accident or were taken ill, the Scheme may offer some peace of mind. On applying for a card you will be asked for brief details of two people who could care for the person you look after in the event that you are unable to do so. You carry the card with you at all times and if someone calls the emergency number to say you have had an accident or are unwell, a call is made to your emergency contacts so that they can step in and support the person you care for.



There is a similar card available for the person being cared for in case they had an accident or emergency and you were not present. For more information about the cards call: 07885 619658 or 07817 000985 or email: infohfd@carersworcs.org.uk

Vaccine Scams



More scams are being reported as the Covid 19 vaccine is becoming more widely available. The key thing to remember is that the vaccine is free to everyone in the UK. You will not be asked to pay, neither will the NHS ask for the following: your bank details; PIN or banking password; or for you to send them a passport or driving licence as proof of identity.



No one will arrive unannounced on your doorstep to give a vaccine and you will never be asked to hand over a pay slip, utilities bill or any other form of paper identification. Finally, ignore any texts that arrive inviting you to log onto a website to book an appointment to have your jab. Do not click these links, but report them to Action Fraud by calling 0300 123 2040 or visiting: www.actionfraud.police.uk

New Look Courtyard ready to open



A more accessible box office area and retail space are just two of the changes that await visitors to the Courtyard, Hereford when the doors reopen to the public. When theatres closed across the UK in March 2020, the Courtyard was just about to start its huge Transform the Yard project, funded by a range of grants and public support. The project has redesigned the front of house area, extending the Café Bar and ground floor dining space, while adding an outside terrace.



However, the most notable change of this wonderful arts space is a large two-storey multi-purpose room, which can be used for conferences, workshops and meeting space, adjacent to the upper mezzanine area, which has more than doubled in size and provides lots of accessible space in its new lounge bar. It is hoped that Government guidelines will allow the reopening of the Courtyard in April.

UK Disability Survey



The Disability Unit at the Cabinet Office is developing a National Strategy for Disabled People. Publication is planned for Spring 2021, with responses to the survey being used to shape its delivery. The government want to know about the lives of disabled people and their views and experiences. The survey will ask about your life experiences either as a disabled person, a carer or parent, or as someone who has an interest in disability issues.



Many people have had big changes in their lives as a result of Covid-19 and there will be an opportunity at the end of the survey to state if your life has changed due to the pandemic, and in what ways. The survey closes on the 23rd April. To find out more about the survey and how to take part visit: <https://disabilityunit.citizenspace.com/cabinet-office/ukdisabilitysurvey/>

SIL Celebrates its 25th Anniversary



Who would have imagined that in 1996 when a small group of people got together to lobby for direct payments in Herefordshire, that 25 years later their efforts would be the start of a not-for-profit organisation that employs over 120 people, supports around 320 individuals and provides a range of services including direct payment support, supported living at home and a suite of training, delivered by SIL's fully qualified trainers.

This year's AGM promises to be very special and the planning has already started on two events – one a face-to-face event and the other a virtual event – so whether or not we can meet we will still celebrate our 25th anniversary in style. So, please save the date - Thursday, 7th October. We will remind you throughout the year but in the meantime here are some snaps of what our service users have been up to recently – thanks to them for letting us share them with you.



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