

# Open Door

Summer 2011

Issue 36



SDEF  
Scottish Disability  
Equality Forum

## The Scottish Disability Equality Forum Newsletter



**Tricia Marwick MSP,  
New Patron of SDEF**

 **News and Policy**

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## Convenor's Welcome



Once again it is my great pleasure to welcome you all to our latest edition of Open Door.

A feature of the current edition is change. We are very sorry to say 'goodbye' to our wonderful Policy, Information and Parliamentary Officer (PIPO), Hanna McCulloch. She was with us for over two and a half years and made a particularly strong impression. Her experience and skills will be a great boon to her new employers and we know Hanna will have a great career. Also moving on is Hilary Third, Team Leader at the Equality Unit. Her new role will be with Early Years. Their gain is our loss, as Hilary was a great friend to our sector. We send our best wishes and thanks.

However as the name of the magazine suggests, as one door closes another opens. We should like to welcome Susan Grasekamp as our new PIPO and are sure she will quickly make a great contribution. We have also been fortunate to have Euan McDougall join us as temporary cover in the Policy department.

Elsewhere you can read the latest news and views from around the country, including; more on Welfare Reform; changes to the Equality and Human Rights Commission; the Equality Act; Inclusive Communication; and developments within SDEF and member groups. Remember to have your say, both to consultations and by sending in your articles for the Autumn newsletter.

Just as we went to press I heard the wonderful news that Tricia Marwick MSP has generously agreed to be our new Patron. This continues the tradition of the Scottish Parliament's Presiding Officer serving in the role and underlines the principles of openness and accessibility of that democratic institution.

Thanks for your continued support and please enjoy this edition.

With very best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "G Mungall". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Gordon Mungall

### Making Disabled Access Easier to Implement

#### Consultation on Legislative Change

Very often, changes to non-domestic buildings (i.e., not private households) which improve access for disabled people can take a long time. This is because getting planning permission can be a lengthy and costly affair.



It involves detailed scrutiny of all aspects of the project. However, for many routine developments, this scrutiny does not lead to any changes to the original plan, despite holding up the process considerably.

The Scottish Government is asking for your views on how to make the whole process more efficient. At the moment, there is a tool, called Permitted Development Rights (PDR), which enables some developments to go ahead automatically, without the need for a full planning application.

However, this only applies in certain cases, and disabled access developments (such as installing a wheelchair ramp) do not automatically have PDR.

The Government suggests that a new PDR could be included for access. This could help adjustments to buildings to be made more quickly and with less cost.

#### Why not just allow changes to be made automatically?



It's important to think of what would happen if criteria within PDR were too relaxed. These criteria or 'rules' ensure that developments which bypass the usual planning application process still adhere to strict building standards. If Permitted Development Rights were relaxed too much, then new developments could be inappropriate, unsuitable or unnecessary.

This makes for an interesting debate, as the Scottish Government seeks to make changes easier, without compromising standards. If you would like to have your say, then why not email us on either [susan.grasekamp@sdef.org.uk](mailto:susan.grasekamp@sdef.org.uk) or [euan.mcdougall@btconnect.com](mailto:euan.mcdougall@btconnect.com) and request our briefing paper?

### UK Government Welfare Reform

As many of you may know, the UK Government intends to replace the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) with the Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The Government has released a draft of the Assessment Regulations that will outline the way people will be assessed for the new payment.

Consultation continues and SDEF will be submitting a response in August. We hope to hear as many of your views as possible to bring these directly to the Government. Here is a quick summary of the main points and an outline of the process to come.

Summary:

- The PIP will be divided into 'Daily living' and 'Mobility' components.
- There are 9 categories for Daily living and 2 for Mobility.
- The categories are sub-divided into detailed 'descriptors', with applicants assessed, based on which they meet.
- Each descriptor carries a score, which determines whether someone's ability to carry out daily living or mobility activities is 'limited' or 'severely limited'.
- Those with 'limited ability' will qualify for the standard level of PIP: those with 'severely limited ability' will qualify for the enhanced level.
- An important difference from DLA is that the Mobility component will take into account any aids or adaptations used by an applicant.
- The Government says the benefit has been designed to be inclusive of all types of impairment or condition.
- Fluctuating conditions are recognised by assessing whether a descriptor would apply for at least 6 months per year.
- The Government hopes the draft Assessment Regulations will make the process clear and impartial.

Process from now:

- The Government will test the likely impact of the draft Assessment Regulations over the summer.
- It will seek responses at the start of August.
- It will then refine the Regulations further as necessary.
- It will publish a second draft of the Assessment Regulations in the autumn.



The Government has said that it will review the removal of the mobility component from people in residential care, following earlier consultation. While we welcome this review we believe that the results of it must be published as an essential part of the democratic process.

It is vital that your views, opinions and ideas are heard. Please help us to continue this work by sharing your views.

If you would like any more information, a copy of our briefing, or to share an opinion, please contact us. Our phone number is 01786 446559, or email us on [ewan.mcdougall@sdef.org.uk](mailto:ewan.mcdougall@sdef.org.uk), [susan.grasekamp@sdef.org.uk](mailto:susan.grasekamp@sdef.org.uk) or [policy.info@sdef.org.uk](mailto:policy.info@sdef.org.uk).

## News and Policy

### Equality and Human Rights Commission



The UK Government has recently been consulting on reform of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). It was set up in 2007 replacing the former Disability Rights Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission and embracing new strands of age, faith, and sexual orientation.

The EHRC has many roles, including: promoting human rights in the UK; taking forward test cases on behalf of people experiencing discrimination and; providing advice. The Government feels that the EHRC has not provided value for money or delivered on its core functions.

It proposes, among many things: to give the EHRC a narrower role; to look for a new provider of information and advice and; to give Parliament greater power to oversee the EHRC's budget.

SDEF believes that:

1. Any reform must reflect the experience of the EHRC in Scotland, which differs from England and Wales.
2. Any new information and advice service must be fully accessible, with well-informed and specialist advisers.
3. Greater accountability to Ministers must not diminish the independence of the EHRC.

## News and Policy

### Equality Act - Scottish Specific Duties

The Equality Act 2010 combines various duties under equalities legislation, such as the Disability Discrimination Act, into one single duty. The Act also gives the Scottish Government the power to make regulations that place specific duties on public sector bodies.

In the last session before the election, the Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee rejected the proposals that were put forward for the public sector specific duties in Scotland. The draft Regulations proposed by the Government were criticised for not going far enough to enforce duties that would promote equality in Scotland, nor involving people from equality groups, such as disabled people, in strategies to tackle discrimination.

The Scottish Government says that they will undertake further consultation and prepare new Regulations later in the year. SDEF fully intends to respond to any consultation and will be seeking your views on this subject.



## Access Panels

### Access all Areas – Barbra Farmer

What is an access panel? Access panels or groups are people who work together for better access for everyone including disabled people in their local environment. Within Scotland there are currently over 40 panels. All are independent, disability led and volunteer led. There are also access groups throughout England but I am unaware of exact numbers.



Some things that access panels do are:

- Review building warrant applications
- Undertake site visits
- Lobby
- Be a contact point with the local authority on access issues.

I am a member of the North Lanarkshire Access Panel and when my work hours allow me, I attend the monthly meetings of this group. At these meetings we are regularly asked to look at plans for buildings, either new builds or refurbishments, to ensure that they make the building as fully accessible as possible. We will either have to give our feedback in the form of a report to the property developer or directly at the meeting to a representative.

I have also been involved in going on a couple of 'site visits'. On one occasion a local wildlife park wanted to put up gates to stop some bikers using the park as a shortcut and damaging the land. They were just about to order a particular type of gate for this, and a number of other parks, but decided to consult with the panel first. Fortunately myself and a few other people were able to go onto another park that had the type of gate to allow us to try it out. We were able to advise and demonstrate that while someone walking with sticks would just be able to use this type of gate anyone in a wheelchair or mobility scooter would not be able to. We were then taken to another park with another style of gate where we were able to confirm that this was far more suitable for these people.

On another occasion we were asked by Strathclyde police to check that the public areas of their stations were accessible.

A group of us including people with visual, hearing and mobility impairments went to one of their stations and were given a tour of the public areas. On this occasion we were able to give feedback on things that they had done well, as well as areas that needed improvement. In fact this detailed report has been sent to police headquarters to be used as a reference document.



We also work with North Lanarkshire council and have at their request carried out visits to Summerlee Museum. The council had completed a major investment in updating the museum and were keen to be sure that it was suitable. We found many faults that affected mobility and sensory impaired people. Needless to say, the council were not too happy to see these faults. To allow us to continue these site visits we have had training in completing access surveys.

All of the Scottish access panels are affiliated to the Scottish Disability Equality Forum (SDEF) and are regularly sent documents for consultation such as a recent one in which the Scottish Parliament is considering making changes to certain aspects of the blue badge scheme. As this is currently at the public consultation stage, we have been able on an individual basis to make comments on these proposed changes.

Without being on the access panel and therefore being sent out documents for consultation, many of us would be unaware of these proposed changes until the decisions had been made and it was too late for reaction.

The Forum is also there to advise on legality, correct measurements on steps/ pavements, door openings etc and to ensure we give the right response with regard to our findings.



Some of the other panels in Scotland have produced accessibility guides for towns in their area, advising on accessibility of public buildings and individual shops.

When I first heard about the access panel I wasn't sure how effective it could be, but I very quickly appreciated the work done and also the advice and participation of SDEF. If you are interested in joining your local access panel then contact your local council who should be able to advise if there is one in our area, and where and when it meets.

## Access Panels

### Fife Independent Disability Network AGM

FIDN's Annual General Meeting is Wednesday 14 September 2011, 2-4pm. Contact Muriel MacGregor, Office Manager on 01592 203993 for more details.



## Access Panels

### The Value of Volunteers



At present there are 50 access panels in Scotland with many people working very hard to ensure that disabled persons can get access to everything that a non disabled person has, thereby helping people to live a life of dignity, respect and independence.

As individual access panels and the network of panels across Scotland always need new faces, it is important that we not only develop new and innovative methods of recruitment, but that we look at how we treat and keep the volunteers we have.

We must therefore look after the volunteers who serve on access panels, making sure that they are happy and contented. When we do get new members they should not be overloaded. Happy volunteers make good volunteers and are of great benefit to the panel on which they serve.

I do believe that all panels should have a volunteering policy. This can be relatively simple and state most of the expectations placed upon volunteers. It should perhaps read something like this:



#### **What is expected of you as a volunteer?**

- You can become a member of the panel committee
- However, you are not obliged to serve on a committee: you can simply be a member of the panel and become involved when something interests you.
- Give the time and commitment that you are comfortable with and do not overload yourself.
- If you feel that you are under undue pressures please approach an Office Bearer so that any problems can be promptly and fairly rectified.

- It is important that you feel valued and are interested in the work that you do for the access panel so please let it be known what your aptitudes are and what you are interested in.
- The panel endeavours to provide training in various areas of access that will benefit both volunteer and the panel. However, this is subject to resources being available.
- Most of all enjoy your time on the panel.

Keith Robertson, Access Development Officer, SDEF.

## Access Panels

### West Dunbartonshire Access Panel

West Dunbartonshire Access Panel was formed in 1997, funded by the local council. Over the years we have become devolved and for the last four or five years have been able to survive without council funding. This was due mainly to funding from SDEF through the Scottish Government and hard work by the committee to find other ways of funding.

We, like most access panels, were finding it tough to keep membership numbers healthy and decided to create a sub group to look at ways of increasing our membership. We decided that one of the best ways was to visit all the Disabled Peoples Organisations in West Dunbartonshire. With the aid of the Disability Equality Officer we visited all the groups, allowing us to increase our membership greatly and changing the way the access panel worked within our council area. We began to cover more disability issues and in fact are looking at all equality issues now.

The main focus of our panel is still access issues and we are working on a good few projects just now including the new Health Centre that is being built at Alexandria and the Sports Centre being built at Clydebank. We are in at the beginning before the plans have been agreed. We are part of the shopmobility management group which will be going live at Clydebank within the next 6 weeks.



Our panel is also planning a conference at the turn of next year looking at all aspects of disability, what has changed for disabled people and what has not. There will be a strong leaning towards Independent Living.

Jackie Maceira

## SDEF News

### Ben Nevis



In our spring issue of Open Door, you may remember an article about climbing Ben Nevis on Saturday 28 May 2011. Unfortunately, this climb had to be postponed due to dangerous weather conditions.

Marta More, our Access Development Administrator, was raising money for Guide Dogs. For those of you, who kindly sponsored Marta, don't worry. The climb will still take place. A date has not been set as of yet, but once it has, an email will go round informing everyone of the new date.

## SDEF News

### Hanna McCulloch

Hanna left the company at the end of April to take up a new position as a Senior Policy Officer with Capability Scotland. We are sure that Hanna's special skills and talents will take her very far in her future career.



Most readers will have become familiar with the articles written by Hanna for Open Door, since she became our Policy, Information and Parliamentary Officer in October 2008. Nearly always they covered an interesting development affecting our readers and usually concluded with details of how people could contact her for further information. Her application and dedication to her subject were always exemplary and we know that readers will miss her.

Many of you will have had the opportunity to meet her personally at a range of events and fact finding meetings which she organised. Hanna was also an ever-present at larger conferences, the 'Gathering' and our Annual General Meeting, where she ran the information stall.

In the office Hanna was noted for her fierce concentration, ability to master new subjects, confer with others, collate complex material and render issues simply yet forcefully. She was also a great companion and a fun person to be around. We wish Hanna all the very best and are confident she will make a tremendous contribution in her new role.

## SDEF News

### New Staff Member

Hi, I'm Susan, the new Policy Officer here at SDEF.

I'm delighted to be part of an organisation which really cares about making sure the views of its members are heard and realised.

To make it easier for you to have your say, Sasha, Euan and I are working together on ways in which you can respond to those issues about which you care.



I'm really excited about the new website which the organisation is busy developing and how it will help you to connect even more easily with staff at SDEF. It will provide lots of information, including current consultations, which you will be able to access and respond to online if you wish.

We will also be sending out a leaflet, asking you about the types of issues you are interested in (e.g., housing, access, work, etc) and how you would prefer to respond to these issues. We hope you will fill this out and return it to us.

Above all, we want to make it easier for you to have your say. And for those who are not already members, we wish to encourage you to sign up and add your voice to the many important issues which affect people with a disability. Your view really counts!

I look forward to meeting and working with you over the next year.

Susan

## SDEF News

### Hilary Third

Over the years SDEF has been greatly supported by the Equality Unit of the Scottish Government. Unlike many funders, the Unit has had a specific remit to foster the development of organisations like ours and has invariably worked very closely with us. Our relationship goes back to 2002, when our first grant was received. As noted in our last edition, funding has been extended recently to March 2012 and the Unit has also made further funding available to Access Panels, as in previous years.

We understand that there have been some internal changes within the Unit recently. Customarily, people move from time to time to broaden their experience within the Scottish Government. Although this is positive, it is occasionally tinged with a little sadness for SDEF. On this occasion, we have learnt that Hilary Third will be moving from being the Team Leader of Equality, Policy and Communities to become the Team Leader of Early Years.

Hilary has been our closest link with the Scottish Government for five years and she has always taken a personal interest in our work. We have shared many a meeting, aired any number of subjects and always felt we were on the same wavelength and working towards the same goal. Although her brief extended beyond disability matters, Hilary was always ahead of the game in terms of information and policy formulation: her critique was always spot on.

It would also be fair to say that Hilary really championed the role of Access Panels and was very clear as to the contribution they make. SDEF and the Panels could not make progress without the support and understanding of the Scottish Government and Hilary's input has undoubtedly had a most positive influence.

We wish Hilary well in her new role and know that Early Learning will benefit from her fine analysis, drive and dedication.

## **SDEF News**

### **Sharing the Knowledge**

During my time at SDEF I have come across so many inspiring examples of our members making a difference in their local communities and to the lives of disabled people. As part of the Network Development Project, I would like to share this knowledge and experience across our network of members.

Where there are examples of great practice, inspiring action and engaging ideas, I would like to hear them, share them and potentially turn them into a step by step toolkit.

The Ayrshire Planning group, which is developing an Ayrshire-wide Inclusive Design event, has kindly agreed to share its experience of designing and organising an event, and for a step by step guide to organising an event to be produced and made available on the new SDEF website.

If you or your organisation have something to be proud of which you would like to share, please get in touch with me, Sasha McDougall, and we can find the best way to share your knowledge. You can contact me on [sasha.mcdougall@sdef.org.uk](mailto:sasha.mcdougall@sdef.org.uk) or phone me on 01786 473152.

In the next issue, Susan Grasekamp will be sharing some of her knowledge on securing funding.

## **SDEF News**

### **Inclusive Communication**

In the last edition of Open Door, Lochaber Access Panel wrote about its experiences of engaging with Communication Forum Scotland and the Inclusive Communication Case Study. This month, SDEF provided opportunities for our members to find out more about the principles of Inclusive Communication in Edinburgh and Inverness. In case you have not had the opportunity to find out more, here's a brief summary:

Inclusive Communication is an approach that seeks to 'create a supportive and effective communication environment, using every available means of communication to understand and be understood' ([Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists](#), 2003)

It is about being aware of and valuing all different ways a person may use to communicate and express their needs, make and understand choices and engage in the world around them.

By using the Six Principles of Inclusive Communication you can work towards ensuring that you provide a supportive and effective environment that enables people to participate and be active citizens.

#### **The Six Principles of Inclusive Communication are:**

- 1: Recognise that every community or group may include people with communication support needs
- 2: Find out what is required
- 3: Match the way you communicate to the ways people understand
- 4: Respond sensitively to all the ways an individual uses to express themselves
- 5: Give people the opportunity to communicate to the best of their abilities
- 6: Keep trying.

To find out more visit the Talk For Scotland Toolkit at [www.communicationforumscotland.org.uk](http://www.communicationforumscotland.org.uk).

## **SDEF News**

### **Network Development Project**

As many of you will know, the Network Development Project is in its third and final year. The project, funded by the Big Lottery, aims to work with our members to build their capacity and increase their influence to enable effective action and to make positive changes in the lives of disabled people. Activity this year has focused on bringing our members together for regional meetings, training and events.

The Network Development Officer is working in the following areas:

In Ayrshire the Access Panels have come together to establish a planning group to develop an event on Inclusive Design. This will be the second event organised by the group and aims to be an awareness raising event that effects change on the planning and design process in Ayrshire.

In Forth Valley and Fife the members have come together to find out more about Disability Equality and the Independent Living Movement, and are developing individual campaigns on volunteer recruitment.

In Argyll and Bute, local disabled people's organisations are coming together to co-produce the local housing strategy with the local authority. As part of a wider pilot, co-ordinated by Independent Living in Scotland and the Scottish Government, the Network Development Officer has worked with the group to facilitate discussion and ensure all views are heard.

In Edinburgh and Inverness, members attended a network and information session aimed at connecting them with representatives from public services, the NHS, and other disability organisations. The events have been well attended and more will be available in the coming months.

If you would like to be part of the Network Development Project or have ideas about how it could work in your area, please get in touch with the Network Development Officer – Sasha McDougall on [sasha.mcdougall@sdef.org.uk](mailto:sasha.mcdougall@sdef.org.uk) or 01786 473152.

## **SDEF News – STOP PRESS**

### **Tricia Marwick to be New SDEF Patron**

SDEF is most honoured to confirm that Ms Tricia Marwick MSP, Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, has kindly consented to become our Patron in succession to Mr Alex Fergusson MSP. We are delighted the Ms Marwick has graciously accepted our invitation and we look forward to many opportunities to link with her in the coming years.

## News from Other Groups

### New Campaign Calls for Urgent Attention for Stroke



An important and positive new campaign to mobilise wider support for improved stroke prevention, treatment and care in Scotland was launched in May by The Stroke Association in Scotland.

The “Agenda for Action for Stroke in Scotland” sets out key areas where further improvements are required.

- Increased public awareness of stroke, as this saves lives.
- Implementation of more effective stroke prevention measures, so there are far fewer strokes.
- Continuing provision of speedy and good quality acute treatment and rehabilitation for all stroke patients, to save lives and aid recovery.
- Improvements in the longer term care and support that stroke survivors and their carers receive in the community, to maximise their quality of life after stroke.

Maddy Halliday, Director Scotland of The Stroke Association said:

“Stroke is a major public health issue for Scotland. It is the leading cause of adult disability and third most common cause of death. Modifiable risk factors for stroke, such as high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and obesity, are increasing in Scotland and these trends - combined with our growing elderly population - mean that the number of people at risk of stroke is growing. We must and can do more in Scotland to reduce people’s risk of stroke, even as they age.

Over the last 10 years there have been significant and welcome improvements in NHS acute stroke care in Scotland and, linked to these improvements, falling death rates due to stroke. But the quality of acute stroke care and rehabilitation across Scotland is variable and many areas do not currently meet all the national stroke clinical standards. Despite the financial pressures ahead, we must also do more to sustain and improve the quality of acute stroke care in Scotland.

It is important to pledge your support, The more people who pledge to support improvements in stroke, the more likely we will achieve the progress we so urgently need.”

More information about the Agenda for Action for Stroke in Scotland campaign and how people can pledge your support, is available from the Stroke Association’s website: [www.stroke.org.uk/scotland/agendaforaction](http://www.stroke.org.uk/scotland/agendaforaction) or by email: [Agendaforaction@stroke.org.uk](mailto:Agendaforaction@stroke.org.uk)

## News from Other Groups

### If in Doubt Keep Them Out – Bogus Callers

Historically this time of the year sees an increase in bogus caller crime, or distraction thefts. This is where people turn up on your doorstep unannounced and try to trick their way into your home to steal money or valuables.



Most people who call at your home will be genuine, but by following this simple advice you won't be caught out by those who aren't.

- Keep your front and back doors locked, even when at home.
- Before opening the door, look to see who it is. Use a spy hole, if you have one, or a window that overlooks the door. If you do not recognise callers, ask why they are there.
- Verify who they are; check ID by passing it through the letterbox. Call the company they are from using the phonebook, never a number they give you to call. If they are genuine they won't mind waiting while you do that.
- Keep them on the doorstep. If they need access to your home, ask them to make an appointment for another time, allowing you to verify them and the organisation they represent. This also gives you the opportunity to arrange to have someone with you when they return.

Bogus callers can be anyone, if in doubt keep them out!

If you suspect you have had a bogus caller at your door, contact the Police immediately. The sooner the Police know, the quicker they can investigate.

## News from Other Groups

### Deaf Awareness & Sign Language Workshop

A new initiative to encourage employees to take up deaf awareness & sign language is now available in Alloa.

Signs4Life is offering an introductory workshop in deaf awareness and sign language to help staff to communicate with their deaf and hard of hearing colleagues, service users and clients. It will be on Thursday 14th July at Alloa Town Hall from 9:30am-12:30pm. **Attendance is strictly by booking (limited places).**

For more information, please contact Fozia on [info@signs4life.org.uk](mailto:info@signs4life.org.uk)

### New Online Disability Database Launch

UPDATE- Disability Information Scotland is proud to announce the launch of its new online pan-disability database for Scotland (SCOOP). Released in conjunction with their new website ([www.update.org.uk](http://www.update.org.uk)), SCOOP provides a one stop shop for disability related information in Scotland.



Designed primarily for information workers, SCOOP holds thousands of records on topics such as local and national disability groups, local authority contacts, accessible holidays, disability equipment suppliers, legislation, equality, travel and welfare rights. SCOOP also allows organisations to use the database structure to create their own local database of disability records, specific to their location or organisation. This can be managed by the organisation for their own purposes, a feature that can add greatly to the information they can provide for their own service users.

Gail Wilson, Manager of UPDATE said “Accurate and timely information is a vital tool in all walks of life and we know from experience how quickly information can become out of date, particularly on the internet. The minute we are provided with updated information, we ensure it is instantaneously updated online, crucial in the ever changing world of information.

“While many of our services are aimed at organisations, the new website also holds a wealth of information for members of the public, enabling access to local disability contacts and support, as well as general disability information throughout Scotland.

“We know from increased calls to our helpline in the last few months, that disabled people are concerned about issues such as changes to the welfare system and our new online resources give people instant access to that vital information and support.”

UPDATE is funded by the Scottish Government and is Scotland’s foremost disability information service providing across-the-board disability-related information to organisations in the voluntary, public and private sectors as well as to individual members of the public.

## News from Other Groups

### ARGH Autism Alert Card

Autism Rights Group Highland has recently issued a new Membership/Autism Alert Card.



When under stress it is not uncommon for an autistic person to have increased communication difficulties. This will vary between individuals and will change depending upon the environment they are in and the amount of stress they are feeling. A person may lose all verbal communication, may appear to be unable to communicate at all, or may simply stumble over words or be difficult to understand. They may appear to be understanding whilst not fully processing what is happening or being communicated to them.

The card allows an autistic person to communicate a need. Of course, we know that each person is an individual: the card is limited as to what it can convey and should be seen as a signal to stop and consider, rather than as a conclusive explanation of each individual's needs.

Even for people who experience these difficulties themselves it can be impossible to predict exactly how we may be affected or behave. Even if a person appears to you to be unaffected you must never presume to know how that person feels; remember an autistic person may not be feeling or behaving in the way you would expect. It is useful to remember that autism is not something that you can "see".

If there is a phone number on the card, this should only be used with the consent of the person carrying the card.

Our card has been warmly welcomed by all, We thank Gordon Ellis, the Scottish Court Service's Sherifdom Business Manager for Grampian, Highlands and Islands who has distributed information so that the courts, the Procurator Fiscal and police are all familiar with the card. He has also worked with the Sheriff Principal to send our card to all Sheriffs in the Highlands and Islands area to start the process of increasing awareness.

Currently we are working to promote the existing card and looking for a National partner to work with us on new alert card project.

For more information, please contact: [kb@arghighland.co.uk](mailto:kb@arghighland.co.uk)

## News from Other Groups

### Tell Your Story, Make a Difference!

Had experience of NHS services recently? Want to offer some feedback, suggestions or thanks? Want to see what others are saying too?



Then Patient Opinion might interest you.

Patient Opinion is a not-for-profit social enterprise, which uses the power of the web to carry your voice into the heart of health services.

Patient Opinion provides a website where anyone can share their recent experience of local health services and see what others are saying. Stories can be from patients, carers, service user or staff and you can submit them directly via [www.patientopinion.org.uk](http://www.patientopinion.org.uk) or by post or telephone. You tell the story in your own words, or pictures, sharing as much, or as little, as you want. It's totally confidential and your privacy is one of Patient Opinion's primary concerns.

Patient Opinion works to make sure the people providing health services see every story that is published on the site and encourages them to respond online. If this response shows that a change has been made to services, the Patient Opinion website highlights this, for everyone to see. Patient Opinion is already working with a number of Health Boards across Scotland which are interested in seeing what people have to say.

Patient Opinion aims to make it quick, easy and safe for patients and carers to give feedback about their health care, and for health service providers to respond to and make use of feedback for service improvement.



Tell us your story at [www.patientopinion.org.uk](http://www.patientopinion.org.uk). Contact us on 0845 113 0012. Write to us at Freepost Patient Opinion.

## News from Other Groups

### MSPs to Meet With NHS Tayside Over Poor HEI Inspection Results at Ninewells

Dundee City East MSP Shona Robison has expressed disappointment over the results of an unannounced inspection at Ninewells, which outlined a number of areas where improvements are required.

This followed publication by Healthcare Improvement Scotland of its report from unannounced visits to Ninewells on 25 and 26 April 2011.

The report found that wards and clinical areas were clean and that NHS Tayside was working towards new and more rigorous health standards, however the inspection uncovered some areas where improvements were required.

Shona Robison said: "I am disappointed at the results of this unannounced inspection. There were eleven recommendations for improvement and nine of these were previously identified in an inspection in November 2010 which is particularly disappointing. We have now set-up a face to face meeting with Gerry Marr to seek assurances that these recommendations will be followed through and that NHS Tayside is committing the resources to address the areas of improvement which this HIS report identifies."

## Events

### Equal Adventure's 2011 Events Programme

Equal Adventure is a charity based in the Scottish Highlands, which aims to ensure all people can be included in outdoor activities, the countryside and active lifestyles regardless of disability.



Equal Adventure is on a **Roadshow / Training Tour** across the UK, with a series of one day training events for outdoor instructors and people who work, or want to work, with disabled people. Why not come along? We will answer your questions on how to bring fully inclusive opportunities to local authorities, outdoor education, schools or to individuals. Our focus, is to mainstream the inclusion of disabled people. With our 'whatever it takes' ethos, attending an Equal Adventure Roadshow / Training day will prove that anything is possible when planning or providing an adventure which once seemed impossible. The training will help you to plan and prepare to include people with a wide range of impairments and understand the role of adaptive equipment, including for paddle sports, climbing and expeditions and field living.

“This is a chance to get all your questions about inclusion answered and see some of our latest adventure sports equipment, such as the ‘Armadillo Bundle’ for people with complex postural needs, and ‘Stump Angels’ for people with lower limb amputations.” said Suresh Paul, PhD, Principle Advocate and Founder of Equal Adventure. These events are supported by Awards for All and will improve access to outdoor adventure across Scotland. The Equal Adventure summer programme also includes:



The **Equal Adventure Festival 2011** based at Glenmore Lodge, provides a chance for participants to learn new skills, improve existing skills, meet new people and build team spirit. It is an opportunity for both individuals and teams to participate in a range of outdoor activities regardless of disability.

#### The **Felicity Aston 'White Stuff' Lecture.**

"A chance to meet and hear from an inspirational polar explorer and expedition leader." Listen to her talking about her expedition experiences, watch her awe inspiring slide show. Afterwards there will be the opportunity to purchase an autographed copy of her new book, personally delivered into your hands by the woman herself!

For more information please visit our website: [www.equaladventure.org](http://www.equaladventure.org)  
or email us: [hello@equaladventure.org](mailto:hello@equaladventure.org)

### **Guest features – Let us hear your experiences!**



Do you have anything you'd like to share with SDEF members? Perhaps you or someone you know does a lot to champion equalities. Or perhaps you have experiences or thoughts you'd like to share with other disabled users. Maybe you just want to get something off your chest! If so just let us know by e-mail, phone or fax and you could see your views in print. Ideally submissions should be between 200 and 500 words in length and you can send photos too – although it's not essential.

Call 01786 446 456, e- mail [marta.more@sdef.org.uk](mailto:marta.more@sdef.org.uk) or write to Scottish Disability Equality Forum, 12 Enterprise House, Springkerse Business Park, Stirling, FK7 7UF



We are building a **network** of members to work together to remove the barriers to full social inclusion of people affected by disability. Contact us today and make a difference!

[www.sdef.org.uk](http://www.sdef.org.uk)

[info@sdef.org.uk](mailto:info@sdef.org.uk)

01786 446456

You will be.....



**Kept informed** through our website, newsletter, blog and regular email updates.



**Consulted** on developments in law and policy.



Given opportunities to **network** with like-minded people and organisations.



Helping to **Influence** public bodies, including the Scottish Parliament and Government

Annual Membership of SDEF costs just £1 for individuals and £5 for organisations.

If you would like to join, please contact [maeve.bain@sdef.org.uk](mailto:maeve.bain@sdef.org.uk) or complete one of the application forms on the following pages

## Application for Individual Membership of Scottish Disability Equality Forum

Name of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Block capitals please)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate which format you would like the newsletter:

Paper  Large Print  Email:  Tape:  CD ROM:

Any other format, please specify.....

Your application will be tabled at the next SDEF Board Meeting

Please return your application to:

SDEF, 12 Enterprise House, Springkerse Business Park, Stirling, FK7 7UF

|  |
|--|
| Information provided will be retained within our system in accordance with the<br>Data Protection Act 1998 |
|--|

**Alternative formats available – call 01786 446456**

**Scottish Disability Equality Forum**  
**12 Enterprise House, Springkerse Business Park, Stirling, FK7 7UF**  
**Tel: 01786 446456 Fax: 01786 450902 Email: [general@sdef.org.uk](mailto:general@sdef.org.uk)**  
**[www.sdef.org.uk](http://www.sdef.org.uk)**

**Registered in Scotland as a Company Limited by Guarantee with  
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[www.sdef.org.uk](http://www.sdef.org.uk)

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## Application for Organisational Membership

Name of Organisation:.....

Contact Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

..... Post Code.....

Tel:..... Fax:.....

Email:..... Website.....

Full members organisations are bodies based in Scotland in which a majority of the Governing Committee or Board are people with a disability, or organisations which are working towards such a majority

Associate member organisations are bodies based in Scotland which do NOT have such a majority, but which support the objects of SDEF.

My organisation wishes to become a full member of SDEF .....

My organisation wishes to become an associate member of SDEF .....

**For Full Membership Applications**

I certify that the above organisation has a majority of people with disabilities on its Governing Committee, or is working towards such a majority. At the date of signing there were ..... people with disabilities on the Governing Committee out of a total of .....Governing Committee Members .

Signature ..... Date.....

**For Associate Membership Applications**

I certify that the above organisation supports the objects of SDEF

Signature ..... Date.....

Your application will be tabled at the next SDEF Board Meeting

Please enclose a copy of your Constitution and return to:

SDEF, 12 Enterprise House, Springkerse Business Park, Stirling, FK7 7UF

Information provided will be retained within our system in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998

**Alternative formats available – please call 01786 446456**

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Scottish Disability  
Equality Forum

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Charity No SC031893  
Company No SC243392

**Patron: Tricia Marwick MSP**

**Open Door is available in alternative  
formats on request**

**Any comments made in any  
contributed articles do not  
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