



Open Door

Issue 18
Autumn 2005



SDEF
Scottish Disability
Equality Forum

Funding received for New Member of Staff!

As part of our Business Plan, SDEF bid this year for a new member of staff to work as a Policy, Information & Parliamentary Officer. We are happy to say that the bid was accepted by the Scottish Executive and, since the last edition was published, we have been busy recruiting.

The role of the new person will be to help us work on policy positions and to ensure the views of people affected by disability maintain a high profile. The remit will also include improving the flow of information between SDEF and our members and partners and to make certain that knowledge of developments is shared.

As you know, SDEF takes part in a number of consultations and it is important that our responses are representative of the views of our members. Many members will have responded to our requests for views on a number of issues. The new Officer will assist SDEF to carry out this function efficiently,

but also help us take a pro-active approach to policy developments, as part of our role as partners in consultation. The appointee will deal with the Parliament and other decision making bodies.

At the time of writing we are unable to give the name of the successful candidate, but the new appointee will be announced on the website very soon. The Policy, Information & Parliamentary Officer will also be taking a leading role in developing the internet and our other forms of communication. We are delighted by the addition of a fifth member of staff and are confident this will be a boost to SDEF and the people we serve.

Wyn Merrells
Manager

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Convenor's Report

This has been a very busy time for SDEF. I am delighted to tell you that, since the last edition, we have heard from the Scottish Executive that they have approved our Business Plan and awarded funding until March 2008. This is, as ever, pending satisfactory progress and achievement of our aims, but this is excellent news.

Part of our bid was for an additional member of staff. Elsewhere in this edition you will read more about the role of our new Policy, Information & Parliamentary Officer. We have very high hopes that our new colleague will make an impact and help us develop these important areas. We anticipate the appointee will take up post in November.

Also in November (on Monday the 21st) we will be holding our Annual General Meeting at the Conservatory, the Management Centre, Stirling University. We have been fortunate this year in securing the Minister for Disabled People, Mrs Anne McGuire MP as a keynote speaker. We are sure she will have a great deal to say of value to our members and she will also be taking questions.

SDEF is also delighted that Ms Marieke Dwarshuis, the Head of Charities at the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) will also be making a presentation and answering queries from the floor. This should make for a very informative and lively AGM and we hope that many of you will be able to come along.

Elsewhere in this Newsletter you will be able to read about some of the developments being carried forward by SDEF and our member and partner organisations and report on some problems that people have encountered.

We hope you find this edition informative and helpful and are happy to report much positive activity. Please continue to send in your copy – we couldn't do it without you.

Ron Skinner MBE
Convenor



The Council on Disability



Who are we?

The Council on Disability (Stirling District) is a disability led organisation promoting a person centred approach in order to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and their families in the Stirling District.

We have over twenty years experience of working with and for disabled people in the Stirling district.

The unit is staffed by trained volunteers led by a management committee, a high proportion of whom have a disability themselves.

What do we do?

- We provide a one-stop shop located in Stirling town centre that provides a specialist information and advice service for disabled people and people with disabling illnesses who live in Stirling and district.
- We campaign on issues that affect the lives of disabled people.
- We provide training in disability awareness.
- We are actively involved with other local disability groups working on subjects such as welfare reform, access and housing.

Why would you contact us?

If you, or someone you care for, would like information and/or advice on any aspect of disability, we can help.

For example – we can:

- Contact statutory bodies on your behalf.

- Provide advice and assistance in claiming disability benefits.
- Assist with reviews or appeals relating to disability benefits.
- Provide advice and information on aids and equipment for your particular disability.
- Give information and assistance to identify accessible holidays.
- Provide a communication service for those who need someone to write letters, official or otherwise, on their behalf.

Clients have been supported, and in some cases represented, by our staff at appeals and reviews.

Our volunteers have time and an understanding approach towards clients and all information is dealt with in strict confidence.

How can you get in touch with us?

Our office is at:

**The Norman MacEwan Centre,
Cameronian Street,
STIRLING,
FK8 2DX
(Beside the Citizen's Advice Bureau)**

Telephone: 01786 462178

E-mail: dis.stirling@btconnect.com

We are open Tuesdays through to Fridays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Please 'phone, or call in for an appointment to ensure you'll be attended to when you need help.

Project Ability

'Leisureable' at Lochore Meadows

It's that time of the year already!
Project Ability has this year's Christmas
cards for sale. There are three designs
to choose from:



Cards are priced at £2.00 per pack of
five cards. To order contact Project
Ability on 0141 552 2822 or download
an order form from
www.project-ability.co.uk .

They also have **calendars** available at
£3.50 each.

I am sure that our readers will join us in
congratulating our
Office Administrator,
Maeve, who was
married on August
27th in her home town
of Keady, Co

Armagh, Northern Ireland.
Our best wishes to Maeve (Bain) and her
new husband Iain.

People with mobility difficulties are
being offered the opportunity to
experience the great outdoors at
Lochore Meadows Country Park, near
Lochgelly, Fife. 'LeisureAble', a new
project which will provide two mobility
scooters and a power chair for the
outdoors will soon be available for hire.

Forth & Tay Disabled Ramblers (FTDR)
has worked in partnership with staff at
Lochore Meadows and 'Bums off Seats',
Fife's walking Health Initiative to make
this project possible. The equipment
will be based permanently at Lochore
and can be used on specially mapped
routes within the Country Park.

Financial support for the project came
from "Paths to Health", matched by
funding from Sport Relief, the Hugh
Fraser Foundation, the Russell Trust,
Fife Charities Trust, Age Concern and
Exxon Mobil / Shell UK.

FTDR is a rambling group run by
disabled people. It was set up in 2001
and organizes rambles, providing the
use of a scooter and transport to the
venue if required. Volunteers assist
with the transport and accompany
members on the walks. For more
information contact www.ftdr.com
or call 01333 320864.



The ECAS office is on the move!

The ECAS office is moving. The Board of Directors has decided that the office will move to Norton Park, in Albion Road, off Easter Road (right next to Hibs football stadium). Norton Park is an old school that has been converted to provide office and meeting room accommodation for charities.

Initially we will be renting desks in a shared office, but we hope to have our own office soon. There is also a strong possibility that we will be able to move the classes to Norton Park in the not too distant future.

Our new contact details are:

Ecas Ltd
Norton Park
57 Albion Road
Edinburgh EH7 5QY

Telephone number:

General Enquiries/FAX **0131 475 2344**

Fife Independent Disability Network (FIDN) is holding a Network Meeting Wednesday 16th November 2005 from 2-4pm Kingswood Hotel, Burntisland. Admission free, Travel expenses paid. For more information call Muriel on 01592 203993

DPHS (Fife)

A new, independent, user-led service working to increase equality of choice in housing for other disabled people in Fife has been launched.

The Disabled Persons Housing Service (Fife), a registered charity, supports disabled people with housing needs and assists in exploring all solutions. With support from Fife Council's Housing and Social Work services, DPHS (Fife) has been able to employ a Development Officer and support volunteer board members.

They can advise on which housing providers may have the type of property or housing solution disabled people are looking for and will assist if necessary in filling out application forms. Open meetings are held throughout Fife, so if you would like to get in touch contact:

Jackie Morrison
Development Officer
DPHS (Fife)
c/o Viewforth Centre
Viewforth Street
Kirkcaldy
Tel: 07980899835
Email: dphsfife@orange.net

Adding 'Text to Speech' to MS Word

WordTalk is a 'plug in' template that adds text-to-speech to Microsoft Word for Windows. Research and experience has shown that students with visual or reading difficulties can find it very helpful to have text read out by the computer. Supporting reading and study through ICT also offers greater independence and a useful life skill rather than relying on a human reader.

WordTalk was developed by Rod Macaulay at TASSC in Aberdeen and the Scottish Executive Education Department and has been distributed on CD free of charge to secondary schools in Scotland.

The program was formally launched in September at a series of presentations.

It can be downloaded free of charge from the WordTalk website, www.wordtalk.org.uk. As the installation file is very large we would strongly recommend using broadband or a similar fast internet connection. If you can only access a slow dial-up connection, the CD can be obtained from:

CALL Centre
Communication Aids for Language and Learning
The University of Edinburgh
Paterson's Land
Holyrood Road, Edinburgh
Tel: 0131 651 6235

Fax: 0131 651 6234
Email: callcentre@ed.ac.uk
www.callcentrescotland.org.uk

Volunteering and Disability Research Launched



The research report 'Volunteering and Disability: Experiences and perceptions of volunteering from disabled people and organisations' was launched by Volunteer Development Scotland on the 21st September in Edinburgh.

The research utilised a variety of research methods including questionnaires and semi-structured interviews and engaged with organisations and individuals throughout Scotland. Findings indicate that although disabled people volunteer, both individuals and organisations feel that they are under-represented in volunteering and that the Internet, a commonly used recruitment method for volunteers, is still not as accessible as it could be for disabled people.

The project was funded by Clydesdale Bank and the launch timed to coincide with 'accessible volunteering' month in the Year of the Volunteer.

Copies of the report can be obtained by contacting:

Christine Reilly
Research Officer
Volunteer Development Scotland
Stirling Enterprise Park
Stirling FK7 7RP

Tel: 01786 479593
Email: christine.reilly@vds.org.uk

Access the Future

East Ayrshire Access Panel (North District) held a conference on 28th October in Kilmarnock. The title of the conference was "Access the Future "; and took the form of a seminar to review the role of the Access Panel in the local community.

Councillor William Menzies, of East Ayrshire Council, formally opened the event and invited speakers were; Susan Fulton, Disability Awareness Advisor (East Ayrshire Council), and SDEF's very own Access Development Officer, Robert Pickles.

Susan's presentation focused on the development of the Access Panel from a local perspective, while Robert highlighted national developments.

After these informative presentations; the audience had the opportunity to suggest how they thought the Access Panel could best enhance its role in the local community.

We will give a fuller account in the next edition of Open Door.

Submitted by Alan Harley

Airline Booking Cancelled

A disabled man was left 'absolutely incensed' and nearly £900 poorer after an airline cancelled his booking, without offering an explanation, less than twelve hours before he was due to fly to Florida.

David Woods, from St Cyrus, near Montrose, had booked a return ticket with MyTravel for £517 four days before his planned trip across the Atlantic to see his sister, clearly specifying that he was paraplegic and was flying alone.

But only a day before his plane was due to leave Glasgow Airport, a representative of the company called to say he could not fly.

"They didn't even give me a reason, only that they couldn't take me. I've never had this before. I'm independent and very active and don't need special assistance", said Mr Woods.

"I've not even got an apology. I got my money back but that wasn't all that easy, either."

The last minute cancellation meant Mr Woods was forced to book with British Airways for £1400, albeit with the return leg in business class.

A MyTravel Airways said: "For such cases such as Mr Wood's we require passengers to be accompanied by a carer who is able to assist in certain situations, such as mobility around the cabin and in more serious emergency situations. We cannot guarantee our crew or onboard facilities will always be available."

Disability Now October 2005

Aberdeenshire South Access Panel

Aberdeenshire South Access Panel held a very successful two day Training Course at The Venue in Laurencekirk. The course was led by Derek Stewart and aimed to introduce Panel members on how to undertake an access survey.

As with most training days the first minutes involve a tentative expectation from the students and an acceptance of his role from the facilitator. Once that had been overcome by both sides we were off to an enjoyable two days of training.

A folder, packed with useful information and tasks, provided an excellent basis for the group. After looking at the current legislation the group began to consider various issues within the building beginning with access

The fact that the usual wheelchair symbol is stuck on an entrance door does not necessarily signify that access is easy. This proved to be a useful starting point and, with a wheelchair available, members were able to find out for themselves the difficulties which wheelchair users encounter.

In the Panel, members have a variety of impairments :- sight, hearing, and mobility. Through discussion and the undertaking of various tasks we discovered that there was a lot which we did know. However we were impressed by what we ought to be aware of in undertaking access surveys.

Time spent using the various items of equipment proved to be very valuable, as did the informal discussions over coffee and lunch.

Undertaking an access audit of the facility proved to be invaluable and provided many discussion points for the course participants.

Overall the course proved to be an enjoyable and valuable learning experience of all who took part.

Margaret Kelman
Aberdeenshire South Access Panel



Moray Access Panel has just launched its website:

www.morayaccesspanel.org

They have just produced a new Access Guide, which is available either as a download from their website or by contacting:

David Dick
Moray Access Panel
c/o Moray Resource Centre
Maisondieu Road
Elgin
IV30 1RX

Tel: 01343 543333

Email: david@dard.demon.co.uk

Angus Access Panel

Angus Access Panel's **Rod McFarlane Award** has been presented to Nationwide Building Society, Forfar. Angus Provost Mr Bill Middleton made the presentation on Thursday 29 September. Highly Commended Certificates will also be presented in the near future to: Saltire Leisure Centre, Arbroath, and Guthrie Village Hall.

Each year this award is presented to buildings or facilities in Angus which demonstrate the best examples of positive efforts being made to encourage the inclusion of disabled people.

Ten buildings in Angus were nominated for the Award and all were inspected.

In the opinion of the judges, the improvements made to Nationwide Building Society to make it accessible for disabled people, represent excellent use of very limited space in a small office.

Rod McFarlane, after whom the award is named, died in 1994 and was a great campaigner for disabled people through his work as a regional councillor, a Director of Disability Scotland, the Chairman of Forfar and District Access for the Disabled Trust and the first Chairman of the Angus Access Panel.

The Angus Access Panel has been heartened by the fact that service providers are taking note of the Disability Discrimination Act which makes it unlawful to offer disabled people a poorer service.



Agnes Mackay, Chairman of Angus Access Panel, the Angus Provost, Bill Middleton presenting the award to Ronnie Keir, Manager of the local office of Nationwide Building Society

SDEF Annual General Meeting

The Scottish Disability Equality Forum Annual General meeting will take place on Monday 21st November at The Management Centre, Stirling University, Stirling.

11am – 3.15pm

Registration forms have already been sent out to members and should have been returned to the office by Friday 21st October 2005.

The Scottish Association for Volunteer Management & Standard Life 2005 Outstanding Management of Volunteers Awards

Nina Kirk, Production Co-ordinator from VIP on Air, Europe's first radio station for blind and partially sighted people, was presented with the Voluntary Sector Award at the Luncheon held at the McDonald Holyrood Hotel on Friday 7th October.

VIP on Air began broadcasting in November 2003 and has been recognised for its innovative approach to broadcasting news and information, which blind people would ordinarily struggle to access.

The station produces four hours of talk-based radio a day – a mix of talking books, specialist information, news and current affairs and was recognised by the Council of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) as the most innovative project in Scotland.



Nina Kirk has been in post since October 2003. Her position involves developing the skills and confidence of VIP's volunteers,

ensuring the growth and success of the station. She also produces programming for VIP and oversees the production team.

VIP heavily depends on its volunteers – both sighted and visually impaired people and since taking up her post Nina has built and developed the volunteers' pool into a vibrant and invigorating team. She has managed to bring a diverse mix of people's skills, talent and abilities together in an environment that has built volunteers confidence, developed their skills and furthered their careers.

With over 80% of blind and partially sighted people of working age unemployed, Nina has managed to involve one of the highest numbers of blind and partially sighted volunteers for a Scottish based project. There are at least 20 blind people involved at any one time - with a further 20 having used VIP as a springboard to securing full time employment and further education since January 2004 making it possibly the most successful training project for blind people in Scotland.

"VIPs achievements are due to Nina's excellent co-ordination skills, hands on training abilities and excellent teamwork. It is also her approach that there is a reciprocal agreement between volunteers and VIP ON AIR - that they get as much out of volunteering as VIP gets from their skills. Tthis is epitomised in the employment successes of the station and the low turnover of volunteers." (Kerryn Krige, Station Manager)

Innovation Award for Let's Go...

Momentum's Let's Go... service, which provides short breaks and community-based activities for adults with learning disabilities in the South Glasgow area, has won a prestigious award for innovation.

Let's Go... promotes independence through a varied programme of activities in the community, ranging from a few hours a week to short breaks. Our service users are supported to take part in social activities like line-dancing, swimming, indoor bowling and cycling. We also encourage new activities, which help to build new friendships along the way. As far as possible, service users are matched to staff with similar interests or hobbies.

Established in 2001 as an alternative to traditional, building-based respite, Let's Go... has been praised by parents, carers and service users for its quality, flexibility and diversity.

Based in The Pearce Institute, Govan, Let's Go... is part of Momentum's Care division, which provides tailored care and supported living in the community services for people with a wide range of disabilities.

The service was awarded second prize in the Locally Based Projects section of Rehab Council's Innovation Awards which attracted 50 entries from across the Rehab Group, Momentum's parent organisation.

The Let's Go... team travelled to Ireland to collecting their award at a ceremony in the Grand Hotel, Malahide.

For further information about Let's Go... contact Kirsty Brown, 0141 445 4757

e-mail

kirsty.brown@momentumscotland.org

The award for Let's Go... builds on Momentum's success over the last two years when the STAR (Supported Training and Rehabilitation) Partnership and ESteam (Employment Support Team) were award winners.



From left: Frank Flannery, Chief Executive, Rehab Group; Kirsty Brown; TJ McDougall (who is supported by Let's Go...); Liam Hogan, Chairman of Rehab Council; Roddy Wright and Stuart Robertson, Momentum Care; and Dr Donal McAnaney, Director of Research and Innovation, Rehab Group

Robert's ramblings

In contrast with the last time I wrote this column, it seems to have been a really busy time over the past couple of months. I have been North, South, East and West of the office at least once sincethen.

From the West, I can report that the Cowal Access Panel in Dunoon is now back up to full strength again with new members and a constitution, which means they can now join the Scottish Executive funding scheme.

In the North I joined up with the Highland Alliance of Access Panels in Lairg on a very wet day in mid-September remaking connections from this time last year.



Photo: The Highland Alliance of Access Panels meeting

In the North East I went to the Granite City in early August (on exam results day) to meet with the Aberdeen Access Panel in early August.

Lastly, I have been South and East to East Lothian and also the Borders to meet with the Panel Chairs there.

The amount of enthusiasm, energy and ideas I encounter on my travels is really inspiring and encouraging. Through the Regional Roadshow meetings we are intending to capture some of this for the SDEF website.

I also travelled to the four seminars on attracting and recruiting new members to Giffnock, Livingston, Aberdeen and Inverness. The seminars were well received and as always there was much value in Panels coming together. The seminars were attended by 41 Panel members and 21 Panels.

If you couldn't make it, please note that we hope to have another session in-house this winter. We are also actively looking at putting a version of the material on the website.

Even though it is only the beginning of November it probably isn't too early to be thinking about Christmas....I have heard about a couple of Panels which had a successful Christmas lunch last year to thank its members (and carers and partners) and celebrate the achievements of the year. This sounds like a really good idea as well as a lot of fun, and I would suggest it to everyone.

Robert Pickles
Access Development Officer

Royal College of General Practitioners Disability Care Award

Nominate your GP's Surgery for the Excellence in Disability Care Award

The Disability Care Award, sponsored by Leonard Cheshire, is an annual award which recognises service excellence for disabled people by GPs and doctor's surgeries.

Any GP or surgery in the UK is eligible for the award. The same piece of work or innovation can only be used to apply for one College award within a three year period.

The award recognises those GPs and doctor's surgeries who have gone beyond their legal obligations to make their service not only accessible but inclusive. The judges are looking for fresh thinking, innovation and ideas which ensure that the needs of disabled people, and not the service provider, comes first.

Perhaps the staff have learned British Sign Language (BSL) or the GPs can arrange special clinics outside the surgery to make sure that every patient, no matter what their disability, can attend. For some disabled people the greatest innovation will be the experience of being treated by staff who can see the person rather than the disability.

The Awards Committee of the Royal College of General Practitioners along with members of the Disability Task Group of the RCGP and Leonard Cheshire will select a winner from the

entries received by the deadline of 23rd December 2005.

Nomination forms and further information can be obtained from:

Mayuri Patel at the Awards Team on **0207 581 3232 Ext 233**

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