



CHOICES AND RIGHTS – UPDATE FEBRUARY 2014

CHOICES AND RIGHTS NEWS

Welcome to the latest edition of our **UPDATE** email bulletin. First of all, our apologies for having no edition in January, but we had an inspection for our Advice Quality Standard mark, and this took up a considerable amount of time. The good news is that we have had it renewed for a further three years and this means that it ensures that users of our services are given a high standard of service and advice.

HABINTEG REPORT

Habinteg Housing Association has produced a major report called “What Price Independent Lives? (Benefit Cuts and disabled tenants)”. This report highlights the difficulties that the welfare cuts and the “bedroom tax” are having on disabled people and is available @ www.habinteg.org.uk There is also a link to this on our website.

BEDROOM TAX ERROR

A loophole has been discovered which could see thousands of people being paid back millions in housing benefit payments.

The error in the legislation has unintentionally left a number of tenants exempt from the policy. These people will now be entitled to be reimbursed for the reductions and they will be exempted from reductions in the future until the legislation has been corrected and the loophole closed.

Those affected are Social housing tenants who have been living at the same address and entitled to claim housing benefit continuously since 1st January 1996. Tenants who were not entitled to claim housing benefits for a period of less than four weeks (or 52 weeks if the claimant was a welfare to work beneficiary) but who otherwise claimed

continuously will also qualify as being exempt, as will tenants who were unable to live in their property during that period because of damage caused by fires, flooding, explosions or a natural catastrophe

The Department for Works and Pension have suggested that it is up to Councils to seek out affected residents, but it is thought that many Councils' will not hold records going as far back as 1996 and may be unable to identify eligible tenants.

If you are a tenant who meets the criteria you should contact your landlord.

DISABILITY RIGHTS UK FACTSHEETS

Choices and Rights are a member of Disability Rights UK and they have over 60 factsheets that provide basic information about benefits, tax credits, social care and other disability related issues for claimants and advisers. **All are free to download @**

www.disabilityrightsuk.org/factsheets.htm

MONEY ADVICE SERVICE

Another service that may be very valuable to disabled people is the Money Advice Service, which offers debt advice. At Choices and Rights, we get very few calls about debt advice and although it's not an area we are experts in, we want to ensure that people know that such services are available.

The online advice will also be available through the Service's advice line (0300 500 5000), and via its face-to-face Money Advisers across the UK. The new money advice section can be found @

www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/disability

DISTRACTION BURGLARIES

Louise Wilkinson from City Safe has sent us the following useful information about distraction burglaries in the City.

There have been a number of distraction burglaries in the City recently, where thieves or rogue traders have called on older or vulnerable people and made false claims in order to steal from them. Please be aware and give your group members, especially those who are older or more vulnerable the following advice.

Please follow the 'Lock, Stop, Chain and Check' guidelines and report anything suspicious to the police on the non-emergency 101 number.

LOCK, STOP, CHAIN and CHECK: When someone calls at your door and offers to do repairs to your home or to ask for urgent help, or when someone official knocks on your door, follow these simple steps to help protect yourself and your home from bogus callers.

- **LOCK:** Keep your front and back doors locked at all times, even when at home.
- **STOP:** Before you answer, stop and think if you are expecting anyone. Check that you have locked any back doors and taken the key out. Look through the spy hole or the window to see who it is.
- **CHAIN:** If you decide to open the door, put the door chain or bar on first. Keep the bar or chain on while you are talking to the person on the doorstep. Some bogus callers call on older and vulnerable people saying they need help urgently. They may ask you to help them outside the house or ask to come in to make a phone call or have a glass of water. Only go to help them if you have someone else with you. Don't worry if you choose not to help it is not rude or unfriendly. Normally, when the door is shut and locked, leave the bar or chain off in case you need to get out in an emergency or a carer or relative needs to gain access with a key from outside.
- **CHECK:** If someone who looks official calls at your door, always do the following. Ask for and carefully check their identity card, even if they have a prearranged appointment (all genuine callers will carry one). Do they look like the person on the card? Is the name the same one as that

on your letter? Close the door while you do this. If you are not expecting them and they have not shown you an identity card, do not let them in until you have checked and double-checked that the caller is genuine. If you think the caller is genuine, but you would rather have a friend or relative with you, ask the caller to rearrange to a time when you are not on your own.

ONLY LET THEM IN WHEN YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY SURE THAT THEY ARE GENUINE.

Genuine callers will always be happy to make an appointment to call and will carry an identity card with a photograph. They won't mind waiting if you want to phone and confirm their identity or want to rearrange the appointment. If you are going to ring the company or organisation the caller claims to be from, don't rely on a number provided by them, you could be ringing an accomplice sat in the van outside.

For distraction burglary crime prevention advice please visit:

<http://www.humberside.police.uk/staying-safe-at-home/crime-reduction/distraction-burglars-and-rogue-traders>

NEW DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE/ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCE TELEPHONE NUMBERS.

DWP is separating Attendance Allowance (AA) telephone calls from Disability Living Allowance (DLA). This will improve access for claimants by providing a more streamlined approach.

Since the 29 January 2014 there is a new number for AA. Claimants can contact the AA Service Centre on 0345 or 0845 605 6055. The new Text phone number for Attendance Allowance will be 0845 604 5312.

The DLA/AA Helpline number (0845 712 34 56) will become a dedicated line for DLA only.

WEB SITE

Over the last few months, we have been improving our web site and Ken Pugh has been updating information on a more regular basis and adding new sections. We would really like to know what you find useful on the

site, so if you have a few minutes to spare, please go to www.choicesandrights.org.uk and if you have any comments to make, please email: mark@choicesandrights.org.uk and we will do our best to take them into account.

SAINTS AND SINNERS

This part of the newsletter has been attracting some attention and we are receiving regular comments, but we would welcome more. So if you have had a good or bad experience to share, please get in touch. Maybe a shop went out of their way to assist you or didn't provide any help at all. We don't have to use your name, so let us know of your experiences.

SAINTS

There are two saints this month, but they are connected. First of all, Adam Hills, the Australian comedian has a new DVD out called Happyism Live. Adam has been around for a number of years now and although he has a disability, he prefers the term "mutant"! The DVD is brilliant and he also has a sign language interpreter alongside him on stage who becomes part of the act! The DVD does have subtitles, so is pretty accessible to most people and it's funny!

Our second saint this month is Channel 4 as they have just brought back The Last Leg for another series and this can currently be seen on Channel 4 at 10.00pm on a Friday night. Starring Adam Hills, Alex Brooker and Josh Widdicombe, this original programme started as a programme dedicated to the fun side of the Paralympics, but proved so successful, it is now a topical news programme, but with great humour around disability as well.

SINNERS

The sinners this month are all those viewers who voted for Jim Davidson to become the winner of Celebrity Big Brother. Regardless of how he came across on CBB, many disabled people will never forgive him for removing disabled people from the front row at a gig because he would "feel uncomfortable" as his act made fun of disabled people. Big Brother may be a programme that people love or hate, but many previous winners have been much better people or less judgemental than Jim Davidson.

DO YOU NEED PAINT?

If you, or your family are on a low income and want to decorate your home. Or if your community group, charity or sports club premises need a coat of paint, Community Repaint can help

For more information visit: - www.communityrepaint.org.uk

Contact: - Hull and East Riding, Paul Clark, 07966234320 or repaintclark@yahoo.co.uk.

This bulletin is published by Choices and Rights Disability Coalition. If there are any issues or articles you would like included please contact Mark Baggley on (01482) 878778 or email mark@choicesandrights.org.uk Please also Mark if you wish to unsubscribe to this bulletin.

Choices and Rights Disability Coalition, Jude Lodge (Tiverton House), Tiverton Road, Hull. HU7 4DQ

TEL 01482 878778

Email office@choicesandrights.org.uk

Web www.choicesandrights.org.uk

A Company Limited by Guarantee Registered in England No. 3982194

Charity no. 1106462