



CHOICES AND RIGHTS – UPDATE MAY 2014

Choices and Rights News

Welcome to the latest edition of our **UPDATE** email bulletin. We have now had our audit by Hull City Council and we are extremely pleased with the findings and details are included in this update.

Inspection of Hull and East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust

At the end of 2013, Choices and Rights arranged (in partnership with the Care Quality Commission and Speak Out), a forum for disabled people to discuss their experiences of local hospitals and these views were taken into account with England's Chief Inspector of Hospitals first report on the quality of services provided by Hull and East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust.

Both the Hull Royal Infirmary and Castle Hill Hospital at Cottingham have been rated as Requiring Improvement following an inspection in February under the new inspection regime introduced by the Care Quality Commission.

You can read the latest information on the results of the inspection and the Healthwatch response at:

<http://www.healthwatchkingstonuponhull.co.uk/news/healthwatch-responds-cqc-inspection-hull-and-east-yorkshire-hospitals-nhs-trust>

Hull City Council Audit of Choices and Rights

As mentioned at the start of this update, Choices and Rights have recently been audited by Hull City Council. The audit looks at our

policies and procedures; including health and safety, case work recording, equality issues, as well as council staff talking to individuals who have used our services.

We have successfully passed our audit and some of the comments from people who use our services were very positive. They included:

“Choices and Rights have changed my life”

“I don’t know what I would do if this service was not available”

“They are like a lifeline”

“Feel like you’re talking to a friend”

“I would be lost without Choices and Rights”

“From day 1 they explained their role and what support they could offer”

“Choices and Rights have been life changing”

“Without Choices and Rights supporting me through the process I would not have managed”

These comments were a real boost to our staff and board and thanks to everyone who gave up their time to speak to council staff and for your fantastic comments.

Choices and Rights are delighted with the findings of this report, which confirms our belief that we are providing a quality cost effective service, and which recognises the efforts of both Choices and Rights staff and trustees, not only in relation to service delivery and customer satisfaction, but also our efforts in relation to strategic and governance issues

Personal Independent Payment (PIP) delays are completely unacceptable say MPs

The level of service offered to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claimants and the length of time disabled people are waiting for decisions is “completely unacceptable”, according to a new Work and Pensions Select Committee report.

New claims for PIP began in April 2013. The majority of people applying

for PIP undergo a face-to-face assessment to determine eligibility, which is carried out by private contractors. But many claims are taking six months or more to process.

The Work and Pensions Select Committee calls for “urgent action” to improve the current unacceptable service provided to PIP claimants and recommends that:

- penalty clauses in the Department for Work and Pensions’ (DWP) contracts with the assessment providers, Atos Healthcare and Capita, be invoked where necessary;
- the DWP clear the existing backlog of PIP claims before reassessment of existing DLA claimants is extended; and
- all necessary resources be devoted to meeting a 7 day target for processing PIP claims from terminally ill people.

The Committee also agrees with a recent National Audit Office report that DWP needs to address the stress and uncertainty being faced by PIP claimants suffering delays. It supports its recommendation that the DWP set out a plan for informing claimants about the delays they are likely to face.

In addition, it recommends that the DWP takes immediate steps to ensure that claimants are given accurate and timely information when they raise queries about progress with their claim with either the DWP itself or with the contracted providers.

Dame Anne Begg MP the Committee Chair said:

“Many disabled or sick people face waits of 6 months or more for a decision on their PIP eligibility. Even those with terminal illnesses are having to wait far longer than was anticipated. This not only leaves people facing financial difficulties whilst they await a decision, but causes severe stress and uncertainty. It is completely unacceptable.

(Article from Disability Rights UK)

New 'right to ask' for personal health budgets (PHB)

From 1 April 2014 people with complex health care needs have had the 'right to ask' for a personal health budget. This is not the only good news though as from October 2014 people will have a **right** to a PHB if they meet the criteria.

Personal health budgets aim to give people more independence over how their healthcare money is spent, be that on carers to provide intensive help at home, equipment to improve quality of life or therapies like counselling.

The budgets were trialled in a national pilot programme between 2009 and 2012 which showed that they led to better quality of life and psychological wellbeing and, particularly for people with complex healthcare needs who use a lot of NHS services, led to a reduction in hospital use. Choices and Rights worked with our local City Health Care Partnership during a very successful pilot in Hull and we are looking forward to providing more support for this group of users in the future.

The Government's Mandate to the NHS also states that from April 2015 people with long term conditions who could benefit will have the option of one. This policy is expected to be further developed in 2014/15.

NHS Continuing Healthcare is the name given to a package of care that is arranged and funded solely by the NHS for individuals who are not in hospital but have complex ongoing healthcare needs.

This is a relatively small number of people, around 58,000 nationally, who have the most complex long term health needs and potentially have the most to benefit from a more personalised and flexible approach to managing their health needs. Taking up a personal health budget will be optional, and anyone who does not want to manage their healthcare needs in this way can leave their care arrangements as they are now.

Personal health budgets are not new money but are a way of using NHS money differently, where people want to and where it is clinically safe. The scheme is being rolled out across the country after the budgets were trialled in a national pilot programme between 2009 and 2012 at sites all over the country.

They give people more independence over how their healthcare money is spent, be that on carers to provide intensive help at home, equipment to improve quality of life or therapies like counselling.

Goodbye ATOS!!!

After some incredible lobbying and publicity by disabled people, it has been announced that ATOS, the organisation responsible for examining disabled people in a Work Capacity Assessment (WCA) for claims for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) to see how their illness or disability might affect their ability for work is to exit from their contract before it was due to end in August 2015.

Mike Penning, Minister for Disabled People said:

“The previous Government appointed Atos as the sole provider for carrying out Work Capability Assessments and since then we have carried out several independent reviews and made significant improvements to the assessment.

“We are seeking a new provider to replace Atos, with the view to increasing the number of assessments and reducing waiting times.

“I am pleased to confirm that Atos will not receive a single penny of compensation from the taxpayer for the early termination of their contract, quite the contrary, Atos has made a substantial financial settlement to the Department.”

However, this is not necessarily a great victory as whoever replaces ATOS will not necessarily be any better and it is more important than ever to lobby for changes in the criteria and the assessment for disability benefits, rather than just a change of provider.

What is Hull People's Premium?

Hull People's Premium is a city-wide club which aims to save you money and one which anyone can join. On joining Hull People's Premium you will receive communications about money saving ideas and details on products that aim to help make your money go further or reduce household expenditure. It will also provide information about relevant services that are available across the city.

How does Hull People's Premium work?

Hull People's Premium will contact people by text (SMS) messages. The service will also be accessible through other channels as well such as by a quarterly newsletter, email and through Facebook and Twitter. Upon joining Hull People's Premium we will ask people to provide their postcode and age (optional) so that information relating to campaigns in your area or age group will be sent to you. If you want to receive information by email or newsletter you will have to provide details of your email/home address. In the near future, a website will be created for people to access.

How can I join Hull People's Premium?

The easiest way to join is by texting HPP to 60999. Texts are charged at your standard network rate. You can also fill in a referral slip and hand it into a Hull City Council Customer Service Centre or Hull Advice, 2nd Floor of the Wilson Centre, Alfred Gelder Street. Please include your age and postcode (optional).

Call 01482 300 300 for more information

Inquiry into Access to Work

The parliamentary Work and Pensions Committee are conducting an Inquiry into Access to Work (AtW).

Specifically they want people to tell them about:

1. The AtW application and assessment processes, from the perspectives of employees and employers;

2. The adequacy of ongoing support, both in terms of the aids, adaptations and support workers provided through AtW, and the help and advice offered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP);
3. The effectiveness of AtW in supporting people with mental health conditions and learning disabilities;
4. AtW's effectiveness in terms of helping disabled people to:
 - Secure a job;
 - Stay in employment; and
 - Develop their careers; and
 - The steps taken so far by DWP to extend AtW, including its marketing and funding of the scheme.

Their deadline is **20th June** and the word limit is 3,000 words. They prefer submissions to be sent online.

Further details are at the link below:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/work-and-pensions-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/access-to-work/>

Related to the above, Limping Chicken has reported that the controversial '30 hour rule' will not apply during the course of the Inquiry, and that anyone already affected can ask for a review. This follows lobbying for change from the UK Council on Deafness because Deaf people have started to lose their jobs as a result of it. The rule says that people requiring more than 30 hours communication support (e.g. a sign language interpreter) a week are restricted to claiming at an hourly rate in line with a £30,000 annual salary. However, this is a lot less than sign language interpreters charge, so the rule put Deaf people at a massive disadvantage. For more on this, see:

<http://limpingchicken.com/2014/05/14/deaf-news-access-to-work-30-hour-rule-suspended-by-government-pending-review/>

(Taken from Information Breakthrough 76)

Pavement Obstructions

Tracy Dearing, the RNIB Regional Campaigns Officer Yorkshire and Humber has been in contact with Choices and Rights about the problems of pavement obstructions for blind or partially sighted people.

There's rarely anything that can cause more problems for this group of disabled people and Tracy has put together some campaign packs to help you make the street environment accessible to everyone. Issues covered include A-boards, cars on pavements, shared surfaces and the everyday things that make walking down your high street seem like you're taking on an obstacle course! To get a copy of the packs go to: <http://www.rnib.org.uk/campaigning-campaign-resources/my-street>

Tracy is also gathering evidence about inaccessible streets and we need to hear from blind and partially sighted people. Please take a few minutes to take part in a survey on the inaccessibility of the urban environment.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RNIB_Street_accessibility_survey

You can also contact Tracy directly at:

RNIB Regional Campaigns Officer Yorkshire and Humber, Fairfax House, Merrion Street, Leeds. LS2 8JU

Tel: 0113 386 2808 Mobile: 07766773206

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

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