

**ISSUE NO:- 04/ 2019**

# BULLETIN



## EVENTS

### Drop-In:-

Greens Lane Methodist Church, Hartburn. We meet here 1pm to 4pm on a Tuesday. Alternative therapy is available for those who enjoy or would like to try Shiatsu.

### Social Evenings:

These are held at the Orthoptic Supplies, 176 Belasis Avenue, Billingham, TS23 1EY, on the last Wednesday of every month at 7pm.

### Shopping Online????

Buy items or book holidays through the Stockton MS Group web site and we will receive a donation. There are over 100 top retailers to choose from. It all helps raise funds for the group.

### Monthly Bulletin

"If you would like to receive this bulletin by email, then just send a request to [news@stocktonmsgroup.org.uk](mailto:news@stocktonmsgroup.org.uk).

Remember if you change your email address to let us know by sending a message to [news@stocktonmsgroup.org.uk](mailto:news@stocktonmsgroup.org.uk)"

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## **Disability benefit cuts will cost taxpayers more than they will save, charity warns**

Government cuts to disability benefit for people with multiple sclerosis (MS) will end up costing more than it will save, a leading charity has warned.

Research by the MS Society suggests cuts to Personal Independence Payments (PIP) planned over the next three years could end up costing the taxpayer almost £10m in increased spending in other areas.

It is estimated that around 16,600 MS sufferers will lose out on PIP support because of the government's 20-metre rule – which bans anyone who can “safely” walk 20 metres from receiving the higher rate of mobility support.

Without the higher rate, people are stripped of their Motability vehicles and often left trapped in their homes and unable to work, causing their health to deteriorate, the charity said.

It comes after *The Independent* revealed that tens of thousands of disabled people were being left out of pocket for increasing lengths of time while they wait for wrongly refused PIP claims to be overturned.

The MS Society report estimates that between 2020 and 2023, the government will lose £57.4m in tax revenue from people with MS and their carers leaving work or reducing their hours.

The charity claims the government will also spend an additional £22.3m on the NHS, £11.4m in extra benefit payments and £1.7m processing appeals and reassessments as a result of the cuts.

The total extra spend of £92.8m outweighs the £83.3m of savings created by cutting PIP benefits.

MS sufferer Emma Williams, 51, had been receiving the highest Disability Living Allowance (DLA) rates of both mobility and daily living, but was downgraded to the standard rates for both when she was reassessed for PIP in 2016.

Ms Williams, who lives in Kent, said: “A woman came to my house for the assessment and ignored a lot of what I told her. I explained that my mum, who is my full-time carer, cooks for me and washes my hair.

“But my report directly contradicted this and said I could cook meals for myself and don't need help with washing. She also estimated how far I can walk after I pointed to a spot in my back garden. She said it was 50 metres, but I know for a fact it was less than that.”

The 51-year-old said she has had to cut down on food and has had to rely on her 75-year-old mother a lot more since her benefit was cut, even borrowing money that had been put away for her funeral to buy a mobility scooter.

Genevieve Edwards, director of external affairs at the MS Society, accused the government of “squandering millions from the public purse while derailing lives”.

“We've long known about the enormous harm caused when PIP takes vital support away from people with MS,” she said.

“Our new report shows for the first time that this harm is rebounding on the government: the knock-on costs from people losing support are greater than the original cuts.

“Scrapping this senseless rule would stop this unnecessary waste and help people with MS finally get the support they need.”

A DWP spokesperson said people who can walk more than 20 metres could still receive the enhanced rate of the mobility component if they could not do so safely, to an acceptable standard, repeatedly or in a reasonable time period.

“We’re spending more than ever supporting disabled people and those with health conditions,” the spokesperson added.

“Over two thirds of MS claimants receive the same or a higher award after DLA to PIP reassessment. We work closely with organisations such as the MS Society to ensure that PIP is working well, and people with the most severe, life-long conditions no longer have to attend regular reviews for PIP.

www.telegraph.co.uk 19 March 2019

### **Medicinal cannabis has opened a 'Pandora's box', Chief Medical Officer says**

The introduction of medicinal cannabis has “opened a Pandora’s box”, with patients believing the drug can cure multiple conditions, the Chief Medical Officer has said.

Dame Sally Davies told MPs that despite being recently legalised for medical use, there is currently insufficient evidence to prove the products are both effective and safe.

She also expressed “concerns” about the safety of the drugs for some patients, warning that until widespread trials had been completed medicinal cannabis should only be prescribed as a “last resort”.

Her comments follow a change in the law last November which removed the products from Schedule 1 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations, which had banned their use in all circumstances.

The move came after the high-profile campaign by supporters of Alfie Dingley, a young boy who had been forced to travel to The Netherlands to receive cannabis oil prescriptions to treat his severe epilepsy.

The strict ban had also prevented any clinical trials taking place, without which the medicinal cannabis products cannot formally be licensed.

It means doctors who prescribe the products enjoy less legal protection if something goes wrong.

Last week The Telegraph reported a widespread refusal to prescribe the drugs by NHS doctors, despite the change to the law.

#### **DISCLAIMER**

Articles in this Bulletin are meant for the sole purpose of information only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the committee.

## **Drinking a mug of cocoa each day may help curb fatigue in thousands of multiple sclerosis patients because it contains anti-inflammatory compounds**

Drinking a mug of cocoa once a day could help people with MS battle fatigue, research suggests.

Patients who drank cocoa drink rich in flavonoids every day for six weeks reported less fatigue and pain, scientists at Oxford Brookes University found.

The researchers believe this is because the flavonoids in cocoa have anti-inflammatory properties.

Multiple sclerosis is the most common disabling neurological condition affecting 100,000 people in Britain.

The condition, which affects twice as many women as men, causes fatigue among nine in ten patients, along with pain and eventually loss of mobility and sight problems.

The condition is caused when the body's immune system malfunctions, and instead of warding off diseases turns instead to attack the body's own nerves.

The new study, published in the BMJ Journal of Neurology Neurosurgery and Psychiatry, split 40 people recently diagnosed with the relapsing remitting form of MS and fatigue into two groups.

The first were told to drink a cup of either high-flavonoid cocoa powder mixed with heated rice milk every day for six weeks, or a low-flavonoid version for the same duration.

Participants were told to wait 30 minutes before taking any prescribed medication or eating or drinking anything else, but otherwise they could stick to their usual diet.

Fatigue levels were assessed throughout the study, and those on the drinks rated their fatigue on a scale of one to 10, at 10am, 3pm and 8pm every day.

Activity levels were also measured with a pedometer.

After six weeks, there was a small improvement in fatigue in 11 of those drinking the high-flavonoid cocoa compared with eight of those drinking the low-flavonoid version, researchers found.

Those drinking the high-flavonoid cocoa were also able to walk further than those in the other group during a six-minute walking test.

Pain levels also seemed to be lower in those on the high-flavonoid drink.

The researchers said: 'Our study establishes that the use of dietary interventions is feasible and may offer possible long-term benefits to support fatigue management, by improving fatigue and walking endurance.'

Dr Shelly Coe, senior lecturer in nutrition at Oxford Brookes University, who led the study, said: 'MS is unpredictable and different for everyone, so we now need to know exactly how effective flavonoid-rich hot chocolate is and whether it can benefit all people with MS before it's recommended.'

'This work is still in its early stages, but with more data we very much hope to find a dietary approach that could help people with MS manage their symptoms, cheaply and safely, in the future.'

She said people with MS and fatigue may find drinking a raw form of cacao daily helps with their fatigue.

Dr Susan Kohlhaas, director of research at the MS Society, which funded the study, said: 'We know fatigue is one of the most common symptoms of MS and it can have a huge impact on quality of life, so finding more comprehensive treatments that help is one of our top research priorities.'

## **Why MS sufferers should avoid fizzy drinks: Patients who consume two a day are FIVE times more likely to be severely disabled**

Drinking two sugar-sweetened drinks per day could leave multiple sclerosis patients up to five times more likely to be severely disabled, according to research.

Researchers found that, while there's no evidence someone's overall diet affects their illness, those who drink more soft drinks have worse health.

This includes sodas and other sugary soft drinks, plus tea or coffee with sugar – but someone could have to drink 20 hot drinks each day to produce the effect.

Understanding the link could help MS patients to control their symptoms using their diet, experts said.

'MS patients often want to know how diet and specific foods can affect the progression of their disease,' said study author Dr Elisa Meier-Gerdingh, from St. Josef Hospital in Bochum, Germany.

'While we did not find a link with overall diet, interestingly, we did find a link with those who drank sodas, flavoured juices and sweetened teas and coffees.'

In its study, the American Academy of Neurology compared how MS patients' levels of disability was linked to the number of sugar-sweetened drinks they consumed.

Multiple sclerosis is a nerve-damaging condition which causes the immune system to attack the brain and spinal cord.

It can leave patients with muscle weakness, vision problems, bad balance, numbness and tingling, bladder problems, and difficulty thinking or learning.

The research found patients drinking two or more sugar-sweetened drinks per day, on average, are five times as likely to have a moderate or severe disability.

In this group of 34 patients 12 were severely disabled, while in a group of 34 people who only drank one-and-a-half drinks per month, just four were severely disabled.

Patients in the worst affected group consumed 290 calories or more each day in soft drinks.

Tea and coffee were included in the soft drinks category but someone would need to drink 20 cups of tea with one sugar in order to match the sugar content in two cans of cola.

The researchers also tested the effects of fruit and veg, red and processed meats, whole grains, dairy, and nuts and legumes – but did not find links to disability.

They admit the results are not proof the drinks directly worsen MS, and people could find it more difficult to follow a healthy diet because of their disability.

Dr Meier-Gerdingh added: 'These results need to be confirmed by larger studies that follow people over a long period of time.'

'The results do not show that soda and sugar-sweetened beverages cause more severe disability, [but] we do know that sodas have no nutritional value and people with MS may want to consider reducing or eliminating them from their diet.'

And, according to recent research, sugar-free drinks are also too unhealthy to drink regularly and could raise a woman's risk of heart attack or stroke by almost a third.

Researchers published by the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association last month revealed the findings of a study of more than 80,000 women.

Women who have two or more diet drinks per day are 31 per cent more likely to have a stroke caused by a blood clot, the research found.

And they are 29 per cent more likely to develop heart disease and 16 per cent more likely to die, when compared to women who rarely drank them.

Dr Yasmin Mossavar-Rahmani, from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, said at the time:

'Many well-meaning people, especially those who are overweight or obese, drink low-calorie sweetened drinks to cut calories in their diet.'

'Our research and other observational studies have shown that artificially sweetened beverages may not be harmless and high consumption is associated with a higher risk of stroke and heart disease.'

## **How the pension age hike could leave legions with no income: Workers hit by illness see protection policy payments stopped when they reach 60**

Thousands of workers struck down by sickness are finding they were sold income protection insurance that could run dry before they can collect their state pension, Money Mail reveals today.

More than 1 million Britons have their own income protection policy and 2.5 million are part of group cover schemes offered by employers.

The policies were commonly sold to last until state pension age — 65 for men and 60 for women. But, with the Government raising the retirement age for men and women, it means thousands of policies will end before those depending on them can collect their pension.

And policyholders facing financial crisis have told Money Mail they had no prior warning from the Government or their insurer.

The oversight will hit women the hardest as some could face an income gap of six or seven years.

Jean Sheaves, 64, relied on insurance payments after she developed multiple sclerosis and became too ill to work at the age of 40.

But when her £1,300-a-month policy payments stopped on her 60th birthday, she also found her state pension age had shifted to 66.

She says: 'I was not expecting to have this black hole of no money coming in for six years. I can only blame the Government for this. I had no notice.'

The mother of one walks with a stick, suffers constant pain and has eyesight, hearing and dexterity problems.

Her husband, Paul, 66, died from a rare type of lymphoma in September. Jean has since been relying on their savings until she can claim her pension in 18 months' time.

She receives £443 a month in employment support allowance, a £100 bereavement allowance from the Government and £300 a month from two of Paul's private pensions.

Jean, from Allhallows near Rochester, in Kent, says: 'I am having to use the money we had saved to do things in our retirement to cover my bills. It is so unfair.'

Jean worked for a local protection firm that took out the policy for her with the Permanent Insurance Company, which was taken over by LV= in 2001.

The Pensions Act 1995 introduced plans to raise women's state pension age from 60 to 65 to match that of men.

The Government later said the state pension age would increase for men and women to 66 by October 2020. It will rise again to 67 between 2026 and 2028.

The latest insurance industry figures show 28,398 individual income protection claims were paid in 2017 and 4,811 new policies were taken out.

One Money Mail reader says he chose to pay for income protection up to his 65th birthday after speaking to a financial adviser when he took out his mortgage in 2005.

The construction worker, 58, paid more than £40 a month before he was diagnosed with vasculitis, a blood vessel condition, in 2015. He has since received £1,350 a month through the policy.

But, while the insurance cash will end when he is 65, he will not get his state pension until he is 67. The father of one, who asked not to be named, says: 'I am trying to make provisions, but who knows what is around the corner?'

'If the Government has moved the goalposts, then [the insurers] have to move with them. I took the policy in good faith. If I'd known about the change, I would have taken it to 67. It is causing a lot of grief and hardship.'

Pensions expert Baroness Ros Altmann says the pension age rise has had unforeseen wider implications: 'It is dreadful. People cannot just magic up money when they are ill.'

Alan Lakey, an industry expert in critical illness cover, says it had been the 'norm' to sell policies up to age 65: '[The new state pension age] was never a problem until five years ago and it never entered the minds of insurers. Most people are unaware their plan now does not fit with their retirement age.'

'The real problem here is the Government — when it makes changes such as this, it doesn't talk to the insurers.'

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) says it sent letters to 1.2 million women between 2009 and 2011 ahead of the change to their state retirement age.

From 2012 to 2013, it sent further letters to more than 5 million people, warning them their retirement age was to rise to 66.

While healthy policyholders can extend their cover until they retire, those who have already claimed are unlikely to find a firm willing to insure them.

Group protection insurer Unum estimates 40 per cent of its policies provide cover only until an employee turns 65 — meaning that there could be 750,000 workers in the UK with income insurance that will end at 65.

Unum now offers new and current customers a 'dynamic' policy option so the insurer will cover the cost if an employee claiming on the policy has their state retirement age changed.

A DWP spokesman says there was 'extensive consultation' ahead of the changes to the state pension age, including with the Association of British Insurers (ABI). He adds: 'The Government decided more than 20 years ago to make the state pension age the same for men and women and this has been clearly communicated.'

An ABI spokesman says: 'No one can predict their future needs or the financial support that may be available. So it is important to get expert financial help and to regularly review how changes in your personal circumstances, and any state support, may impact on you and your dependants.'

A spokesman for LV= says: 'We update income protection policyholders to let them know about changes to premiums and cover amounts, but we don't generally contact them to update on changes in government legislation.'

Insurers say customers should regularly review their policies — especially if they have had a change in circumstances.

Campaigners won a judicial review at the High Court in June after arguing that 3.9 million women born in the 1950s were not properly warned of changes to their state pension age.

## YOUR JOKES

Every week, Pete entered the state lottery hoping to win. He never did. Finally, he prayed vigorously, and hoping for God's message, he walked around the local fairground.

A flash of lightning struck as he was passing by Nadine's carnival stall. She was bending over and he saw she was not wearing panties. He could see the number 7 tattooed on each of her butt cheeks.

He bet on 77, as he thought God had given him a sign. He lost again. Sad!

The winning number was 707.

Moral of the story: Never underestimate the importance of arseholes in your life.

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Did you hear about the restaurant on the moon? Great food, no atmosphere.

I just watched a program about beavers. It was the best dam program I've ever seen.

Why did the scarecrow win an award? Because he was outstanding in his field.

## MEMBERS COMPETITION

A £5 prize will be given to the member whose entry has the most correct answers. Even if you do not answer all the questions, send in those you have answered – you could still win!

- 1/ The Victoria Cross for gallantry was instituted by Queen Victoria during which war? .....
- 2/ Which occupation has for centuries made the Adriatic island Murano world famous? .....
- 3/ In pantomime, who is Aladdins Mother? .....
- 4/ Who was the first British royal to be interviewed on TV? .....
- 5/ Capybaras are the largest living examples of what in the world? .....
- 6/ Which amnesic and very well trained fictional character didn't know his real name was David Webb? .....
- 7/ Until the mid 1970s Smarties were called Smarties chocolate what? .....
- 8/ According to a survey by the Halifax Bank, what is the most common street name in the United Kingdom? .....
- 9/ Who slept in the teapot at the mad hatters tea party? .....
- 10/ What did Fred Astaire, Heidi Klum, Michael Flatley and Betty Grable all do to their legs? .....

Name:

Address:

Send Completed Forms To:  
Mr D Henderson  
74 Windermere Road  
Stockton-on-Tees  
Cleveland TS18 4LY

All entries to be received by the next social. The winner will be drawn from entries received with the highest number of correct answers.

### Answers to last quiz:

1/ Vatican City 2/ 17 3/ Vincent Vega 4/ Let and Let Die 5/ Apple 6/ Turkey 7/ 19<sup>th</sup> Century  
8/ Gallery, Largely, Regally 9/ Jamie Oliver 10/ Sayonara