

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.

Remember if you change your email address to let us know by sending a message to news@stocktonmsgroup.org.uk"

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RACE EVENING

Stockton Cricket and Rugby Club will be holding a Race Night on Friday 2nd November 2018, and we will be one of the beneficiaries

Tickets will be £5.00, which includes pie and peas. If you require tickets please contact David Henderson on 07999-849340

Family Fun Day

Thank you to everybody who donated prizes for the tombola, which was due to take place at the Stockton Cricket and Rugby Club's Field Day at the end of July. Due to the inclement weather the event had to be cancelled.

However, Stockton Cricket & Rugby Club will be holding a musical event at the end of August, where we will be able to run the tombola.

AGM

Our Annual General Meeting will take place on Wednesday 31st October 2018 at Orthoptic Supplies, 176 Belasis Avenue TS23 1EY at 7.15pm, everyone is welcome

www.bbc.co.uk 7 August 2018

Belfast airport turns away wheelchair user due to repair kit

A disabled man was unable to board a flight from Belfast because his wheelchair repair kit was deemed a security risk.

Steve Smithers, 48, was turned away at security and missed his flight to see his sick father, who is about to start treatment for cancer.

He said staff claimed the spanners could be used to "dismantle the plane".

Belfast International Airport has apologised and will make a donation to a charity on Mr Smithers' behalf.

The repair kit, which he said was essential for wheelchair users, contains several spanners and a wheel nut.

"When I booked this trip, all I wanted to do was to get to see my seriously-ill father," said Mr Smithers, who is paralysed from the chest down after a motorbike accident.

"I have travelled extensively over the 11 years I have been paralysed and there have never been any problems preventing me from doing so independently."

Mr Smithers, who lives in Killinchy, County Down, has had to postpone his trip to Essex to visit his 76-year-old father Joe until the end of August, but he does not want to fly again.

'Nobody would listen'

Mr Smithers said the security gate supervisor at Belfast International Airport, near Templepatrick in County Antrim, told him he would have to put his bag with the tool kit - which also contained his catheter and diabetes medication - in the hold.

But, he said, the security supervisor also told him if he put his bag in the hold he would not have time to make it back through security in time for his flight.

Mr Smithers said when he suggested he could give the spanners to the cabin crew until landing, security said this was also not possible.

"I just wanted someone to listen to me," said Mr Smithers.

He said that he was a seasoned traveller, having travelled to Australia and the United States on his own, but has never been refused access through security before.

What is allowed through security?

- Essential medicines even if they exceed 100ml, including inhalers and liquid foodstuffs
- Supporting documentation - a copy of the prescription or a doctor's letter - is required
- Security staff may open the containers to screen the liquids
- Medical equipment if considered essential
- Again documentation is needed and security staff will screen the equipment separately.

Source: [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

In a statement, a spokesperson for Belfast International said it acknowledged Mr Smithers had a distressing experience at the airport security search point.

"As the treatment experienced by Mr Smithers during this process fell well below standards expected from security personnel, in order to remedy this, the airport will be immediately reviewing customer service and escalation procedures with our security provider ICTS," it said.

'With dignity'

Mr Smithers said he tried to explain to security that he needed the tool kit in case his wheels broke and that he would need to adjust his wheelchair to fit a hire car he had booked for his arrival at Gatwick.

When he rang the car hire company, it confirmed there were no mechanics on site and would not be able to make the adjustments for him when he arrived.

His partner Lisa Clydesdale, 39, said he was "literally in tears" trying to explain his predicament. He said he had no choice but to miss his flight.

Both EasyJet and the car hire company have refunded him in full.

EasyJet also offered compensation to apologise for a delay retrieving his baggage.

Belfast International Airport contacted Mr Smithers to apologise and offer him compensation, but Ms Clydesdale said they suggested the airport donate to a disability charity instead.

"For disabled people it is not about asking for special treatment, but simply wanting the opportunity to live life as unimpaired by our disabilities as is possible, and to be allowed to do so with dignity," said Mr Smithers.

"On this occasion, it was particularly pertinent for me as this was the last opportunity I would have to see my father before he starts chemotherapy but no disabled person should have to experience this, regardless of the circumstances for their trip."

DISCLAIMER

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

BBC's Frank Gardner left stuck on Heathrow plane for a second time

The BBC's Frank Gardner has spoken about being left "stuck on an empty plane" at Heathrow Airport, for a second time in six months.

The security correspondent, who is a wheelchair user, had to wait 30 minutes to disembark from his flight on Monday.

The delay was caused by staff locking themselves in a lift which was supposed to help him to the ground, he said.

He added: "It's not deliberate. But unless people like me make a fuss about it, it's not going to be addressed."

A Heathrow spokesperson said the airport had "apologised to Mr Gardner for the technical fault", and accepted it "fell short of our standards".

In March, he was left on a plane at Heathrow for nearly two hours after staff said they had lost his wheelchair.

It had been taken to the terminal, rather than the plane door, leaving him stranded.

The latest delay for assistance comes after it emerged another wheelchair user was not allowed to board a flight at Belfast International Airport. He was told his wheelchair repair kit could be used to "dismantle the plane".

'Very apologetic'

Gardner was travelling on a British Airways flight from Krakow, Poland, to London's Heathrow Terminal 5 on Monday evening.

The plane arrived early, but was not scheduled to park at a jetty, which allows passengers to walk off a flight without the use of steps.

"Able-bodied passengers were able to walk down the steps to the buses," Gardner said.

"I had to wait for a high-lift, which turned up reasonably soon, but the high-lift operators couldn't get it to meet the door of the plane."

Cabin crew were "very apologetic", he added. "They were courteous, they were calm, they were professional."

But after 30 minutes, the ground staff had locked themselves in the lift with Gardner's wheelchair. The journalist tweeted: "This is so absurd it is actually funny."

The wheelchair had to be dismantled, passed through the lift window, and then reassembled before he was helped down the stairs.

"I'm not cross about it," Gardner said.

"But it's just a reminder that Heathrow isn't there yet when it comes to mobility-impaired passengers."

He said the airport had taken his feedback from the incident in March on board.

And on Tuesday a Heathrow spokesperson added: "While this was an isolated technical incident, unrelated to Mr Gardner's previous experience, we accept both fell short of our standards."

They added that changes made to their special assistance service had been "recognised as 'good' by the regulator, and we continue to invest and make the necessary improvements" required.

Gardner said there had been an "inverse correlation" between the helpfulness of people in places with good wheelchair access and countries with nearly no provision.

"In a country like Cambodia, which has almost no facilities, everyone's happy to help. I've been piggy-backed up the steps to a plane in a pouring rainstorm by the pilot.

"The flip side of that is Frankfurt Airport where I was there in transit, the ground staff had not turned up to help me.

"I could see my wheelchair sitting up at the cockpit. So I used my upper body to transfer myself up seven rows, zigzagging - which hurt like hell - all the way to get to my wheelchair."

Gardner has used a wheelchair since he was **shot six times by militants while reporting in Saudi Arabia**, in 2004.

Thousands of Brits on benefits set to get up to £10k extra in compo after bungling officials screw up payments

TENS OF thousands of Brits are set to get up to £10,000 compensation thanks to a huge benefits blunder, it emerged today.

Work and Pensions Secretary Esther McVey announced her department will have to pay out millions more to make up for previous errors.

The extra cash will go to disabled claimants who were switched from Incapacity Benefit to Employment and Support Allowance between 2011 and 2014.

An estimated 70,000 people are eligible for compensation of up to £10,000, with the average payout likely to be around £5,000.

The DWP already faced a bill of £340million for claimants who lost out because of the department's mistakes from October 2014 onwards.

Now the scheme is being extended as far back as 2011 following a scathing report from the Public Accounts Committee.

The report found ESA claimants had been routinely underpaid after switching to the benefit. Hours after it was published, Ms McVey pledged to take further action to ensure that no disabled Brits miss out on what they should have received.

She said: "I hope this will help members to provide reassurance to their constituents who think they may have been affected that they will receive all the money they are entitled to."

But campaigning MP Frank Field warned that ESA claimants had still been denied other benefits such as free school meals, dentists' bills and NHS prescriptions.

He said: "The department failed to listen to claimants, charities and even its own staff when they sounded the alarm.

"Their warnings fell on deaf ears, and tens of thousands of people lost out as a result. The Government must now learn the lessons from this catastrophic failure as it faces the challenges of migration onto Universal Credit."

The DWP will pay out the money over the coming months.

Underpaid ESA claimants could get £20,000 repaid, says watchdog

Claimants for the main sickness benefit may have been underpaid by as much as £20,000, according to a new report.

The National Audit Office said about 70,000 claimants for Employment and Support Allowance were underpaid for years due to mistakes by ministers.

It said the Department for Work and Pensions knew about the errors as far back as 2013, but started to address the problems only last year.

Ministers said they were now committed to repaying claimants.

In November, the BBC revealed huge problems in the transfer of people from Incapacity Benefit to Employment and Support Allowance.

Wednesday's report said claimants would be repaid an average of £5,000 each, although some could get as much as £20,000.

The problems arose when officials awarded claimants contribution-based ESA instead of income-related ESA, which meant they missed out on premium payments.

Backdated claims

The failure to pay the right type of benefit meant that some people could also have missed out on their children receiving free school meals and help with NHS prescriptions, according to the National Audit Office.

The debacle could cost taxpayers as much as £830m. This includes the cost of backdating claims as well as higher continuing benefit awards for those who were wrongly assessed.

▪ **Terminally ill 'priority for repayments'**

"Tens of thousands of people, most of whom have severely limiting disabilities and illnesses, have been underpaid by thousands of pounds each, while the department for several years failed to get a proper grip on the problem," said Amyas Morse, head of the National Audit Office. "The department has now committed to fixing this error by April 2019, but not everyone will be repaid all the money they have missed out on."

The National Audit Office said the mistakes began as far back as 2011, that officials became aware of them in 2013 but only started properly to address the issue last year.

Welfare advisers have welcomed the belated acknowledgement by the department of the problems but have criticised ministers for limiting their liability.

The DWP says a court judgment means it has to backdate payments only until October 2014, a decision the National Audit Office says will mean up to £150m will not have to be reimbursed.

'Shoddy' administration

Daphne Hall, who advises claimants on their welfare rights, said she had no sympathy for DWP as it had clearly failed to follow its own guidance.

"As a result some of the most severely disabled people have lost out on thousands of pounds that they will never get back," she told the BBC.

Correcting the error will cost the DWP £14m in administration costs, with hundreds of officials given the task of repaying all those affected by April 2019.

Ministers said they've already repaid £9m to claimants.

"We're well under way with our plan to identify and repay people affected by this issue, and payments have already started," said a spokeswoman.

"We're committed to ensuring people get what they are entitled to receive as quickly as possible. Everyone who could be affected will be contacted directly by the department."

Meg Hillier, chairwoman of the Commons Public Accounts Committee, hit out at the "shoddy administration" at the Department for Work and Pensions which left vulnerable people out of pocket.

"The NAO's report shows the Department for Work and Pensions was unacceptably slow to act on early signs something was wrong," she said.

www.bbc.co.uk 29 July 2018

Blue badge parking permits to cover 'hidden disabilities' in England

Blue badge parking permits are to be made available for people in England with "hidden disabilities" such as autism or mental health problems.

The Department for Transport said people with non-physical disabilities would have an equal right to free parking from next year.

Currently the rules do not explicitly exclude hidden disabilities, but councils' interpretations can vary.

Similar changes have come into effect in Scotland and Wales.

When the changes to the blue badge scheme in England are introduced, they will extend eligibility to:

- people who cannot make a journey without "a risk of serious harm to their health and safety" or that of others, such as young children with autism
- people for whom travel causes "very considerable psychological distress"
- and those with considerable difficulty walking, meaning "both the physical act and experience of walking"

About 2.4 million disabled people in England currently have a blue badge.

The scheme, first introduced in 1970 to make access easier for disabled people, costs £10. It allow holders to park for free in pay-and-display spaces across the UK and for up to three hours on yellow lines.

The blue badge concessions do not apply to privately-run car parks. They also can not be used in central London, where residents need to apply for a special permit, although they do provide an exemption from the congestion charge.

Thousands share experience of invisible disabilities

Transport Minister Jesse Norman said: "Blue badges are a lifeline for disabled people, giving them the freedom and confidence to get to work and visit friends independently."

The change follows a **consultation** launched in January which saw 6,000 responses.

Three in four disabled people say they would go out less often without the parking permit, the DfT said.

'Overwhelming anxiety'

Jane Harris, director of external affairs at the National Autistic Society, said the change would "make a massive difference to the lives of many of the 600,000 autistic people in England, and their families".

Many autistic people experience major challenges in travelling, making detailed preparations and suffering "overwhelming anxiety" about things going wrong, she said.

She said that some can be unaware of the dangers of the road while others can feel panic in busy or loud environments.

Siobhan Fairclough, from Edgware in north London, said she had been refused a blue badge for her daughter Jenny, 21, who is autistic with learning disabilities and rheumatoid arthritis. She welcomed the change.

"We wouldn't have to worry," she said. "When we're walking and there are too many people around, she gets overwhelmed and it's likely to cause a meltdown."

People with other disabilities and their carers also said easier parking would have a significant impact on their lives.

Jenette Kingsbury in south Norfolk said her husband, who has 50% vision loss, auditory processing issues and cancer of the bone marrow, had been rejected for a blue badge because he is physically mobile.

But she said his disabilities put him at risk in traffic and she hoped he would benefit from the rule change. "Just small things make big differences when every day poses a challenge," she said.

Scotland and Wales have already changed their eligibility criteria for the Blue badge scheme to include some mental impairments, where people cannot follow the route of a journey without assistance, but the rules are yet to be altered in Northern Ireland.

Comedian 'humiliated' for using disabled space on train

A comedian has hit out at a train operator after she was "harassed and humiliated" for using a disabled space for her mobility scooter.

Tanyalee Davis said a guard on a Great Western Railway (GWR) service threatened to call the police if she did not leave the space.

Ms Davis said the guard then made an announcement that she was "causing problems" which had delayed the train.

GWR said staff who saw the video were "collectively horrified".

Canadian-born Ms Davis, 47, who has a form of dwarfism, was travelling on the 11:00 service from Plymouth to London on Sunday with her partner, Kevin Bolden, who filmed the incident on a mobile phone.

She was told to move from the unreserved space after a young mother asked to use it for a pram.

Ms Davis, who lives in Norwich, said she felt "personally and publicly humiliated" after the guard threatened to call the police.

"He made an announcement... saying that it was 'the woman with the mobility scooter' that was causing problems and that the train would be delayed indefinitely," she said.

"It was humiliating and I cried for most of the journey home," she said.

Ms Davis had been travelling back to Norfolk after headlining the Plymouth Comedy Club on Saturday.

In a tearful video after the journey, she said: "I don't know what it is about this country, they really make you feel disabled.

"Just because I use a mobility scooter it doesn't make me a pariah, it doesn't make me less disabled".

"I'm just trying to make a living, to make people laugh," she added.

Dan Panes, from GWR, said a team from the train company had watched Ms Davis' video and were "collectively horrified".

"We got it wrong, it made no sense. A wheelchair space is a wheelchair space, it's not for luggage or pushchairs," he admitted.

"The priority is really clear. Tanyalee should not have been asked to move."

He confirmed that an investigation is under way - but did not say if any action would be taken against the train guard involved.

Botox for bladder problems

A recent study has found that low-dose botulinum toxin injections can significantly reduce urinary incontinence in people with MS. The lower dose meant that fewer people needed to start self-catherisation.

YOUR JOKES

FROM DISSATISFIED CUSTOMERS:

1. "On my holiday to Goa in India, I was disgusted to find that almost every restaurant served curry. I don't like spicy food."
2. "They should not allow topless sunbathing on the beach. It was very distracting for my husband who just wanted to relax."
3. "We went on holiday to Spain and had a problem with the taxi drivers as they were all Spanish."
4. "We booked an excursion to a water park but no-one told us we had to bring our own swimsuits and towels. We assumed it would be included in the price."
5. "The beach was too sandy. We had to clean everything when we returned to our room."
6. "We found the sand was not like the sand in the brochure. Your brochure shows the sand as white but it was more yellow."
7. "It's lazy of the local shopkeepers in Puerto Vallarta to close in the afternoons. I often needed to buy things during 'siesta' time -- this should be banned."
8. "No-one told us there would be fish in the water. The children were scared."
9. "Although the brochure said that there was a fully equipped kitchen, there was no egg-slicer in the drawers."
10. "I think it should be explained in the brochure that the local convenience store does not sell proper biscuits like custard creams or ginger nuts."
11. "The roads were uneven and bumpy, so we could not read the local guide book during the bus ride to the resort. Because of this, we were unaware of many things that would have made our holiday more fun."
12. "It took us nine hours to fly home from Jamaica to England. It took the Americans only three hours to get home. This seems unfair."
13. "I compared the size of our one-bedroom suite to our friends' three-bedroom and ours was significantly smaller."
14. "The brochure stated: 'No hairdressers at the resort.' We're trainee hairdressers and we think they knew and made us wait longer for service."
15. "When we were in Spain, there were too many Spanish people there. The receptionist spoke Spanish, the food was Spanish. No one told us that there would be so many foreigners."
16. "We had to line up outside to catch the boat and there was no air-conditioning."
17. "It is your duty as a tour operator to advise us of noisy or unruly guests before we travel."
18. "I was bitten by a mosquito. The brochure did not mention mosquitoes."
19. "My fiancée and I requested twin-beds when we booked, but instead we were placed in a room with a king bed. We now hold you responsible and want to be re-reimbursed for the fact that I became pregnant. This would not have happened if you had put us in the room that we booked."

A guy bought a new fridge for his house.

To get rid of his old fridge (still working), he put it in his front yard and hung a Sign on it saying:
'Free. You want it, you take it.'

For three days the fridge sat there without anyone looking twice.

He eventually decided that people were too mistrustful of this deal.

So he changed the sign to read: 'Fridge for sale \$50.'

The next day someone stole it!

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/ How many golden stars feature on the flag of the European Union?
- 2/ In which world city would you find Maracanã Stadium?
- 3/ Which word can come after 'dream', 'steam' and 'life' to form other words?
- 4/ How many times did Pete Sampras win the Wimbledon Men's Singles title?
- 5/ I think I'm gonna be sad, I think it's today..." These are the opening lyrics to which 1965 hit?
- 6/ Emerald is the traditional birthstone associated with which month of the year?
- 7/ Of which US state is Harrisburg the capital?
- 8/ In which 'James Bond' film did Daniel Craig first play the starring role?
- 9/ Which author wrote the original 'Poldark' series of books?
- 10/ How many miles long is the River Nile: a) 2,258 miles (3,634 km), b) 3,258 miles (5,243 km) or c) 4,258 miles (6,853 km) long?

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/ Richard 111 2/ New York 3/ Bob Hope 4/ 10 5/ La La Land 6/ Frasier 7/ Motor City
8/ C 9/ 55-70 years 10/ Plantagenets