

ISSUE NO:- 02/ 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.

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

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George Osborne's PIP reform to disability benefits actually cost Government an extra £1.5bn a year

PIP was rolled out in 2013 replacing Disability Living Allowance and has faced ongoing criticism for depriving people of enough to live on

The introduction of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) has cost the Government over a billion pounds each year instead of saving money, new figures show. PIP was introduced by David Cameron's Government in 2013 and was designed to reform disability benefits, which should have cost around 20 per cent less each year. But new figures from the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) have shown PIP has instead cost far more than if the Government had stuck to the previous system – as much as £1.5bn to £2bn more a year.

Costing, not saving

Former-Chancellor George Osborne introduced PIP in 2013 to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) as part of a swathe of benefits and tax changes made as part of cost-cutting measures. The new PIP system brought in a new face-to-face assessment and regular reviews of a claimant's ability to carry out daily tasks. PIP has come under fire and faced accusations of denying benefits to those who need them. Iain Duncan Smith, who was the Secretary for Work and Pensions at the time, publicly condemned the system and quit over cuts to disability benefits in 2016.

The OBR tested PIP against three scenarios for DLA having remained in place, and found that PIP cost more than the previous system would have. The cost of PIP has been £11bn in contrast to the £9bn – £9.5bn that would have been spent under DLA. The OBR said in a statement: "The Government assumed initially that PIP would be rolled out by 2015-16 and that it would cost 20 per cent less than DLA would have done. In fact, by 2017-18 it was costing around 15 to 20 per cent more, with rollout only around two-thirds complete." A Government spokesperson told i: "Our priority has always been to ensure disabled people get the support they're entitled to. "PIP is designed to focus support on people with the greatest needs and that's happening, with 31% of people getting the highest level of support, compared to 15% under DLA. "As with any major new benefit we have been flexible and adapted our approach, and we continue to make improvements to ensure PIP is working in the best way possible."

What is PIP like for claimants?

Last year, up to 220,000 disabled people who are owed PIP benefits were still awaiting their money six months after the High Court ruled the Department for Work and Pension's policy had been "discriminatory". Some were waiting on money backdated to November 2016 and were told they would have to wait until the end of the summer for their payment. The people affected are those who claim the mobility component of PIP. In December, the High Court ruled that the policy for awarding this part of the benefit was "blatantly discriminatory against those with mental health impairments".

Before the ruling, claimants of PIP were eligible for a larger payment if their disability affected their ability to travel and make journeys, unless it was down to psychological distress, in which case they were not entitled to more money. This change to the law was made in March 2017. Deciding against appealing the High Court decision, the Government said people who experience psychological distress would no longer be singled out. It added that all 1.6 million PIP cases would be reviewed to identify the people who have been underpaid the mobility component of the payment. In January, it was estimated that the back payments could cost up to £3.7 billion.

Watchdog plans probe into handling of PIP benefits

The Public Services Ombudsman has proposed launching an investigation into the handling of Personal Independence Payments.

PIP replaced Disability Living Allowance, or DLA, in 2016 and involved an official review of claimants switching benefits.

Marie Anderson is considering launching her first probe under her own initiative following suspicions of "systemic maladministration".

The ombudsman's independent inquiry would focus on how Stormont's Department for Communities administers PIP.

It has noted the "high" number of successful appeals of departmental decisions.

Ms Anderson said: "The investigation would be the first under the Ombudsman's 'own initiative' power, which allows for an investigation to take place where there is a suspicion of systemic maladministration."

PIP is aimed at those with long-term ill-health or disability and since June 2016, 160,000 decisions have been made on PIP claims.

The department said the benefit is administered in accordance with the legal framework set down under part five of the Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015 and the PIP Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 and PIP (Transitional Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016.

It added: "It is administered no differently from the rest of the United Kingdom, with the exception that in Northern Ireland welfare supplementary payments are available for those who are adversely impacted by welfare changes.

"The department is operating within the appropriate statutory mechanisms including the independent appeals process."

www.bbc.co.uk 5 February 2019

Carers quitting jobs from pressure

More than 600 people a day leave their jobs because of the demands of being a carer, says research from a charity.

The pressures of looking after an elderly, ill or disabled relative have made almost half a million people quit their jobs in the UK in the past two years, says Carers UK.

The report calls for more flexibility in the workplace for carers.

The charity's head, Helen Walker, says that 15% of the working population is "now working and caring".

The report estimates that almost five million people are trying to balance looking after relatives with working - up from about three million in 2011.

An ageing population has pushed this increase - but the report says not enough employers are offering flexibility over working hours or taking leave.

'Not a penny to spare'

Carers UK is calling for employment rights to formally recognise the needs of carers, such as providing five to 10 days per year of paid leave.

Such carers in work are typically aged over 45 and the report says that their caring responsibilities "often go unnoticed".

Among those giving up their job is Terry, who has left his role as a duty hospital manager in London to move to Monmouth to look after his father. The 92-year-old was living alone after Terry's mother died and he had begun to "struggle with everyday tasks".

For Terry, it has meant going from a well paid job to relying on a carer's allowance and accepting that he now "doesn't have a penny spare".

The report follows a warning from the Office for National Statistics of growing numbers of people who not only have to look after an elderly relative but are also caring for their children. There are 1.3 million of these mid-life "sandwich carers", says the ONS, with many feeling ignored and undervalued.

More than a quarter of such carers are suffering from depression or stress, says the ONS. Carers UK says there is a "real social and economic imperative" for workplaces to be made "carer friendly".

"Better workplace support for people juggling paid work with caring for a loved one is becoming an increasingly important issue," said Ms Walker.

www.bbc.co.uk 24 January 2019

'Super poo donors' wanted

Claudia Campanella, 31, works as a student support administrator at a UK university, and in her spare time she is a poo donor.

"Some of my friends think it is a bit weird or disgusting, but it doesn't worry me. It's very easy to donate and I just want to help with medical research. I'm glad to contribute."

Her faeces, teeming with "good" bugs, will be put into the bowel of a sick patient to help their poorly gut get better.

Claudia knows her donation is extremely useful - that is why she does it - but is her poo extra special?

Scientists believe some people's poo might contain an ideal mix of healing bacteria to fix gut diseases, making them super-donors.

Claudia says she wanted to **become a donor** because she had read that vegans might make particularly good candidates.

There's no good evidence that vegan poo is better than any other human faeces, but experts are exploring what might make a stool "super".

Dr Justin O'Sullivan is a molecular biology expert at the University of Auckland and he has been investigating the concept of super poo donors.

Perfect poo?

Our guts house millions of bugs that live inside us as a community. This diverse microbiome is unique to each us - no two are exactly the same.

Although faecal transplantation is still a relatively new field of medicine, evidence from the studies that have been done hint that some donors make the best poo for the job.

Dr O'Sullivan says: "We see transplants from super-donors achieve clinical remission rates of perhaps double the remaining average.

"Our hope is that if we can discover how this happens, then we can improve the success of faecal transplantation and even trial it for new microbiome-associated conditions like Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis and asthma."

Dr Jon Landy is a consultant gastroenterologist for West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust and helps to co-ordinate their faecal transplant unit.

He agrees with the idea of a super-donor, but says finding one could be tricky.

"We do not understand yet what makes a super-donor, or why," he said.

"We always make sure our donors are healthy and not carrying any disease, but we don't test all of their microbiome to see what that is like.

"These are the sorts of investigations that might need to be done."

Faecal bugs

Dr O'Sullivan's research, published in the journal **Frontiers in Cellular and Infection Microbiology**, suggests having lots of different microorganisms in your poo might be the advantage.

He says a larger number of species in the donor's stool has been shown to be one of the most significant factors influencing faecal transplantation outcome. And patients who respond well to the transplants develop a more diverse microbiome too.

But studies suggest success could also depend on how good a match the donor is for the patient.

And it might not only be which bacteria are present in the poo.

"Some cases of recurrent diarrheal infection have even been cured with transplants of filtered stool, that has had all the live bacteria filtered out but still contains DNA, viruses and other debris.

"These viruses could affect the survival and metabolic function of transplanted bacteria and other microbes," says Dr O'Sullivan.

Dr Julie McDonald, a microbiome expert at Imperial College London, has been studying how to boost the success rate of stool transplants.

Currently, most donations are used to treat a dangerous bowel condition caused by an infection called clostridium difficile.

This infection can take hold when a patient's own "good" bowel bugs have been wiped out by antibiotics. For the most vulnerable, it can be deadly.

Dr McDonald's work suggests poo transplants do a very specific job, replacing something lost in disease.

She found patients suffering from clostridium difficile infections had virtually undetectable levels of a short-chain fatty acid valerate produced by healthy gut microbial metabolism

The levels could only be restored with a successful faecal transplant.

"In our lab we are trying to figure out exactly how the transplants work and we are looking at whether we even move away from giving faeces itself."

Instead of giving the patient an injection of faeces they would be given a treatment based on the faeces, which they might find less off-putting.

This might help get round the whole poo taboo that's associated with donating, she says.

Claudia wants people to "get over the mental barrier" and think about becoming a donor.

"It's really very easy to donate. It's simple to do. If you are thinking about it, check if a hospital nearby has a service and get in touch with them.

"I collect my fresh sample at home in a container that my hospital provides. Then I drop it off to the hospital as I pass by it on my way to work. It's just a little bit of effort."

Claudia's now thinking about becoming a blood donor too. "I've not got round to that yet, but it's something I might do."

DISCLAIMER

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

Discrimination: 'I can't take your guide dog, I've got an allergy'

Discrimination against people with assistance dogs happens more often than you might imagine, and it never gets easier. BBC journalist Damon Rose tells his own story.

Last Friday, Transport for London took a mini cab driver to court for refusing to take my guide dog, and I was due to be the witness. The driver pleaded not guilty but, five minutes before the trial was due to start, he changed his plea to guilty. I won, I'm very pleased.

Over the years, I became fed up - as driver after driver refused to carry me and my dog. I took to getting my iPhone out sometimes to film as I attempted to make journeys. And then, one morning in May last year, I captured one such refusal on video.

When you watch the footage back, I am quite happy leaving the house - talking to my guide dog, telling the camera he's sweet. He's a small Labrador retriever cross, he's three years old and his name is DeeBee.

As I walk towards where I imagine the taxi has parked, it plays out like a textbook case of discrimination - the kind that assistance dog owners are more than familiar with.

The driver greets me in a friendly manner and then he spots the dog.

"Oh I'm sorry sir, I am allergic to dogs," he says.

I've learned that taxi drivers can't just say they're allergic and drive away. They need proof of their allergy because many would rather not carry a dog, perhaps not understanding that assistance dogs are highly trained and won't jump all over the seats like an excitable puppy.

The Equality Act 2010 states that taxi and minicab drivers must carry assistance dogs unless they have genuine health reasons not to do so. Local authorities will provide a driver with an exemption certificate if they give proof from an appropriately qualified medic. The certificates should then be available to show to an assistance dog owner on demand.

The ability to read the certificates is, of course, a bit of an issue for many guide dog owners - but my plan was to capture his paperwork on film and show it to a colleague later.

So, I asked for his exemption certificate. The video shows him hunting through papers in his car and finding nothing - but he assures me he has an allergy and urges: "You can check with my GP."

"I'm getting sneezy because I'm staying near the dog," he says. "This is going to put me in danger of my health, and surely you don't really want that do you?"

And indeed, I really wouldn't want him to be harmed if he did genuinely have an allergy. But was he being harmed? Or was I being wronged?

"If it's such a big health issue for you, you would have got an exemption certificate," you hear me say on the video.

While being questioned in court, the driver maintained he had an allergy but, nine months on from the incident, was still unable to provide proof.

The driver worked for Uber but does not any more. If you open the Uber app, go to the menu, click on Help then Accessibility, you'll see that Uber provides a specific space for assistance dog owners to report any issues arising when using the Uber partners taxi: "I want to report a service animal issue".

This is how I have reported five refusal incidents in the past 18 months and have been called by friendly Irish-accented staff asking if I'm OK and then taking down details.

A survey of more than 1,000 assistance dog owners, conducted by Guide Dogs in spring 2015, found that 75% had been refused access to a restaurant, shop or taxi because they had an assistance dog with them.

My video footage helped me to get justice in this case.

TFL's lawyer told the court the driver had claimed initially that I had been aggressive and had "chased" him - not easy to do if you are blind. She went on to say that the driver had conceded this was not the case, after having viewed the video in which I was very calm and measured.

The driver in the video I took has been blurred out - at my request. That's not because he's innocent - he's not - but because he's received a fine plus court fees which amount to almost £1,500 - and I think that's punishment enough.

The reason I'm sharing the video is because disability discrimination is an odd beast and, to the untrained eye, may not look like discrimination at all. But what happens in this video is a criminal offence - when you become a cab driver, you sign up to this contract. If you don't want to take dogs, don't be a cab driver.

Minicab or private hire vehicle drivers (unless they have a medical exemption):

- Must carry the assistance dog and allow it to remain with their owner
- Cannot refuse a booking, or refuse to carry out a booking, due to someone having an assistance dog with them
- Cannot charge extra for carrying an assistance dog
- Have a duty to provide a reasonable service

Taken from the [Guide Dogs charity website](#)

If you watch the video and think "he seems nice to me", that's not the point. He probably is a really nice fella, but didn't understand the implications of what he was doing - how it excludes people. That's why the laws exist. When the next taxi turns up, and the driver lets the dog jump in, that doesn't fix what just happened. It does not stop what happened spinning round in your mind for days.

I have initiated two more cases against minicab drivers since this one, both of whom just drove away without saying a word. Now, each time I leave my front door I get my camera ready because I fear I'll be refused again - like I have been dozens of times before. That goes for restaurants and the occasional shop too.

An old online disability magazine, Ragged Edge, once named this type of thing "little acts of degradation".

These days we might think of it as the kind of drip, drip, drip effect which causes trauma - chipping away at that part of your brain which stores all your disability insecurities, the job rejections, the name-calling across the street, the mandatory online training at work that turns out to be inaccessible... and taxi drivers, who in this case abandoned me on the pavement from where it took me several minutes to find my front door again even though it was just feet away. The big irony is that I ordered a mini cab to pick me up from outside the magistrates' court after the hearing. Can you guess what happened? The taxi driver called me when he arrived, asked me where I was, told me he could see me, then cancelled the job and drove away.

Admittedly, it's not too easy to park directly outside the court where I was - but he chose to leave a blind person on the kerb, in the rain and sleet, without attempting to find another location and without any explanation.

It's up to me to guess what happened. I think I can. And if I'm wrong... I'm afraid I'm still thinking it.

www.inthepaddock.co.uk 14 January 2019

Remarkable Rhona Using Racing To Resist Her MS

Having hidden her Multiple Sclerosis for 12 years while still coming to terms with the diagnosis in her 30s, speaking up is no longer a problem for the remarkable Rhona Elliot, who is using racing and her successful ownership club to raise both awareness and funds for those fighting the disease.

Aged 65, Elliot has gradually lost the use of the right side of her body, but still has some mobility on the left. The other thing she hasn't lost is an appetite for keeping busy and an obvious and evident passion for horses and horse racing.

It is through the Multiple Sclerosis Borders Racing syndicate that she set up while still a trainer in the Scottish Borders that Elliot continues to get people talking about Multiple Sclerosis while enjoying the ups and downs of ownership.

Last week, Wot A Shot once again put the group into the spotlight when scoring at Musselburgh, after which Elliot gave a powerful interview in the winner's enclosure.

"This is the 22nd winner in the 15 years of the club and it's been amazing," she said. "What people don't realise is that there will be a lot of people sat at home, who are suffering from MS, who know these colours and who will be cheering them on. This is for them.

"Our trainer, Nicky Richards, has done a brilliant job for us and I'm so grateful to him."

Elliot has good reason to want to give the Multiple Sclerosis Borders Racing Club any publicity that she can. Since its foundation in 2004, she has been able to raise over £150,000 for charities, while at the same time giving her members a steady stream of winners in their colours and much more besides.

"I like to think it's probably one of the best value-for-money ownership groups out there, and I would love it to grow even bigger," she says.

"The thing is that I have time to organise it properly. Yes, I'm in a wheelchair, but there are still lots of things I can do and I've always been a bit of an organiser.

"I'm lucky in that I have had a tremendous amount of support from all sorts of people in racing, people like Mike Cattermole and Dale Tempest and so many others who have been generous with their time. We recently went down to Nicky Henderson's yard and he was so generous with his time, and Newbury racecourse were brilliant too.

"I was sitting chatting at Kelso one day with Johnny Weatherby and he said 'I'd be delighted if your group wanted to make use of a box at my racecourse'. I was a bit embarrassed as I had to say 'That's so kind, but which is your racecourse?' I'm afraid I didn't realise quite who he was, but when he said Ascot, I was obviously thrilled. The group had a brilliant day out there as a result."

Rather than seeing her disability as a potential barrier to going racing as much as possible, Elliot instead sees the sport as one of the best 'days out' on offer to those for whom mobility is an issue.

"When I look on TripAdvisor, I'm always amazed that more people in wheelchairs don't realise how good many racecourse facilities are," she says. "Of course, there is always room for improvement, but you can get around, see the horses in the parade ring, get into the restaurants or the bars and even the parking is on hard surfaces at many tracks. You can get under cover, find places to keep warm and the thing about going racing is that people will always talk to you.

"I've just persuaded Musselburgh racecourse to invest in two mobility scooters that can be borrowed for the day by racegoers who want to come to the races but find it difficult to transport their own scooters from home – and I would love more racecourses to think along those lines."

Wot A Shot's latest victory followed up a win at Carlisle last month for the club's other horse, Isaactown Lad, and despite only ever keeping one or two horses in training at a time, the members have enjoyed plenty of success. We've been lucky from the start because the first horse we had was Diamond Mick in 2004. He'd been with a couple of other trainers without winning and was given to me," says Elliot, who was awarded the MBE in the New Year's Honours List in 2017 for services to horseracing and her fundraising efforts.

"I was still training at that stage and we tried to sweeten him up a bit at home. When the time came to run him I wanted to use Rose Davison (now Rose Dobbin and herself a trainer) instead of a professional jockey, which I think surprised a few people, but I had a feeling that he didn't want to be bullied and Rose had been doing so well in point-to-points. They won together at 9-1 on his first start for us at Kelso and then won again back there the following month. How's that for a start?" "Around three-quarters of our members either have MS, or have a friend or family member or loved one who has it. There isn't always a lot of fun in having MS. It is hard. So we try to have as much fun as we possibly can and if other people would like to be part of it that would be great."

YOUR JOKES

Mike was going to be married to Karen, so his father sat him down for a little chat.
"Mike let me tell you something. On my wedding night I took off my pants and handed them to your mother and said; "Here - try these on."
She did and she said "These are too big, I can't wear them." I replied, "Exactly. I wear the pants in this family and I always will." "Ever since then, we have never had a problem."
"Hmm.....,said Mike." He thought that might be a good thing to try. On his honeymoon Mike took off his pants and said to Karen; "Here-try these on."
She tried them on and said; "These are too large. They don't fit me."
Mike said; "Exactly. I wear the pants in this family, and I always will. I don't want you to ever forget that." Then Karen took off her pants and handed them to Mike.
She said; "Here, you try on mine." He did and said; "I can't get into your pants."
Karen replied; "Exactly. And if you don't change your smart ass attitude, you never will."

Now, as if everything else wasn't bad enough, we find out that beer isn't good for us?
Beer contains female hormones! Yes, that's right, FEMALE hormones!
Last month, Montreal University scientists released the results of a recent analysis that revealed the presence of female hormones in beer.
The theory is that beer contains female hormones (hops contain phytoestrogens) and that by drinking enough beer, men turn into women.
To test the theory, 100 men each drank 8 large drafts of beer within a one (1) hour period.

It was then observed that 100% of the test subjects, yes, 100% of all these men:

- 1) Argued over nothing.
- 2) Refused to apologize when obviously wrong.
- 3) Gained weight.
- 4) Talked excessively without making sense.
- 5) Became overly emotional
- 6) Couldn't drive.
- 7) Failed to think rationally, and
- 8) Had to sit down while urinating.

No further testing was considered necessary!!

A car hit an elderly Jewish man. The paramedic says, "Are you comfortable?" The man says, "I make a good living."

I just got back from a pleasure trip. I took my mother-in-law to the airport.

I've been in love with the same woman for 49 years. If my wife finds out, she'll kill me!

Someone stole all my credit cards, but I won't be reporting it. The thief spends less than my wife did. We always hold hands. If I let go, she shops.

My wife and I went to a hotel where we got a waterbed. My wife calls it the Dead Sea.

My wife and I revisited the hotel where we spent our wedding night. This time I was the one who stayed in the bathroom and cried.

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/ In which Dickens novel does Little Nell appear?
- 2/ Name Harry Potters non magical cousin?
- 3/ Which real person took the name meaning Man of Steel?
- 4/ Where do boy scout leaders get their names from?
- 5/ In what country was fashion designer Yves St Laurent born?
- 6/ What common British river name comes from Celtic for river?
- 7/ Jane Austen is famous but who reigned Britain when she wrote?
- 8/ Who is known as The father of Poetry?
- 9/ Who was the first US president to be sworn in by a woman?
- 10/ What does Monaco get most of its income from?

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/ Pavillion 2/ Goliath 3/ Venus and Mars 4/ Sultan of Brunei 5/ The Kinks and the Hermits 6/ Lake Victoria 7/ Chile 8/ David Beckham and Wayne Rooney 9/ Memphis 10/ Knights Templar