

Newsletter

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Squeezed out: counting the real cost of the bedroom tax

The 'bedroom tax' or Under-Occupancy charge, to give it its official name, is a housing benefit cap. In real terms it reduces the amount of housing benefit awarded to anyone who is considered to have a 'spare' room. This report gathered by Capability Scotland outlines the key findings of our survey into people's views and concerns about the changes. It reveals the potentially devastating impact of one of the most controversial welfare reforms on the lives of disabled people and their families.

Almost a quarter of people who responded to Capability Scotland's Housing Benefit Survey will see their housing benefit cut as a result of the bedroom tax – despite the fact that they considered their 'extra' room to be essential for a purpose related to their disability. The people who are most likely to be affected are couples who need to sleep in separate rooms as a result of their disability. Examples given included people who needed to sleep alone because of problems including constant spasms, incontinence or extreme restlessness. Other households affected by the tax include people who need an extra room to store bulky disability related equipment including powered wheelchairs, hoists, walkers and frames.

Key points

Almost a quarter of disabled people who responded to the survey will see their housing benefit cut because of the 'bedroom tax'
None of Scotland's 32 local authorities can guarantee they have enough one bedroom properties to meet the demand generated by 'bedroom tax'
Disabled people are going without life's essentials such as food and heating as a result of 'bedroom tax'

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Making Life Easier North Lanarkshire Council

This is an online internet based service which offers information, advice and a matching service. You can find out about products which might help you with every day activities.

Access this online service via www.northlan.gov.uk and type in makinglifeeasier in the search box.

The site gives:

- ~ information on equipment and advice to help you live in your home Independently
- ~ general health information, eg A to Z of health articles
- ~ link to assessments
- ~ possible help
- ~ product listing broken down into areas, ie kitchen, hall, etc

If you want more information about equipment and adaptations, please contact one of the disability information officers at : 01698 274460
www.northlan.gov.uk or email: makinglifeeasier@northlan.gov.uk

Integrated Equipment, Adaptation and Disability Information Service

A joint North Lanarkshire Council and NHS Lanarkshire Service

It provides equipment and adaptations and a disability information service which includes the making life easier service.

Equipment and adaptations across North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire are for NHS Lanarkshire equipment only.

The service receives approximately 600 requests a week and delivers around 80% of all equipment requests within seven working days.

The range of equipment and adaptations provided is very wide and includes items such as assistive technology, sensory impairment items, profiling beds, commodes, standard walking items, stair lifts, external rails and banisters, ramps and bathroom adaptations.

Requests come from Social Work or NHS Lanarkshire members of staff following assessment as well as from the "making life easier" service.

They also arrange service and repair of equipment and adaptations - which are carried out either by staff from the service or companies contracted by the council.

Contact the service on:

General enquiries: 01698 274460

Adaptation enquiries: 01698 274512 or 01698 274583



SAMS

St. Andrew's Multiple Sclerosis
Self Support Group



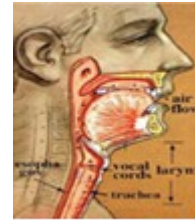
**Open to People with MS
and their Carers**

We meet on the
last Thursday of every Month
from **1.00pm to 3.00pm**
in the **Day Hospice**
(Tea / Coffee provided)

Contact: **01236 766951**
for further information

SpeakEasy Lanarkshire

Drop in Cancer Information Service
Every Wednesday
10AM—2PM



Where? 42 Campbell Street, Hamilton, ML3 6AS (across from Police station)

Advocacy Services for those with long term neurological conditions

An advocacy service is seeking the views of GDA members on the demand for advocacy support from those with long term neurological conditions.

Advocacy offers the benefit of talking to someone and obtaining independent support to voice your needs, concerns and issues which have arisen from your condition. There are currently legal requirements to provide advocacy services for those with learning difficulties and mental health issues, but not for those with other conditions.

If you feel that an advocacy service for those with long term neurological conditions is something that would be of benefit to you and you are interested in completing a questionnaire on this subject please contact:

timbone66@gmail.com



Added on Friday 30 Aug 2013 (Glasgow Disability Alliance website (GDA))



Practical Assistance for Everyday Living

Things are busying up at the Forum. Recently we successfully applied to Awards for All for some funds to help people with a physical disability in North Lanarkshire.

We have called it '**Practical assistance for everyday living**'

Our aim is to help people take control with a little support from a volunteer to carry out everyday living, things such as

- ✓ Help with benefit forms
 - ✓ Form filling
 - ✓ Signposting
- ✓ Attending health appointments
- ✓ Attending appointments in relation to Housing & Social Work
- ✓ Confidential service

Recently we accompanied a service user view a property within a sheltered housing complex, this gave them some moral support. This was enough for them to feel confident to ask questions and take their time in making decisions. We also attended follow up meeting to support them in the process.

If you feel you would benefit from this resource OR if you would like to volunteer with us to help others so if you are interested please call Lorraine on 01698 275710.

I would like to stress that this is NOT an advocacy service and we do NOT provide transport.

ENTERTAINMENT



The Rat Pack at Christmas, live at Motherwell Concert Hall, promises festive fun all the way as the "Purveyors of Cool" swing by on Saturday 7th December with this sensational show.

There will be wonderful memories of Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin & Sammy Davis Junior in a fabulous production which continues to be find success all over the world.

The show is all totally live with a fantastic orchestra of musicians who also join in the fun along with The Fabulous Vegas Showgirls, adding a touch of glamour.

Every song is an absolute classic - *Come Fly With Me*, *Under My Skin*, *Mr Bojangles*, *That's Amore*, *Mack The Knife*, *Sway*, plus many of your festive favourites!

With an abundance of class & style the boys will take you on a trip back in time to vintage 60's Las Vegas, as their legendary timeless soiree remains the pinnacle of quality entertainment and always a fun night out.

Plus there may even be a guest appearance from Santa !

Showtime 7.30pm finishes around 10pm

Tickets £21 Call 01698 403 120

Book online www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk

To see, hear and get more information about The Rat Pack visit their website at www.ratpack.biz



The magic of pantomime returns with this brand new production of a classic family tale. Tap your red shoes together and follow the yellow brick road to Motherwell Theatre for an unforgettable adventure in Pantomime-land.

Tickets for this year's pantomime The Wizard of Oz at Motherwell Theatre are now on sale. The pantomime runs from Wednesday 20 November 2013 to Sunday 5 January 2014.

From the producers of *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin*, *The Wizard of Oz* re-tells the much loved story of Dorothy and Toto - with lots of laughs along the way! The cast includes panto favourite Ian 'Sheepie' Smith as the Scarecrow, Jamie Bannerman as The Lion, and Phil Amato as The Tin Man.

Prices are between £11-£14. Call 01698 403120 to book tickets.

Size matters

The UK Government claims that the aim of the 'bedroom tax' is to move people out of homes that are too big for them. However, only 5% of disabled respondents felt that their home was too big for them. Of the 5%, all said that the reason they hadn't yet moved to a smaller home was because their current house suited them and had been specially adapted to meet their needs.

Money down the (adapted) toilet

Our research findings also highlight that money spent on existing aids and adaptations could go to waste as a result of the reforms. 84% of respondents said their home had been specially adapted to meet their needs. Adaptations included a wet floor shower room, a track and hoist system and an automated toilet.

Counting the cost

The majority of people who responded to our survey thought that they would be likely to remain in their current home even if their housing benefit is reduced. 87% of respondents thought it was unrealistic to move to a smaller home. Reasons for this included the shortage of adapted homes, the shortage of smaller homes, and the fact that people had had difficulty finding suitable accommodation in the past.

A recent Freedom of Information request by STV showed that none of Scotland's 32 local authorities could guarantee they have enough one bedroom properties to meet the demand generated by the bedroom tax. The impact on those who have decided to stay put, despite the decrease in benefit, makes alarming reading. 76% of respondents told us they would make up for the decrease in their income by cutting down on life's essentials. Most would have to make cuts to heating, food and clothing bills.

Discretionary assistance

Some households may receive Discretionary Housing Payments because their home is classed as having 'significant adaptations.' Discretionary Housing Payments can be paid to someone who receives Housing Benefit, where the benefit they receive does not cover all their rent and they are finding it difficult to pay the balance.

It is up to a local authority to decide whether someone is given a Discretionary Housing Payment. Many will not receive one. This means disabled people, landlords and local authorities face having to fund adaptations including new ramps, adapted doors and toilet appliances when claimants are forced to move to smaller, unadapted properties.

Conclusion

Once again the UK Government's welfare reform programme is having a devastating effect on the lives of disabled Scots. For some the changes to housing benefit, particularly the 'bedroom tax', are just too much to bear. The extra amount that many disabled people are now having to pay towards their rent is forcing people to use money reserved for essentials such as food and heating. Many are gravely concerned about the future. And of course it's not just disabled people that are affected. Local authorities will be expected to pick up the tab either to adapt smaller homes for individuals or to pay out discretionary housing benefit in some cases when a move isn't possible. The Scottish Parliament has set up a committee of MSPs to look at the powers local authorities, social landlords and they themselves have to mitigate the impact of bedroom tax. Capability Scotland hopes that its findings will lead to solution for those disabled Scots who are literally struggling to keep the roof over their head as a result of these changes.

Volunteering

Becoming a volunteer can be personally rewarding and can help you to 'give something back' to your community. Volunteers can choose from thousands of different opportunities. As a volunteer, you will not only be giving your time to help charities and community groups improve lives, but volunteering can also provide you with many benefits including:

- > **increased self confidence**
- > **meeting new people**
- > **try something new**
- > **increased job and career prospects**
- > **learn new skills**

will give you a flavour of what we do : www.nldforum.org.uk

Or contact : **Lorraine Elliott, North Lanarkshire Disability Forum, 41/42 Civic Square, Motherwell, ML1 1TP**

Or telephone : **01698 275710** for an informal chat.

Lanarkshire Helplines:

Mental Health

North Lanarkshire Mental Health Information – 0800 073 0918

Lanarkshire Links - 01698 265232 or 265254

Deaf and Hearing Impaired

Lanarkshire Deaf Club – 01698 275710 lanarkshdeafclub@btconnect.com

Blind and Sight Impaired

RNIB -0131 311 8500 (Edinburgh Head office)

Children and young people with disabilities

Partners in Play – 01698 230130

Carers

North Lanarkshire Carers Together – 01698 404055

Elderly

Voice of Experience – 01236 758855

Disabled Access Information

North Lanarkshire Disability Access Panel can be contacted through North Lanarkshire Disability Forum on 01698 275710.