

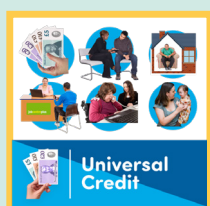
“Your Say”

November 2025

Issue 37

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Editorial Team

Royce Barton, Heather Blair, Jackie Haddow, Bobby Heron, Ashley Wallace, Kris Stevenson, Elaine Roberts.

Thanks to Vicky, Gillian, Jane and Steven for their support.

Welcome,

to the 37th edition of the newsletter.

Learning Disability Week 8th - 14th September

2025

During LD week the theme was ‘I am here’.

Our members were asked to write why they should be seen and heard for who they are.

One of our members wrote:

“I Am Here because I am proud to be part of an organisation which helps people. I have a learning disability and I am proud to be involved.”



Check it out!!



enquiries@advocating-together.org.uk



www.advocating-together.org.uk



advocatingtogetherdundee.co.uk





Make Choices and Take on Responsibility

Moving to Universal Credit



People are slowly changing over to a benefit called Universal Credit (UC).

Universal Credit is a payment to help with living costs.

You may get it if you are:

- On a low income
- Out of work
- Unable to work due to health issues or other reasons



It replaces some older benefits (called legacy benefits) including:

- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)



If you get a letter about this change, it is important that you follow the instructions. Do not ignore it.



People who ignore the letter could lose their benefit. Once you lose your benefit you may get less money in future.





You have 3 months to apply for Universal Credit before your benefits are stopped.



If Universal Credit do not hear from you they might phone you or could send a visiting officer to your home address. **Please don't panic - they are only trying to help you.**



If you rent your home then you may need to get Universal Credit to help pay the rent or you could end up with rent arrears. Ask for help if you are not sure.

When you get a letter, if you or your support network are unsure what to do, please get help.



In Dundee you could get support from:

The Welfare Rights Team

01382 431188 option 2

Brooksbank

01382 432450

Citizens Advice

01382 214633

To make a claim over the telephone you can get help from Citizens Advice Help to Claim Line 0800 023 2581.



People's Experience of Universal Credit



Jackie, along with Gillian, went to speak to staff and residents in supported accommodation about their experiences of changing their benefits to Universal Credit.

This is what we asked residents:

How have you found meetings at the Job Centre?



- Good, one of the staff came along to support me. I wouldn't want to go there on my own. I had two appointments, the first one didn't go as well, but the second one was better.
- I haven't been yet; I'm getting my money sorted out just now. My dad is helping me.

Do you have any worries or concerns?



- I was very worried what money I would have and if I would have to move. I want to stay where I am.
- I don't know if I will get less money or not.





We also asked staff what their thoughts were about the change in benefits, we asked:

How do you support residents to change their benefits to Universal Credit?



I support them to set up an email address and then support them to look out all their benefit letters to apply.

This can include bank statements, tenancy agreements. I explain what is going to happen, so our residents are aware of the change, and support them to fill in any forms online.

What challenges have you faced?



Job centre staff are dealing with things differently or seeing different staff at each of the appointments. Difficulty with residents managing their own claims, logging in online, and them needing a lot of support to do that.

Out of the 5 claims we have made on behalf of our residents, only one claim for Universal Credit has been correct the first time.

Other challenges we have faced is speaking to someone, you're using an online journal, different people replying all the time, that proves challenging.

Do you have any concerns?



- Lots and lots. How many people with additional needs find it difficult to manage their own finances? Many residents would struggle without support.
- Some people moving into supported accommodation are at risk of losing money, which I don't feel is fair.
- It's just not working for a lot of people, people out in the community who maybe don't have support and have to fill in these forms and not understand what's going on.
- If their claim is incorrect, would they know it and how to fix it?
I think there's a huge area that needs a lot of looking at.



Be Informed and Involved



Learning Disability Team



Jackie sat down with Heather Wilkie, Team Manager of the Learning Disability Team, to find out more about what she and her team do.

What does your team do?

The team supports adults aged 16 and over who have a learning disability.

We work with people, families, carers, and service providers to support things like housing, benefits, health, relationships, and adult protection.



With around 780 people on our caseload and 21 staff, it's a busy and wide-reaching service. Around 400 to 450 cases are actively being worked on, while the rest are reviewed periodically.

How do social workers help people?



Social workers act like signposts, pointing people in the right direction and helping them get the support they need. They arrange care, communicate with health and police when needed, and often speak up for people when their voices aren't heard.





They also support young people as they move from children's to adult services and help families understand the differences, like the fact that some adult services come with costs.

What are the recent changes to your team and how does this affect the people you support?

COVID had a major impact. Many support workers left the profession, and services haven't returned to normal.



There is also less funding available, so every pound must be used wisely.

However, the team has welcomed new staff with strong experience from both children's and adult services. This mix of backgrounds has created a stronger team. It is rare to have such a well-balanced group.

Why are care managers now called social workers?



The role has grown. Social workers now do more than just organise care. They deal with trauma, legal matters, adult protection, and complex risks. The name change reflects the full range of the job.

What is the difference between a social worker and a care worker?



Care workers focus on practical help, like paying bills, applying for benefits, and reducing loneliness. Social workers take on more legal and protective roles.

How many hours do you work?

Officially, I'm contracted for 37 hours and additional if needed. I often stay late, take work calls during my commute, and juggle being a carer and a grandma alongside my job.

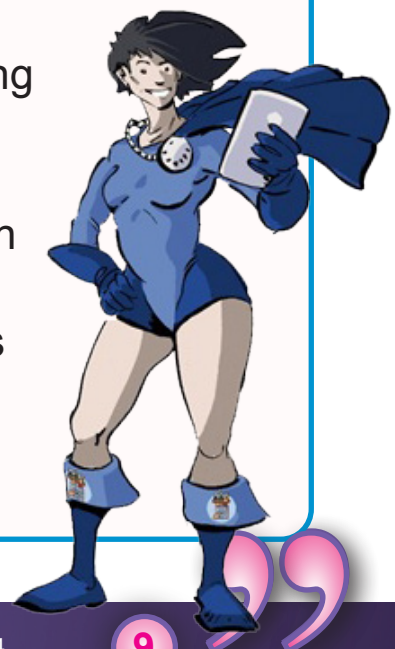


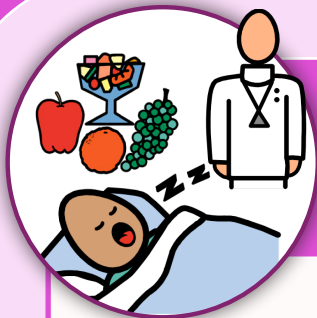
A typical day includes 5 to 7 meetings, crisis planning, staff supervision, and back-to-back calls. I also live with hearing loss made worse by COVID, which makes meetings even more tiring.

What do you like about your job and what are the challenges?



I love supporting people, sharing knowledge, and making a difference during life's hardest moments. The job can be tough emotionally and mentally, but I value honest, real relationships with families and my team.





Explore and Develop Healthy Lifestyles



In July Ali interviewed Alison Marshall, Team Lead, Community Learning Disability Nurses and acute LD Liaison Nurses



What is an annual health check?

An annual health check is a dedicated appointment for people with a learning disability aged 16 and over, or who self-identifies as having a learning disability.

It was introduced because people with learning disabilities often do not receive the same healthcare as others, and sadly, their life expectancy can be lower.

Evidence shows that annual health checks can help reduce health inequalities by preventing illnesses and picking up issues earlier.



When did they start?

The Scottish Government instructed health boards to begin offering annual health checks from 2022.

In Dundee, the community learning disability nurses began delivering them in 2024.



Who carries out the health checks?

It varies across Scotland.

In Dundee, community learning disability nurses are currently delivering them as part of a test of change.

This is still being developed, but GPs and other health professionals may also be involved.





How do people get an appointment?

At the moment there isn't a booking system. The checks are being offered mainly to people already known to the learning disability team or referred by psychiatrists or GPs.

In future we hope to have a fair system so everyone who has the right to a health check can get one.



How many people have been seen so far?

Around 150 people have received an annual health check in Dundee, with an estimated 2,000 - 3,000 people still eligible and waiting.

What happens at an annual health check?

- You will be sent a questionnaire before your appointment.
- The nurse will ask you questions in a way that is easier for you to understand.
- The health check looks at your body health and your everyday life and wellbeing.
- If you need more help, you may be sent to another service. For example: Dietician, Physiotherapist, National screening programs.



What if someone doesn't respond to an invitation?

People are usually offered up to three appointments. If they don't attend, they'll be re-invited the following year.





What if I think I should get one but haven't been contacted?

- It is possible you may not have been contacted yet. That's OK, if you have health concerns, see your GP as usual.
- Make sure your GP has you registered as having a learning disability.
- You can use template letters (such as those from The Assembly) to ask your GP to confirm you are on the list.



Can people choose who does their health check?

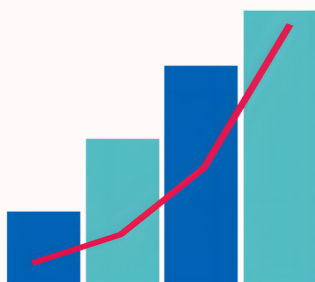
Currently, there isn't much choice in Dundee, but feedback shows people value the extra time and communication provided by learning disability nurses.



Why are annual health checks so important?

People with learning disabilities often need more time in appointments, clearer communication such as Easy Read materials, Talking Mats, or Makaton.

Without this, serious health needs can be missed. Annual health checks aim to change this, reduce inequalities, and make sure healthcare is fairer for everyone.



What's next?

This work is still developing, and resources are limited. The long-term aim is that everyone who's entitled to a check will receive one every year. It's a continuous service that will grow and improve over time.





Build Friendships and Relationships



In March, Heather, Gillian, and other members went to the National Involvement Network meeting (NIN), in Glasgow.



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The topic of the day was how important relationships are to people.

The NIN members discussed their experiences and any barriers they faced.

The NIN Charter for Involvement says
We have the right to live our lives independently.



A high number of NIN members said that trust is a very important part in any relationship. Many said that it was important to have friends, family, support workers, and finally romantic or intimate relationships.



Other thoughts on relationships, were having things in common with each other, and having someone to speak to, and people looking out for each other.

Please fill in this easy read form

 Your name

 Address

 Phone

If you would like to join the NIN and get the chance to take part in discussions like these.

Please search for “Arc Scotland NIN” to find our more or to join the network.





Share Ordinary Places

Visit to Royal Yacht Britannia by Elaine



My friend and I took a train from Kirkcaldy to Edinburgh in January. We stayed at a hotel in the Grassmarket area. The next day we had breakfast at a cafe and explored the shops in the Grassmarket and the Royal Mile.



Later, we took a taxi to visit the Royal Yacht Britannia. Onboard, we saw how the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh lived.

They give you a speaker to listen to more information around the yacht, but we just did it ourselves.

Their rooms were small, I wondered how they could live in them.

We even saw a display featuring one of the Queen's favourite corgis.

There was also a sweet shop, the Queen's Land Rover, and a posh black car.



We enjoyed refreshments in the tearoom, which was very fancy. We felt like royalty with our sandwiches, chips, and juice.

It was £20 to get on the yacht, but it was a good day out.

The tearoom was my favourite part. They had nice cutlery, and I like the choices on the menu. It was a bit expensive, but it was worth it.

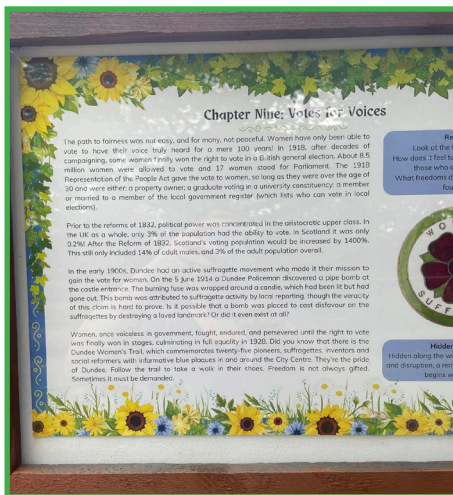


Visit to Uppertunity – Dudhope Castle History and Nature Walk



In June, our member Elaine went along with Gillian to visit their new nature trail, which is in the grounds of Dudhope Castle.

It was the launch of their trail, and it's free to go and visit, you have many clues to find and are given a nature trail map to write down your answers.



At each stop there's an information board telling you lots of facts about each of the exhibits.

The Launch day included some young musicians who played wonderfully.

Come and explore the trail yourself.



For further information please search for 'Uppertunity Dundee' or visit:



<https://uppertunity.org.uk/nature-trail>





Safety



Keep Safe

The Keep Safe scheme is no longer running. This scheme was used to help people who felt lost, scared, or unsafe.

You could go to specially trained shops, or libraries, or community centres that displayed a Keep Safe sticker for help.

We hope there are places where you still feel safe, that are friendly and happy to help if you need support.



Coming Home Update

Last month we wrote about the Tick Tock report. It looked at how money from the Coming Home report was spent in Scotland. We would like to update you.



Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership used their funding for new housing projects. We hope this supports people's move from hospital to the community.



Contact YOUR SAY. We want and need to hear your news and views

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