

Expanding horizons – Opening doors

Winter 2017

Letter from the editor

Welcome to our winter newsletter. I have recently joined the Committee and have taken on responsibility as editor of the newsletter. We also have two other new Committee members - Susan Butterworth and Don O'Neal. You can read a little about us below.

Many people aim to improve their health and well-being in a New Year so this issue includes some possible ways to do that in Oxfordshire which has lots of activities for disabled people. We are always being told to be more active but that can present added challenges if you are disabled. I know if I find it hard to travel to a venue and if I can't do it independently, or if it takes too much time and energy, I lose motivation. That's one reason why I do yoga at home. But many people enjoy the social contact of a group activity and that can help to motivate them.

How active are you able to be? Do any of you regularly do a sport or other physical activity like tai chi or dance? If you are able to, walking is one of the best physical activities and it is free. And even if you are fairly immobile, use your imagination. If you visualise yourself doing an activity repeatedly we are told you can gain 80% of the benefit of physical activity - such is the power of the mind. So take yourself for an imaginary walk in the countryside or a run along a sandy beach, or try five minute bursts of intensive imaginary cycling. Of course, you still have to work at it!

Mind and body are not separate - one affects the other. So we have suggested some activities that help mental well-being too. Do you engage in any learning or creative activity? If you do, we would like to hear about it and what it adds to your life. And if you have found any new activity or venue with good access we would also love to know about it.

Contributions to the newsletter from members are always welcome, including those to Moaner's Corner or suggestions on topics you would like covered. Our next newsletter will be in April so I do hope to hear from you in the meantime.

Diane

You can see a list of the full committee on the back page

New Committee Members

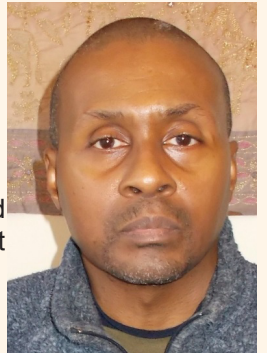
Diane Sider

Diane is a former television production manager and producer and worked mainly on programmes for C4 and BBC for about twenty years. She is also a qualified trainer, delivering *Disability Equality Training* to various organisations. She produces the biennial *School of Sound International Symposium* which explores the creative use of sound with image. She is a volunteer reader for *Oxtalk*, the Oxford and District Talking Newspaper for the blind. Diane has mobility impairments and uses a mobility scooter. She has become a Trustee of *Unlimited* and will edit the newsletter.



Don O'Neal

Don was Oxfordshire Green Party Treasurer for 13 years, is a Trustee of the Green Economics Institute and a member of the Voice of Experience group for Oxford Brookes University and Ruskin College's social work degree course. He enjoys travel, board games, Toastmasters and independent films. He has been a wheelchair user for over 33 years. Don now chairs the *Unlimited* Committee meetings and is updating the website and membership database.



Susan Butterworth

Sue has experience of user-led voluntary organisations both in Oxfordshire and nationally when she worked alongside colleagues with personal experience of disability. They worked together to set up an *Independent Living Centre* with information and advice about assistive technology. Since then Sue has continued efforts to represent issues faced by disabled people as consumers, with her present involvement with *Tourism for All*. Having known of *Unlimited's* own objectives as the voice of disabled people over the years she is pleased to join the committee.



Oxford Folk Weekend Festival

Unlimited is assisting the Oxford Folk Weekend festival staff who are aiming to improve disabled access this year. The festival takes place 21st - 23rd April 2017 with tickets already on sale. There is comprehensive access information on their website www.folk-arts-oxford.co.uk/ or if you have any queries about accessibility, please contact Cat Kelly, Festival Director on...

cat@folkweekendoxford.co.uk or Euan McGill, Logistics Manager on euan@folkweekendoxford.co.uk.
Tel: 01865 881896.

If you would like them to phone you to discuss arrangements please provide a contact number in your email and let them know a good time to call. They will aim to get back to you within 5 working days but please be patient as they are all volunteers.



Are you cheesed off with city centre access?

Unlimited committee members Joanna Matthews, Rosie Blacker and Diane Sider met with Patsy Dell, Head of Planning for Oxford City Council, to discuss the continuing problems of access to premises by disabled people in the city. All service providers have been obliged since 1999 to provide a portable ramp if their premises can accommodate it, and since 2005 businesses should have adapted their premises to accommodate permanent ramps wherever possible. Change of ownership of shops and cafes happens fairly frequently and too often even basic wheelchair access is not improved in these circumstances. Patsy welcomed our feedback and has put us in touch with both the City Centre Manager and the Building Control team so we can take our complaints further. *Unlimited* are aiming to meet the Building Control team soon so please send us examples of poor access so we have lots of evidence to show them.

Retailers lose out on £11.75bn 'Click-away pound'

UK retailers could be missing out on online sales estimated at £11.75 billion a year because their web sites fail to take into account the needs of people with disabilities, according to research from Rick Williams, Associate Member of the Business Disability Forum. The main reasons disabled users cited for 'clicking-away' from a website were because pages are crowded with too much content (67%), there is poor link information and navigation (61%), they need to fill in poorly-designed forms (58%), there are distracting moving images and graphics (44%), or poor legibility due to colour contrast and text layout (44%).

Benefit Cap

If you are worried about the benefit cap which further reduced housing benefit in December 2016, you can contact the Welfare Reform Team who can provide help and advice by email welfarereform@oxford.gov.uk or by phone 01865 252755.

Have your say on employment

The Government is proposing to introduce some new legislation aimed at improving the lives of disabled people by tackling issues with employment. The minister for disability issues, Penny Mordaunt, is currently consulting about the changes and how they affect people like you, *Unlimited* members. Even if you are not currently in work your views are important; you may want to get back into work and know what barriers are in your way; you may be a retired disabled person with some good advice about what made employment possible for you. You can respond to the consultation on your own or be part of our response. You can give as much or as little evidence as you like – please don't be put off by the thought of filling in a long form, instead send your comments and ideas to us at *Unlimited* and we will add your stories to our response.

Consultation website - www.gov.uk/government/consultations/work-health-and-disability-improving-lives

Consultation email address - workandhealth@dpw.gsi.gov.uk

The closing date is 17th February

Government Fails to Amend Bill

Peers recently tried to make an amendment to the government's Policing and Crime bill that would have forced bars, shops and restaurants to ensure their premises obeyed laws on accessibility when renewing their alcohol licences. But a vote on the amendment was narrowly defeated because Labour decided to abstain. The amendment was proposed by Baroness Deech, who chaired the Equality Act 2010 and disability committee, which concluded in March that there were problems in "almost every part of society" with laws designed to address disability discrimination.

The amendment – backed by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Access Association – would have added the need to secure access for disabled people to the duties of licensing authorities. This would have meant that a pub, club, shop or restaurant that wanted a new licence or to renew their existing licence would have had to prove to their local authority that they had made reasonable efforts to make their premises accessible to disabled people. If they failed to do so, the council would have been able to refuse to grant or extend their licence. Such a measure would help the UK to meet its duties under article nine (on accessibility) of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

(Adapted from John Pring's Disability News Service).

Get Active!

The number of participants in disabled sport fell by 20,000 across the UK in 2016, according to Sport England, despite the spur of seeing our medal-winning Paralympians who achieved a record number of gold medals.

Oxfordshire has many sporting activities available to disabled people and aims to be the most physically active county in England. The best place to find out about them is to visit the *Oxfordshire Sport and Physical Activity* website www.oxspa.co.uk/disability-sports or Tel: 01865 252676, Email: info@oxspa.co.uk, Twitter: [@oxsport](https://twitter.com/oxsport)

There is an *Oxfordshire Disability Sport and Physical Activity Directory* on the website which is a good place to browse some of the activities and clubs available. These include archery, wheelchair basketball, boccia, boxing, cricket, cycling, dance, fencing, fitness and exercise classes including seated exercise, football, golf, karate, multi-sports, rowing, tag rugby, sailing, swimming, ten pin bowling, tennis including visually impaired tennis, trampoline, rebound therapy and general wellness and fitness sessions.

www.oxspa.co.uk/disability-opps

Get Active! Oxford Otters

Oxford Otters was established in 1966 and is run by a team of loyal volunteers and qualified lifeguards. They swim at Westminster Sport, Oxford Brookes University, Harcourt Hill, Oxford OX2. People of all ages are welcome to enjoy the benefits of swimming and relaxation in the warm water. The membership covers a wide range of disabilities.



Families, friends and their carers are all welcome. The pool is heated to a comfortable temperature and the *Otters* have sole use of the pool from 9.00 am to 11.30 am on alternate Sundays. Ample parking available. A hoist and wide shallow steps allow easy access to the pool. Individual assistance in the water can be offered as well as support with showering and dressing. Shower chairs are available.

For information Email: info@oxfordotters.co.uk or contact Membership Secretary Susan Davis Telephone: 01993 708134

Email: whitecherrytree@btinternet.com

Get Active! Wheels for All

Wheels for All Oxfordshire provides opportunities for both adults and juniors to access inclusive cycling. The *Wheels for All* initiative is a nationally recognised programme run by Cycling Projects whose vision is to ensure that cycling is accessible for all. By using specially adapted cycles, the activities are both physically and mentally stimulating and most importantly, fun for everyone involved.



Wheels for All Oxfordshire was set up to provide regular physical activity for people in the county with disabilities and differing needs. Both national and local evidence highlights that disabled people are one of the least active sectors of the population, hence the need for more opportunities. *Wheels for All* also run a Junior Session in Witney that takes place the 1st Sunday of each month; this is led by one of the volunteers and has 84 young people registered. (Please note there are no Junior Sessions in the winter.)

The programme has been very successful at encouraging people from across the disability spectrum to be more active. It is suitable for people with mild to severe learning and/or physical disabilities such as older people and minority groups.

Simon Cruden, Blind *Wheels for All* cyclist says: "When I come to *Wheels for All* and cycle around the track it's the only time I feel truly free, it's such an adrenaline rush!"

The sessions are at Horspath Athletics Track, Oxford, 1st and 3rd Fridays of each month 9.30am-12.00pm, at £3 per session. www.oxspa.co.uk/wheelsforall or contact Lucy Tappin 01865 252661



Get Active! Train as an instructor

Soll Leisure is pleased to be joining the multi award-winning [InstructAbility](#) programme in Oxfordshire, designed to support disabled people in the fitness industry as gym instructors and gym users. *InstructAbility* is funded by Sport England and offers disabled people free gym instructor training and a 12-week industry work placement.

The aim of the scheme, created by Aspire, the spinal injury charity and delivered in partnership with YMCAfit, is to support disabled people into a fitness career where they can encourage other disabled people to access leisure facilities and enjoy an active lifestyle.

Soll Leisure is delighted to welcome Monica Capoferri on her voluntary work placement at the Park Club Milton, Oxfordshire, which started in October. If you would like more information about Soll Leisure's specific activities for target groups and disability access, contact them on 01235 861289.

Spotlight on Unlimited member Monica Capoferri

We are delighted to welcome new member Monica who has an interesting story to tell.

Monica spent 20 years working in graphic design and publishing, and has previously loved walking and running. Unfortunately, when the symptoms of Monica's neurological genetic disease became worse, she found herself unable to face - psychologically more than practically - any physical activity. The idea of joining a gym or classes full of super-fit able-bodies was too scary to consider. Right at the time when her body was demanding physical activity, she stopped performing any. Thankfully Monica found Aspire's *InstructAbility* project, gained fitness qualifications and started being more physically active. Thanks to the *InstructAbility* programme Monica has gained qualifications as a Gym Instructor and in Exercise and Disability through YMCAfit.



Get Active! OXSRAD

Sport and Leisure Centre, Court Place Farm, Marston, OX3 0NQ Tel: 01865 741336

An inclusive sport and leisure centre which offers over 20 activities which Oxsrads are confident are accessible.

Get Active - Try Boccia!

Boccia is a game of strategy and accuracy that was originally designed to be played by people with cerebral palsy. Now, the sport includes athletes with impairments that affect motor skills. The sport is played on a flat, smooth surface, where players must throw or roll coloured balls as close as possible to a white target ball, known as the "jack." The player, pair or team with the most balls near the jack is the winner.

The individual and pair matches consist of four ends, while team matches have six ends. After each end, the athlete, pair or team with the ball closest to the jack receive one point, and an additional point for every ball that is closer to the jack than the opponent's. Each athlete, pair or team "throws" six balls per end.

You may have seen Boccia being played at the Rio Paralympic Games and been impressed with the level of skill and accuracy required. Top athletes spend many years practicing to get this good but it is a good game for beginners too.

Boccia was played for many years as a leisure activity until it was introduced at the New York 1984 Paralympic Games as a competitive sport. It is one of only two Paralympic sports that do not have an Olympic counterpart (goalball being the other) and is governed by the Boccia International Sports Federation (BISFed).



In case you are wondering about the ease of holding a Boccia ball, the balls themselves are made of leather and are slightly larger than a tennis ball, measuring 270 mm in circumference and weighing approximately 275 grams (or about 10 ounces). They are available in different grades of softness and hardness. If you need to, you are allowed to use a ramp to 'throw' the ball.

Boccia groups

Oxford – OXSRAD 01865 741336 info@oxsrads.org

Witney – Windrush Leisure Centre 01993 861564

Jenny.bennett@westoxon.gov.uk

Wootton and Dry Sandford Village Hall,

richthomson31@yahoo.co.uk



My Personal Independence Payment story – part 1.

I have in front of me a PIP booklet waiting to be completed, and I cannot face doing it! Questions about how I manage – or don't manage – with life; should be easy to complete. I'm a grown man; but I cannot do it, and I know I am not alone in dreading this 'inquisition'. I still have nightmares from completing booklets for my Invalidity Benefit. Just putting down, truthfully, in black and white in one go, all the things I can no longer do, drops me into a pit of severe depression. I know what is wrong with my health, but usually put this to the back of my mind, and get on with life. Being reminded of what I have lost, all in one go, is devastating to my 'balanced mind'. It has also made me discuss with my GP whether I should give up my independence, and move into a nursing home.

Added to this is the fear that, if I put just one wrong answer somewhere, I shall lose all my benefits. Normally, no doubt like you, I do my best and try to push myself to do things that others can do easily; a constant fight against my body's 'challenges'. However, the PIP questions make me think it would be better for me to give up, and be helpless – as this would provide 'good' answers. As far as benefits are concerned, it would be in my interest to stop trying – not a good situation.

If you are lucky enough not to know what 'PIP' is, I should explain. It stands for Personal Independence Payment. We used to have 'Mobility Allowance' (MA) and 'Care Allowance' (CA) - followed by DLA (Disability Living Allowance) combining the two - a system that worked reasonably well. I received both 'for lifetime'. My benefits were regularly paid, with no problem or query. However, just before Christmas I had a letter saying my DLA would stop in 3 weeks, unless I filled in this daunting form. I cannot see why a working system should be changed, although I have heard that introducing PIP is possibly a mechanism to significantly reduce money paid to needy and deserving disabled people.

For me there was an added blow. Claiming Invalidity Benefit occasionally caused me 'aggro' with their booklets of questions. I recently hit my 65th birthday, and rejoiced - no more IB hassle, as this was replaced by my pension. Then, this booklet arrives - gulp!

The date on their letter was 4 weeks before the deadline, but the letter took over a week to reach me! Furthermore, it arrived a few days before Xmas Day, when I was busy with preparations. No allowance made for bank holidays! On Boxing Day I wrote saying I could not meet their deadline, and over a week later (two days before the deadline), I received a reminder repeating the dead-line. Finally, the day before the dead-line, I was phoned by PIP saying I had a two week extension.

The whole process has been too stressful, and I still haven't completed the form. I have tried but this made me too clinically depressed.

To me it is unreasonable that someone who is slowly becoming more disabled, who had been informed over a decade ago they had MA and CA for life, and has since become an OAP, should have to reply to questions for which the DWP (Department of Work and Pensions – I knew of it as DHSS) already had the answers. Am I right in moaning?

In a future Newsletter I'll let you know whether I have a 'post-PIP' life. Sadly, there are many thousands of disabled people also suffering the added mental pain caused by PIP. If you get a PIP letter then maybe you should:

Treat it seriously; no response from you = no more benefits!

Deal with it straight away

Get help (see below). If one organisation tells you they cannot help, ask them where you should try next.

Do not lie when completing the form. Do tell the truth about how grim your life can be on your worst days. Do not put what you'd like to think you can do, and do not put what you can do on your best days. If you cannot do a task repeatedly, reliably, or safely, then you cannot do it. Many disabled people, like me, vary daily in what they can do; tell them about the days when things are the most difficult. Also, even if you might find a way round some task, so can 'sort of' do it; explain fully how hard it is.

Make sure you explain in depth why you cannot do particular things, and what aids/carers you need.

Good luck, and I do wish all readers a 'Happy New Year for 2017' (have some fun – the best medicine!). *The views in Moaner's Corner are John's own and do not necessarily represent Unlimited's views. Benefit entitlement varies with age. You should seek expert independent advice if worried and these organisations may be able to help you.*

A useful guide to the PIP can be found on the www.disabilityrightsuk.org website.

Help with benefits in Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire Welfare Rights (Barton)

www.oxfordshirewelfarebenefits.btck.co.uk

Telephone advice (for ALL Oxford City residents)
01865 744165

Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm

Barton Drop in (only for those living in OX3 postcode area) for general advice without an appointment
Monday and Wednesday 10am and 1pm. Telephone advice or appointments for more complex issues or assistance with form filling 01865 744165.

Residents outside of Oxford City should contact Oxford Specialist Advice Service.

01865 410 660 9am – 5pm weekdays or email
advice@oxfordshiresas.org.uk

Try contacting the national charity for your condition or look at www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Please note that these services are severely stretched.

Get Creative- Start Drawing!

The healing power of art has been formally recognised. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence recommends art therapy as a cost-effective way of helping people with depression. Cal Strode from the Mental Health Foundation says it offers "expression when the emotional issues we're experiencing are too confusing or distressing to communicate with words". He says focussing on an activity calms the mind, "occupying and holding it in the present moment where it can't dwell on the past or worry about the future".

Drawing is not just good for people with mental health issues but can be good for anyone. You don't have to go to art therapy sessions or even sign up to art classes to start drawing. There are many free classes and demonstrations online - see www.quora.com/What-is-the-best-way-to-learn-how-to-draw-1 as an example.



Whether it's used by a child expressing emotion or a professional designing our world, drawing changes lives everyday. When *The Big Draw Festival* patron Andrew Marr suffered a stroke, he used drawing to help him recover, with remarkable results:

"I became Andrew Marr again when I started to draw once more. That was the first time I knew who I was properly and became myself again." (www.thebigdraw.org/what-we-do)

And Sarah Simblet, art tutor at Ruskin School of Art says: "As children we love to draw. Hours are devoured in the inextinguishable blaze of our imaginations wielding across paper brightly coloured crayons, pens and paints. Drawing forms a crucial part of our early physical and mental development. Sadly as adolescents most of us stop. Inhibitions creep in, and ideas of good and bad slowly terminate confidence. However, at any age, we can all return to drawing – if we want to. It is not as mysterious or difficult as many people assume. An ability to draw is not dependent upon being born with natural talent. Talent can also be worked for and achieved through determination."

www.rsa.ox.ac.uk/study/short-courses/the-drawing-book

Drawing is also cheap and easy to get started - so find yourself a pencil and some paper and have a go!

Get Creative - Start Dancing! Wheelchair Dance

There are two new classes, one in Witney and one in Banbury offering Ballroom and Latin dance classes for people with disabilities including wheelchair users. Classes and dances can be adapted to suit you, carers welcome. Dancing can help with coordination and posture, is a good social activity and a cheeky way to keep fit.

Every Wednesday 1pm - 2pm
Witney Leisure Centre Sports Hall
£5 per session - First session FREE

www.westoxwheelchairdance.co.uk/classes
or Tel: 07780 298534 or email info@westoxwheelchairdance.co.uk



Get Creative - Start Singing!

The Big Lunchtime Sing Tuesdays 12.30pm – 1.30pm £5 per session
The Old Museum, Oxford Town Hall.
Tel: 01865 252334

The Big Lunchtime Sing is a drop-in weekly singing session that anyone can come along too. No experience required and no need to read music. Singing, musician and choir leader Steph Pirrie teaches you everything by ear. No need to book, just come along. Evidence shows singing is very good for our health. For more information please contact: steph@stephipirrie.com

Unlimited's new committee

At our annual meeting last October we elected our committee. We are pleased to welcome new faces to serve alongside old hands. The full committee are:

Rosie Blacker
Susan Butterworth
Ruth Conway
Joanna Matthews - Chair
Don O'Neal
Diane Sider
Steph Talbot

There is still room on the committee for more members so do get in touch with Rosie on info@unltdox.org.uk or phone 0800 044 8192 to leave a message if you want to find out more.

Layout by Bob Hundley, Mailing by Lilian Sherwood

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