Hello

Welcome to Choice!

Everything in Choice has come from your ideas because this really is your magazine. Inside, you’ll find information about our services (page 11); how we are championing the development of new assistive technology (page 5); what fundraising events are coming up (page 5); what people really think about the accessibility of taxis (back cover); and much, much more.

Everyone at Choice was also really pleased to grab an interview with renowned disability campaigner Jim Elder-Woodward, who was actually once a pupil at Westerlea School. You can find out more about Jim on page 6.

In fact Jim had so much to tell us that we couldn’t fit it all in the magazine! And he wasn’t the only one. At the end of some articles you will see that there is an icon letting you know that there is more to find out on our website www.capability-scotland.org.uk/choice.

Enjoy the read and don’t forget to turn to page 15 to find out how you can help shape future editions.

Sarah Allen, Head of Communications

A message from Alan

I would like to welcome you to the first issue of Capability’s new magazine, Choice.

Choice is designed to inform and entertain but, most importantly, demonstrate what lies at the heart of our organisation. Capability is people. We are our service users, their families, friends and carers; we are our volunteers, our supporters and staff. It is only with all these people that we will achieve our vision of being a major ally in supporting disabled people to achieve full equality and to have choice and control of their lives.

To truly transform people’s expectations of what is possible and ensure that disabled people achieve equality will not only require the hard work, support and contribution of individuals, it will also need everyone involved with the organisation to come together in partnership.

Our magazine reflects the diversity of our organisation and highlights how different elements of Capability work together towards our common goals.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you all for everything you have done and continue to do for Capability.

Alan Dickson, Chief Executive
Hate crime success

Capability has been actively involved in campaigning on the issue of hate crimes for many years. In 2004 we carried out a survey which showed, alarmingly, that 47% of the disabled people who responded had experienced hate crime. We were therefore delighted when Patrick Harvie’s Offences (Aggravation By Prejudice) (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament. As Choice went to press the Bill was about to go into its third and final stage through Parliament. To find out happened visit our website. You can also turn to page 10 to read about someone who has experienced hate crime first hand.

Disability parking bill passed

More success in parliament came on 1 April when the Disabled Persons’ Parking (Scotland) Bill introduced by Jackie Baillie became law.

The law prevents disabled parking places being used by people who are not entitled to park in them, which means disabled people are stopped from being able to access essential services.

The Bill will make a massive difference to the lives of disabled drivers across Scotland, enabling them to get in and out of their own homes and carry out day-to-day activities that many people take for granted. This is a real step forward for disabled people and will be of direct benefit to more than 200,000 people in Scotland entitled use disabled parking bays.

Dates for your diary

Ride the Rapids
13 September
Capability invites you to join us in a white water rafting experience on the River Tummel. Do you have what it takes to face foaming channels and white water rapids?

Abseil off the Forth Rail Bridge 11 October
Abseil SAS-style off the Forth Rail Bridge. Are you ready to face this 165ft Challenge?

Baxter Loch Ness Marathon & Festival of Running
4 October
Run through stunning Highland scenery and raise funds for Capability in the process. Choose your distance from 5k, 10k or for the fitness fanatics out there the marathon is on offer.

For more information please call the Fundraising team on 0800 980 5331 or email fundraising@capability-scotland.org.uk

How was school today?

 Capability has always been a champion of assistive technology and strives to stay at the forefront of new developments. Recently we teamed up with Dundee and Aberdeen Universities to trial an innovative software system that enables children with communication difficulties to talk about their school day.

How was school today? uses sensors, swipe cards and a recording device to enable children with disabilities such as cerebral palsy and learning difficulties to have conversations in a faster, more interactive way. And excitingly, pupils at Capability’s Corseford School near Glasgow were the first to try the new system.

Sue Williams, headteacher at Corseford says: “How was school today?” finds out what pupils have been up to during their school day by using environmental sensors and class timetable information. This can then be turned into a story to share when pupils get home.

“In the week we used the system we found it very useful for pupils, teachers, therapists and parents alike. It enables children to take control of the conversation without having to rely on help from us.”

Nicole Vallery and Rebecca O’Neill were two of the pupils at Corseford to test the new software.

Nicole’s mum, Jan, says: “We really enjoyed using “How was school today?” and hearing Nicole’s story. The program enabled her to talk easily and answer questions quickly, prompting more interaction and giving us a very detailed insight into her day.”

After the promising results and overwhelming support at Corseford, funding has been secured to try the prototype with more children over a longer period of time, and the pupils of Corseford School can’t wait! Rebecca says: “I really enjoyed using How was school today? as it is different to anything else I have used in the past.”

Nicole adds: “It made me feel really good about myself and I would definitely like to use it again.”
Independently minded

The Scottish Council for Spastics became Capability Scotland in 1996 and the Westerlea School is now Capability Scotland’s Head Office. Over half a century later, Jim sits in his former classroom to discuss how his mother’s desire for her child to become independent is being reflected in the current drive for Independent Living with which Jim is heavily involved.

Making independent living a reality

After graduating from Hull University Jim’s career included stints as a psychiatric social worker, a spell in the Civil Service in London and researcher at Edinburgh University. Though now technically retired Jim hasn’t slowed down and has undertaken a host of voluntary roles including his latest challenge, becoming Convenor of the newly-launched Independent Living in Scotland (ILiS) project.

“The main problem with independent living is moving from rhetoric to reality,” Jim explains. “Resources are needed to make independent living a reality. The Independent Living (IL) movement in Scotland is undernourished.” The two-year ILiS project is funded by the Scottish Government. “We need to use these two years to get something concrete and meaningful to disabled people and to those who fund it,” he adds. “We also need to alleviate fears that jobs will go and services be affected. There is resistance against Independent Living; people fear it will take resources away from traditional services but there will still be a need for those services. There should be a sliding scale from total control and responsibility to minimum control and responsibility – people can go anywhere along that continuum. It can be adjusted according to abilities and needs.

Self-directed support

“More resources are needed for self-directed support,” he says. “Under the Scottish system, people are given money without learning how to use it. It’s like giving a teenage boy the key of his first car without giving him driving lessons. It’s the same for Direct Payments – people need help in getting the money and controlling what it buys.”

What does Jim think Capability Scotland needs to do to meet this new challenge? “Capability needs to be sensitive and sensible in terms of service delivery…”

A champion of equality, civil rights and independent living, Jim Elder-Woodward chats to Choice about his vision for the future.

When Jim Elder-Woodward was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, his mother was told by psychologists that he was “ineducable”. Jim proved his detractors wrong when he went on to achieve a degree in, ironically, psychology and pursue a distinguished career in health and social care. Thankfully for Jim, his determined mother realised her son’s potential and was resolute he should receive an education, even if that meant Jim leaving home while still a child as he did when he moved to the Westerlea School, run by the Scottish Council for Spastics. Her actions were condemned at the time as Jim explains, “She was heavily criticised for ‘putting me away’. You were supposed to look after disabled children at home. But she wanted me to have an education, to become independent.”

Jim with his mother

Jim and his mother

A young Jim (left) playing with a friend

Read more at:
www.capability-scotland.org.uk(choice

“Capability needs to be sensitive and sensible in terms of service delivery…”

Jim Elder-Woodward
“I love being recorded playing our music,” April Caesar told us, “but the camera is much more scary.” “You’ve just got to think about it as another performance, just ignore me – you’ll forget I’m here soon,” promised Andrew Raphael, cameraman and director.

Soundbeam is an ultrasonic musical instrument, which converts movement into music. An invisible beam is directed across the room and, when interrupted by any solid object, like a hand or even the blink of an eyelid, it sends a message to a MIDI device like an electronic keyboard or sampler. This then plays a note or sequence of notes or chords. Soundbeam can also be linked to switches and buttons, which makes it accessible to people who have very limited motor skills.

Getting everyone involved
April, Rosa Allen and Kathy Arthurs, who have been involved in music for many years, started using Soundbeam three years ago and they love it. “One of the best things about music is everyone working together.”

Soundbeam is easy to learn and use so everyone can use it. It also has really good sounds. The technology is exciting as well”, explains Kathy. April agrees, “I love learning about the technology, it’s really interesting.”

For Rosa one of the most important aspects of playing music is that it has given her much more confidence: “I am much more confident singing and it has helped my confidence in everything. I am a disabled person but people see the disability first not me. I don’t think they do when I am performing.”

Technology made easy
For all three performing is one of the most exciting and enjoyable parts of playing music, especially when the audience gets involved. Curtis Logue, Music Technology Co-ordinator explains that at a recent concert the children in the audience came on stage to join in and use Soundbeam themselves. “It made my day”, April tells us “I loved showing Emily from the audience how to use the technology. She was so happy and that made me even happier.”

So what are their future musical plans? It turns out April is a keen composer and Kathy is interested in lyrics so they hatch a plan to write a song together. Rosa also likes composing but for her the most important thing is just to keep on playing and singing. Kathy sums it up for all of them when she tells us, “Music helps me express myself. I sometimes find it difficult to do that in other ways. It makes me happy and you get a really good buzz out of it. I have made lots of new friends. Music means a lot to me.”

Which only leaves the most important question – how had they found being filmed? There is a lot of laughter as they realise that Andrew’s prediction had come true. They had forgotten all about him.

To watch the Soundbeam movie go to
www.capability-scotland.org.uk/choice
First person

The devastating impact of hate crime

Justice Minister Kenny MacAskill recently highlighted the damage done to individuals, communities and Scottish society by hate crimes – crimes motivated by race or religion. These crimes can have a huge impact on disabled people’s daily lives – Choice spoke to Caroline about her story.

“*I have a permanent disability. Many of my symptoms are similar to cerebral palsy in appearance. I cannot walk long distances and I sometimes have involuntary movements.*

“*I have been subjected to name-calling and threatening behaviour on several occasions. Once I was on the bus when someone threatened to slit my throat.*

“*Another time I was at a bus-stop when these guys bumped into me. One had a metal pole in his hand and shook it in my face. I chased after him and he threw it at my feet. It was really scary.*

“*I don’t get buses at night any more, instead I travel by taxi and avoid certain areas.*

Take action

Caroline’s story is typical of that of many disabled people targeted because of their impairment. It’s often assumed that there is a connection between disability and vulnerability. But hate crime is not about vulnerability, it is a violent expression of intolerance.

It is essential that this distinction is recognised, so Capability has joined the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and a number of other organisations to raise this issue with Kenny MacAskill. Only then will the new statute truly provide police, prosecutors and courts with the means of tackling the crimes of prejudice which have been committed against Caroline and so many other disabled people.

Service round-up

Name of service: E2
Location: Eliersly Road, Edinburgh.
Number of staff: 18 full and part-time staff members.
Number of service users: Registered for 18 service users per day and support 22 over the week.
What does the service do?
We support people with complex care needs to lead as independent a life as possible. We have daily activities in the centre and out in the community. Many of our service users also attend Edinburgh Telford College’s Pathways courses. Additionally, we also access hydrotherapy swimming sessions twice a week.
What is the most important thing that people should know about the service?
E2 is a very social place. We are always trying out new activities and ideas that will help us to develop and learn.

Name of service: Aberdeenhire Play 4 All
Location: Based in Inverurie, providing service across all of Aberdeenshire.
Number of staff: Currently 3 staff.
Number of service users: We work with 30 childcare providers who use our service for support and resources.
What does the service do?
We work with a variety of childcare providers such as playgroups, nurseries, out of school clubs, holiday schemes and childminders, to help them run a truly inclusive service. We provide information, strategies, plans or activity programmes and interventions for children up to the age of 16 who have additional support needs.
What is the most important thing that people should know about the service?
There is a proven high value in early intervention and the service has been shown to be highly effective in this area. But perhaps the most important thing is that it is free to the childcare providers!

All about me

Every issue Choice gets to know more about a Capability service user, volunteer or staff member. This issue, Morningside Shop Volunteer Diana Caryl tells us more about her personal passion for dance…

What do you like to do in your spare time?
For the last 10 years I have taken part in a Continuing Education Course in dance at Edinburgh’s Centre for Lifelong Learning.

What does that involve?
I attend a lecture every week where we learn about all aspects of dance, from its history and costumes to direction, choreography and lighting. We study a different aspect and style of dance each term and often go to see productions which reflect what we are studying.

What do you like most about it?
I have always been interested in dance – it is a passion of mine. This course has opened up a whole new realm of dance styles and dance companies to me, and it has also allowed me to meet some great friends who share my love of dance.

Any other interests we should know about?
I am a self-confessed cat addict with four cats at home. As well as volunteering for Capability, I also volunteer for Lothian Cat Rescue.
Spotlight on Employment Services

Disability is not – and should not – be a barrier to employment. Yet only a small percentage of the 800,000 disabled people of working age in Scotland actually work.

Capability’s Employment Services Team was set up to help people develop the skills and confidence they need to find the kind of work they would like.

The service provides several programmes through Job Centre Plus designed to build confidence, increase skills and experience, and prepare and support people to find paid employment.

They can also help with internal recruitment and offer employment support to our service users.

Employment Services helped Richard Gallagher find his job as call centre agent for Becogent. Having never worked before, Richard was understandably apprehensive about taking his first steps.

Richard’s supervisor, Margaret Hill said: “When we first met Richard he had very low self-esteem but he has quickly become one of our best agents. With the support of his Employment Service Officer he now believes in himself and his abilities, regularly meeting his targets and providing the best customer service he can. Richard is a credit to Capability Scotland and Becogent because he doesn’t let anything stand in his way.”

Employment Services also provides support to disabled staff members who need access to assistive technology or reasonable adjustments to carry out their roles.

Since then Richard has gone from strength to strength, progressing quickly into unsupported development and being voted employee of the month for the first time last year.

Margaret continues: “As Richard was born with no upper limbs, Capability also helped us make adjustments where needed, for example we have purchased a high keyboard to make typing more comfortable. Employing Richard has opened up new opportunities for the company and we are now able to support anyone with a disability.”

How long have you been in the role?

Do you use any assistive technology in the office?
Yes. I use Zoom Text as a screen magnifier and a large-print keyboard. I use dictaphones to record messages.

What is the role’s biggest challenge?
In the current labour market it can be difficult to find employers flexible enough to support the needs of the families we work with. It doesn’t stop us though; there are employers and roles out there and we are constantly talking to new people about the service.

What is the best bit about your role?
Seeing the parents I have helped grow in confidence and achieve what they want to achieve and how their children grow and develop, I get to see how my role benefits the whole family.

Day in the life... Gavin Dayer

What do you do at Capability?
I work for Renfrewshire Work 4 All as an Employment Link Worker. I help parents and carers of disabled children back into employment and support the person they’re caring for at the same time.

How long have you been in the role?

Do you use any assistive technology in the office?
Yes, I use zoom text as a screen magnifier and a large-print keyboard. I use dictaphones to record messages.

What is the role’s biggest challenge?
In the current labour market it can be difficult to find employers flexible enough to support the needs of the families we work with. It doesn’t stop us though; there are employers and roles out there and we are constantly talking to new people about the service.

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ISO with a smile

Capability is proud of its commitment to quality and continuous improvement. Two people who really demonstrate this commitment are Service Manager Karen Graham and Team Leader Elaine Russell from Lanarkshire and Carluke.

Indeed Capability’s auditors BSI were so impressed by the way Karen and Elaine had embraced our Quality Management System (QMS), that they highlighted them as one of the examples of good practice from across the organisation in our recent ISO 9001:2008 audit report.

Choice spoke to Karen and Elaine to find out more.

“The QMS is a great tool for managers to work with,” explains Karen, “because it ensures we are covering all spectrums of care within services. We use QMS at Lanarkshire as an action plan to ensure that legislative work, quality, safety and service users’ rights are threaded through everything we do.”

Elaine agrees, “QMS is a set of policies and procedures that ensures service users have a great quality of life, remain fulfilled and have as much independence as possible. On top of this, QMS also ensures we are recruiting the correct people with all the skills and training required of them.”

Elaine is therefore justifiably proud of Capability’s ISO 9001 accreditation. “We hold the quality of care and support we provide for service users as our main priority and the ISO accreditation is an acknowledgement of all the hard work and dedication of staff. If we did not all work together toward the same goal then we would not have met the standards required for this achievement.”

For Service Manager Karen, QMS is a beneficial one-stop shop for support and direction. She says, “It is important for me as a manager that both service users and staff are happy within the service and are treated with the respect and dignity this system supports at all times. With QMS everything I need is in one place. It is like having a wealth of knowledge at our fingertips. QMS gives staff the guidance and encouragement they need to do their jobs with confidence.”
Do you compare the equipment you use with other disabled people who use the same bit of kit?

When Choice asked readers what they would most like to see in this new magazine lots of you told us that you would find it useful to swap information about the equipment and adaptations that make life easier. Anything from which wheelchair to buy to which supermarket sells jar twisters.

Starting next issue, Choice will include a section with useful information and product reviews written by disabled people for disabled people.

If you would like to write a review of a product you have used or want to pass on useful tips for self-management or want to pass on useful information and product reviews written by disabled people for disabled people.

Guess who?

Every issue Choice is running a ‘guess who?’ feature just for fun. Each guess who will be the subject for next issue’s Career Path. First up it’s… well, let’s see if you can guess. Good luck!

Who…

Has been with Capability for 19 years this year?

Won the junior Mr Scotland competition in 1984?

Began his Capability career at Westland’s Adult Residential Service?

Attended Reid Kerr College to study and complete a City and Guilds course?

Is known for adding a bit of ‘spice’ to his job?

The answer will be revealed in the next issue of Choice magazine.

Career path

You may know Rosie Smith as the leader of Team Capability who successfully completed the Ben Nevis challenge last year.

Rosie is about to start a new job at Capability. She explains her career path to Choice.

“I started out volunteering at an after-school club as a play leader. I’ve also volunteered as a play leader for summer and Easter play schemes at schools in Paisley and near Kilbarchan,” she says. “I first volunteered at Capability as a befriender at the Renfrewshire Project’s Thursday Group where I worked with young people close to my own age. At the end of last year I took on an additional volunteer role as an administrator for the Project.

“The skills I got through my volunteering made me decide to apply when a role at the Renfrewshire Project’s Playscheme came up. I am really happy to say I got the role and at the end of June I am starting in my new job as a Play Leader.”

Guess who?

Who...?

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Are taxis genuinely accessible these days?

Each issue Choice asks a topical question about the issues that matter most to you. This time we find out if you think taxis really are accessible to everyone…

"I think they are not so good for people in wheelchairs. Sometimes it can be hard to get accessible taxis for people who use wheelchairs."
Billy Moan, Upper Springland.

"In Dundee, most taxis are accessible taxis. Sometimes the drivers’ attitudes are a barrier however."
Rose Anne Main, Service Manager Community Living Services North, & Family Support Services North & East.

"I know some people who use taxis, and they say that there are often problems. I’ve got a bus pass and use the bus instead!"
Sarah Jane McAndrew, Whitehaugh.

"Some are accessible, some are not. Wheelchair access is often difficult because of the height of the taxi."
Francis Hood, Anton Ogilvie.

"Most taxis are accessible in Edinburgh and most drivers are helpful, however there are still issues if you don’t have an “average” sized wheelchair. Therefore it is essential that you explain your needs when you book."
Steven Innes, Team Leader, E2.

"I think they are not so good for people in wheelchairs. Sometimes it can be hard to get accessible taxis for people who use wheelchairs."
Billy Moan, Upper Springland.

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