

SPELTHORNE COMMITTEE 4 ACCESS NOW (SCAN)

JUNE 2020

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Special Issue - 6



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CORONAVIRUS – COVID19 - TELL US HOW YOU'VE BEEN AFFECTED

Local Organisations with an involvement in Disability and Health support services across Surrey are encouraged to submit regular reports and updates.

Are you arranging 'virtual' open meetings and events? – let us help to publicise them. Nominate any 'Local Heroes'. Please contact me on info@spelthorneaccess.org.uk or text me on 07853 038933.



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DISABILITY RIGHTS UK (DRUK) – NEWS IN BRIEF

Disability Rights UK's e-news keeping you up-to-date with disability equality issues, including policy news on coronavirus.

We are updating our DR UK Coronavirus information page as and when we receive new information. You can find this here: <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/coronavirus>

Disabled People 'Forgotten By Government' As 'Perfect Storm' Puts Vital Services On The Brink

Disability Charity Consortium (DCC) members including DR UK say the UK's 14 million disabled people are being "forgotten by the Government" and "allowed to fall through the cracks".

Vital services for physically disabled people in particular have missed out on emergency funding so far. The DCC has highlighted a lack of a coherent strategy to specifically support disabled people through the pandemic and beyond, with many services suspended and facing a perilous future.

Whilst some money has been made available for mental health, autism and learning disability it is nowhere near enough to match the demand for services.

<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2020/june/disabled-people-%E2%80%98forgotten-government%E2%80%99-%E2%80%98perfect-storm%E2%80%99-puts-vital-services-brink>



Shielders Resist New Guidance On Going Outdoors

Government advice issued on 31st May, allowing people who have been shielding to go outdoors, either alone, with their household, or at a two metre distance with one person from another household has received a mixed response from shielders in England and Wales, with many choosing to continue to follow the previous advice of total shielding.

DR UK's Policy Lead, Fazilet Hadi, said: "Decisions need to be made by the people shielding and not by government. Government needs to provide the best possible evidence on societal risk. People shielding will also want to understand the level of personal risk to themselves, from their medical advisers. It is then their decision on what activity they can undertake at the same time as keeping safe. The new advice is in direct contravention of the



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advice issued in mid-May, which said that if the country remains at level 4 risk of the international Covid Alert System, lockdown needs to continue. The government has confirmed the country is still at level 4.”

<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2020/june/shielders-resist-new-guidance-going-outdoors>



‘Isolated, Alone, Forgotten’ – DR UK Shielding Survey Reveals Huge Sense Of Lack Of Safety And Neglect

Eighty-five per cent of people shielding feel unsafe going outside since the relaxing of lockdown rules on 1 June, according to a new survey by DR UK.

Only two-fifths of people shielding from Coronavirus have had the confidence to leave home since the regulations around shielding were eased. Most people who left their home did so by themselves or with a family member, although some took the opportunity to meet someone outside their household following social distancing advice.

There was a very low level of reported trust in the government’s advice on shielding. Only 15% of people reported they trusted the government’s advice, and only 13% thought the government was following the best available scientific advice on shielding.

The limited list of impairments and health conditions produced by the government has left people with rare conditions or in moderate risk groups particularly confused. Respondents in these categories described particular difficulties getting food and medication, as they were not able to access volunteer schemes or pharmacy deliveries. A third of people who reported shielding do not have conditions listed on the government’s official list.

Respondents described the government’s communication as being unclear and inconsistent, and many reported they trust their doctor more than the government. Many respondents found the government’s language around shielding to be unhelpful, and were frustrated by feeling like they were under house arrest, best summed up as: “I’ve done nothing wrong, I’m not a criminal, I can’t help the fact I am ill but it feels like I have committed a crime”.

Many people who are shielding want to go outside but are worried about others not giving them enough space, or not being able to safely access parks or other open spaces where it is easy to



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maintain physical distancing.

Shielding has thrown people's lives into disarray; described by one respondent as "I exist but do not live". Comments received from survey participants indicated that many feel isolated, alone and forgotten.

DR UK's Head of Policy Fazilet Hadi said: "The government has failed to deliver strong support for disabled people and those with chronic health conditions throughout the Coronavirus crisis. It is clear that many people do not trust the government's handling of the crisis to date. If it is to win trust, it must recognise that there are far more people who need proper support beyond those with immuno-suppressed conditions. People with autism, sight impairments and mobility issues have all been saying they cannot safely go out and maintain social distancing and may need extra support in terms of consistent home delivery services. There has also been a total lack of support to help disabled people boost their mental health and improve access to socialisation through digital means. Many disabled people cannot afford digital technologies, and have not had training in how to use them. Such technologies have been transformative for many people during lockdown – for everything from shopping, to socialising, and working, but many disabled people still remain shut out of digital access. This needs to change."

DR UK received survey responses from a self-selecting group of 291 people between Friday 5 June and Wednesday 10 June 2020.



Universal Credit £20 Per Week Increase Must Be Extended To ESA, DBC Tells Chancellor

Disabled people receiving ESA have been missing out on an emergency £20 week out of work benefit top up to help them through the Coronavirus crisis as the Government says it will take too long to make changes.

The Disability Benefits Consortium (DBC), a network of over 100 organisations, including DR UK, has been told the reason people on all legacy benefits have not received the same £20 uplift as those claiming Universal Credit is because it is "too complicated" for the Government computer system.

This is despite a April 2020 DBC survey finding that 95% of



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disabled people had seen an increase in their costs as a result of the pandemic – from needing more money to safely access food to having to pay for higher heating and water bills while shielding at home.

The DBC has written to the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak MP, urging him to end the discrimination against disabled people, and for pay to be backdated to when the top up to Universal Credit was introduced.

You can add to the 115,000 signatures on the DBC petition here: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/stop-leaving-disabled-people-behind>



Government Extends Removal Of Rights In Last-Minute SEND School Guidance

DR UK's Head of Policy, Fazilet Hadi, said: "Despite children with Education and Health Care Plans being classed as 'vulnerable', despite nearly 50 DPOs demanding clarity in a letter sent last week, despite 60 Local Authorities being at loggerheads with the government regarding its plans for schools to reopen, despite strong opposition from teaching unions about the safety of a return to school at this time, and with at least half of all parents expected to keep their children at home, the government didn't see fit to even tack on half-baked plans for children with SEND to its proposals until this weekend".

<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2020/june/government-extends-removal-rights-last-minute-send-school-guidance>



Accessible Holiday Accommodation Petition

The future of firms providing holiday accommodation for severely disabled people is in doubt because of the impacts of the Coronavirus crisis.

A petition has been set up asking for it to be made law for hotels of a certain size to provide accommodation for severely disabled people (including facilities such as a profiling bed, ceiling hoist, wheel-in shower wet room and wheelchair access throughout all key facilities). You can find the petition here:

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/301139>



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GOVERNMENT URGED TO PROTECT THOSE WITH SIGHT LOSS DURING OUTBREAK *Edited from The Independent June 2020*

In a survey conducted by charity Fight for Sight, some four in 10 people said they feared their sight would further deteriorate during the pandemic, with some saying they had not been able to access regular injections and necessary surgeries to preserve their vision. 73 per cent of respondents to the poll of 325 adults with eye conditions said they had experienced reduced access to treatments during the outbreak.

Two in five said they found it difficult to follow social distancing rules during the lockdown, with more than half saying they had seen their access to food and goods diminished during measures to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

Angharad Paget-Jones, 27, who is registered blind and uses a guide dog, said she had been shouted at by members of the public after finding herself too close to them while out shopping — while large supermarkets have not been able to make staff available to help her find the things she needs. Meanwhile her guide dog, Tudor, is more likely to be confused than aided by yellow warning tape used to mark 2m distances — which outside the context of the virus are often used to identify steps and trip hazards.

She told the Independent: “I’m told there are arrows and spacing on the floor, but as someone who can’t see the ground that’s not much good — and my dog isn’t trained [for this] ... he’s not trained to know what they are. It’s like the queueing outside supermarkets — he’s trained to find the door he’s not trained to find the end of the queue”.

She added that government messaging throughout the pandemic has frequently forgotten the needs of disabled people. “They aren’t even putting audio descriptions on their feeds, they’re not putting out large print for us, they didn’t even have sign language on the broadcasts so they’ve forgotten disabled people and that’s not good enough — especially as everyone is one slip away from being disabled”.

The concern from disabled people comes a month after a cross-party letter signed by 97 MPs and peers urged the government to “re-evaluate its current strategy to ensure social distancing does not lead to exclusion for those with disabilities”.

Chief Executive of Fight for Sight, Sherine Krause said: “The



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government must develop a plan that addresses the immediate need of people with eye conditions, so they don't become blind because of lockdown and social distancing measures. Additionally, we're calling on the government to urgently update its advice to retailers on social distancing measures to ensure the needs of people with poor vision are not excluded.

In the longer term, we must continue to fund research for new, more efficient treatments and cures for the leading causes of blindness and sight loss, to help ease the pressure on our NHS.”
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-latest-disabilities-blind-sight-loss-fight-for-sight-survey-a9547836.html>



FACE MASKS FROM COFFEE FILTERS

– *Edited from The Independent May 2020*

As the world grapples with a PPE shortage, one unlikely German manufacturer is taking matters into their own hands.

For a manufacturer of the paper coffee filter, inspiration was close at hand. “The ergonomics of the thing, the fact that the filter fits exactly over mouth, nose and chin is so unbelievable that you might call it a gift from heaven,” says Katharina Roehrig, a managing director at the company which is based in a small city in north western Germany.

The company has a 112-year history with coffee filters that began in the kitchen of the woman who invented them.

The essential ingredient in many medical-grade masks – what separates them from simple homemade versions – is a filter made of non-woven super-thin fibres, formed in a process known as melt-blown extrusion. Since the pandemic, demand for so-called melt-blown fibre has skyrocketed. The material, a triple layer of melt-blown and spun-blown microfibre, has a Bacterial Filtration Efficiency certification of above 98 per cent, a value comparable to simple medical masks.

This initiative is not the first time the company has considered getting into the face mask business. About a decade ago, it looked into manufacturing masks because the process fit with the company's expertise. But this was before the coronavirus.



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SURREY COALITION VIRTUAL EVENTS

Please join us at our virtual meetings. We are using Zoom to run the meetings. Using Zoom is easy and free.

Virtual Café: our virtual café has 4 rooms on offer each week, the topics of the groups vary according to what people have chosen to talk about but they usually include entertainment, travel, pets, physical activity and technology. All you need to do is come along and let us know which room you fancy when you arrive – we do the rest! **Monday** 11.00 am – 12.00 noon

Move & Chat: an opportunity to meet virtually to do some gentle movement (of your choice) whilst enjoying a light-hearted chat with others. Some people do some marching on the spot, others do some arm movement, some even have a bit of a dance!
Monday 2.30 pm – 3.00 pm

Crafting chat and tips: do you love crafting or want to start? Come along and tell the group what you are working on, share tips and tricks and get inspired. **Tuesday** 2.30 pm – 3.00 pm

Book chat/story sharing: come and talk about books and reading – describe the best story you have ever read (or even written!).
Wednesday 2.30 pm – 3.00 pm

Weekly quiz: come and join the weekly quiz for a relaxed and fun chance to test your knowledge! **Thursday** 2.30 pm – 3.00 pm

Fitness & food chat: come and talk about how you are keeping active and eating well, swap ideas with others and pick up some tips! **Friday** 2.30 pm – 3.00 pm

How do I join?

If you are not a member, please contact us by email bookings@surreycoalition.org.uk in advance so we can take some details and send you the links that you need.

If you are already a member, please just contact us to let us know that you would like to come along (and which group you are interested in) and we will send you the link and password that you need.

If you need some help or assistance to get started (or a device!) you can get some support from our Tech to Community Connect



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project by registering your interest here: Tech to Community Connect project <https://surreycoalition.org.uk/technology-projects/> or by emailing getconnected@surreycoalition.org.uk or by phone or SMS text on 07471 518 998.



TV Licence News: *edited from Surrey Coalition News*
Have you claimed your TV Licensing blind concession?
Qualify for a 50% blind concession

A blind concession TV Licence costs £78.75 for colour and £26.50 for a black and white TV Licence. To apply, you will need to complete an application form and post it, and a photocopy of **one** of the following documents, to TV Licensing:

- A copy of the certificate or document issued by or on behalf of your local authority
- A copy of the certificate from your ophthalmologist

You will not need to provide this information again when you renew your TV Licence.

To find out more, and apply for a 50% blind concession licence, please visit tvlicensing.co.uk/blind. You can also get information on the concession in Braille, large print or audio format by calling TV Licensing on 0300 790 6076.

The Over 75's Licence – an update from the TV Licensing Community Relations Team

The TV Licensing community relations team for London and South East, who were able to provide some advice on all aspects of the TV Licence, including the changes to the over 75's TV Licence.

What is happening to the over 75s TV Licence concession?

- Free TV Licences for all over 75's, funded by the Government, will come to an end on 31st July 2020.
- From 1st August 2020, anyone aged 75 or over receiving Pension Credit will be eligible to apply for a free TV Licence, paid for by the BBC.
- Applicants need to be receiving Pension Credit in their name, or this can be in their partner's name if they are a couple and living at the same address.



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- Over 75's not receiving Pension Credit will need to pay for their TV Licence from 1st August.

What should I do?

If you think you may be eligible for Pension Credit but you currently don't receive it, you can find out more at:

www.gov.uk/pension-credit/eligibility.

For more information on the changes to over 75's TV Licences, visit www.tvlicensing.co.uk/age

Scams

TV Licensing has been a big target for scammers. We have updated our advice to customers to help them recognise scams and are working with the National Cyber Security Centre and Action Fraud. See here for the latest.

https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A_www.tvlicensing.co.uk_faqs_FAQ288&d=DwMFAg&c=9wxE0DgWbPxd1HCzjwN8Eaww1--ViDajIU4RXCxgSXE&r=SEoQrjiEvRIjQS4S29uuvdsFETk0h00p9juewodjSQM&m=ZzOQQa_8sV0kVIrrXmWuQ6ucJmFTYy7WGI6dpIHvWvE&s=eDL0JM32qIDR-tcA5ntwTFcYaHCq2dXqDZ7F0KKOjS8&e=



DISABILITY EMPOWERMENT NETWORK (DEN) – NORTH SURREY

North Surrey Disability Empowerment Network covers the areas of Runnymede, Spelthorne, Woking & Surrey Heath and is one of three groups of local disabled people, and carers, who meet up quarterly with representatives from local organisations like the NHS and supportive charities for information and advice. **Next Meeting on Monday 7th September 2020**

Please Note All Empowerment Meetings Are Being Held 'Virtually' During The Covid19 Pandemic And will start at 1pm after the Virtual Café sessions.

Please contact Yasmin Broome, Engagement Officer at Surrey Coalition email: Yasmin.Broome@surreycoalition.org.uk
Telephone or SMS text 0745 5267424 for details of how to participate in meetings remotely.



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Message from Jason Gaskell, Chief Executive Surrey Community Action

We've been in lockdown now for over 12 weeks, the best part of three months. In that time, charities have missed out of billions of income, and services have been slashed. As a sector, we don't fundraise for the sake of the money, we fundraise so we can continue to offer our beneficiaries the support they need to help them live fuller lives, whether that is access to personal care services, mental health support, or help with finances.

We have been very lucky in Surrey with the level of support offered by our funders and partners, which has been the envy of many of my national colleagues, so I would just like to say a huge thank you to those people who have worked hard to help mitigate some of the impact our sector has felt in the last few months and the further impact we expect in coming years.

We are seeing gradual lifting of lockdown restrictions which makes me feel excited (yes, I do really want a hair cut and the kids miss their friends) but also slightly nervous: What happens if/when we see another spike? Another lockdown? I am involved in some of the voluntary sector recovery work through the Local Resilience Forum and we are now looking at "outbreak control"; how we can keep people safe while minimising the harmful impact on others. It's a knife-edge, and we will all have a role to play just as we have currently.

For those of us lucky enough to be working and not on furlough, working from home was a bit of a novelty at first. I enjoyed watching Zoom meetings being taken over by hungry children or demanding pets. I enjoyed the occasional glimpses into people's lives, seeing people in more relaxed surroundings. The novelty is wearing thin though - I miss my office and my colleagues, and I even miss being held up on the A3 on the way to a meeting at County Hall!

I'm lucky in that I have a home office with decent facilities, but many don't. Some of us are not lucky enough to have a home office and have to make do with dining room tables, or in one case I heard of, ironing boards. Many of us have to manage a house full of distractions, like trying to help children focus on home-school work. I salute those of you who have to manage a full-time job on top of all the challenges of having children home from school.

Many of us are also working at a frenetic pace to make sure



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people get the help they need, and are working excessive hours to get everything done. I was reminded at a meeting today that we can't help others if we don't help ourselves first, and so please, please, please make sure you look after yourselves as well as the people around you - take a walk, get some exercise, relax with a book, whatever works for you, but take some time for yourself whenever you can, and don't be ashamed to get some help and support when you need it too.

This situation will go on for a fair while yet, so please look after yourselves and remember: This too shall pass.



Knitting for Keyworkers (Surrey and Sussex)

Are you a local community group or not for profit looking for mask extenders to help with soreness behind the ears? Local group Knitting for Keyworkers (Surrey and Sussex) has already donated just over 3000 extenders so far around local communities.

Together the volunteers in this group have supplied carers, care homes, local surgeries, children's transport services, Medi 4, NHS hospital wards and ambulance stations as well as local community nurses and midwives. Please contact the group via their Facebook page for further information.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2815165408601736/?ref=share>



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