

active

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Registered company limited by guarantee number 7940239



Welcome Members and Supporters



Active Independence is a new organisation committed to getting a better deal for all Disabled people. We aim to provide a combination of practical services whilst campaigning for the right of all Disabled people to live life as they choose, as independently as possible, and with dignity. As our logo suggests, being Disabled doesn't mean living in a box!

Our core principle is that we are a 100% Disabled People's User Led Organisation. The entire management committee are Disabled people, making us a truly user led organisation!

Active and Independent by Name, Active and Independent by Nature

Since our first AGM in October 2011, a lot has happened! Active Independence has formally registered as a company limited by guarantee and we are well on our way to becoming a registered charity. Our company number is 7940239.

Some of our existing management committee members (seen below) became Directors of the Company, and will eventually become charity trustees. New members are very welcome to get involved in joining and managing Active Independence. Thanks to funding from Awards for All, we have worked with a social enterprise consultant to develop ideas for future activities and sustainability and we now have a working business plan in place.



Brian Button
Chair



Dawn Gibson
Treasurer



Barbara Booton
Secretary



Toyah Wordsworth
Director



Join our Online Community

Our website is up and running - take look and see what we have been up to. You can register as a user and join our online discussion forum, follow us on Twitter and visit our Flickr photostream!

We understand that not everyone has access to the internet, however without an office base we can't offer any alternative way to contact us at the moment. We are urgently looking for accessible premises in which to set up office, and also seeking further sources of funding to grow and develop further.

In the meantime we meet regularly at the Friends Meetinghouse in Balby, Doncaster. We also have regular social meetings in Costa Coffee at the Lakeside shopping centre. See our website for further details of when to come along and meet us.



Pies, Peas & Personalisation!



We held a pie & peas / games evening on April 12th to take an informal look at Personalisation and Independent living. This was our first evening event, which proved to be well attended, lively and enjoyable. We hope to bring more events in future.



Our Advocacy Services

Funded by the Government Office for Disability Issues (ODI) our Peer Advocacy Service means we will be able to use our own experiences as Disabled People using Personal Budgets to help others to do the same. We can also provide welfare benefits information and help people with any PA employment issues.

So far we have helped around 20 Disabled people in Doncaster and Rotherham - and the project has only been up and running for a month! We have been invited to go back to the ODI for more funding to continue this project, and will keep you informed.

Our Membership is Growing!

Membership of Active Independence is free, and is open to all Disabled people, their friends families and carers / PAs. Full membership is available for Disabled people, whilst non-disabled people can become associate members. Full members can vote at our Annual General Meetings and are welcome to stand for election to our management committee. To join, please complete the membership form - you can download copies from our website. All we ask is that all members agree to our aims and objectives:

1. To provide information, advice, advocacy, training and support to enable Disabled people to have choice and control, and to live independent lives.
2. To raise aspirations and confidence amongst Disabled people, families and carers to facilitate choice, control and independent living.
3. To campaign for the right for Disabled people to have choice and control, in order to live independently and with dignity.

Are You an Employer?

If so, it is important to keep up with employment legislation and any changes. All Active Independence Newsletters will be considering employment as a regular item – and in this issue we consider increased National Insurance.

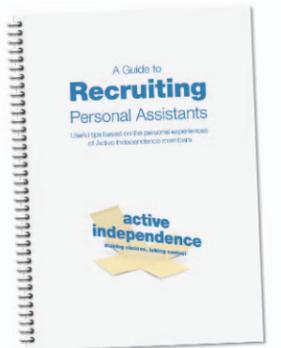
Our chair, Brian wrote to the Government minister for Pensions for clarification, and was told that the Government “is committed to introducing automatic enrolment into a workplace pension scheme to increase the number of workers saving for their retirement”. Small employers (which will cover most Disabled people employing PA's) will have to do this by 2015. This will be counted as an increased employment cost, which will have to be reported to the local authority who provides your personal budget. A full copy of the letter is on our website, and naturally we have sent a copy to Doncaster Council!

If you are thinking about employing a PA, Active Independence can help! Please take a look at our guidance on recruiting personal assistants, which is available from our website.

For £2 you can also get a hard copy, so drop us an email if you're interested.

Lastly, contact our Peer Advocacy service to talk to someone else about how they do it.

The next newsletter will cover the thorny issue of whether you actually employ your PA, or whether they are self employed.



Partnership Work

On 6th March we met with the Personalisation Forum Group (PFG) to discuss areas in which we could work together. The PFG is a local user-led organisation for people with mental health problems and during our lively meeting we found that both groups had much in common! The meeting helped to cement a commitment to joint working, and we look forward to a fruitful and enjoyable working relationship. For more information about the PFG go to www.pfgdoncaster.co.uk

Skills for Care Funding

Active Independence has been awarded funding from Skills for Care to deliver activities to support Disabled people who employ personal assistants or carers to build the skills and qualifications of their employees. Events will take place on **15th May:** Friends Meetinghouse, Balby, Doncaster, **12th June:** My Place, Rotherham, **3rd July:** Thorne. Please email to book your place. On **June 30th** we will also be at the Disability Awareness Day at Doncaster Deaf College - please come along and meet us.

The end of Disability Living Allowance?

Plans are afoot to abolish Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and replace it with something called the Personal Independence Payment or PIP. The current method of claiming benefit by filling out a form stating your mobility, care and or supervision needs will end.

People wanting to apply for the PIP will instead have to submit to a series of tests focusing on their “ability to carry out a range of key activities necessary to everyday life” – which raises some serious questions about Disabled people’s right to live life independently and with dignity. So far, we understand that Attendance Allowance will remain in place for older Disabled people aged over 64. Watch this space for further news!

Don’t forget, advocacy can help with any benefits issues you may have – contact for assistance from our advocacy service.



Campaigning on the Issues that Matter

We have started campaigning on national and local issues that affect Disabled people. In November we submitted a contribution to the Human Rights Commission’s consultation on the Human Rights Act. We gave examples of how Disabled people have to fight for their rights and urged the Commission to protect the Human Rights Act so that in a civilised society, Disabled people can live

independently with dignity and respect. You can read the report on our website, go to News, then click on November Archives. We are also in regular contact with DMBC to get clarification on certain questions that have arisen concerning Personal Budgets locally here in Doncaster – getting the answers is taking some considerable time, but watch this space for when we get some!

Thank you!

The Active Independence team would like to express many thanks to our generous funders over the past year: Big Lottery Fund Awards for All, South Yorkshire Community Foundation, The Office of Disability Issues – DP ULO Development Fund, Skills for Care, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

