Liberty Link
Summer 2017
The newsletter from Surrey Independent Living Council
You can read back issues of Liberty Link, all the way back to 2008, on our website www.surreyilc.org.uk (PDF document).

In the interest of greater accessibility, the latest four issues of Liberty Link (including this one) are additionally available:

- in a text-only format (built primarily for screen readers)
- in audio format (MP3 file type, most browsers support MP3 natively, so no need to download anything!)

These can be found on our website www.surreyilc.org.uk
Chair’s Remarks

SPOTLIGHT on Changes to our support for users of Surrey County Council funded direct payments

Accessible holidays and places to visit by Brenda Griffiths

The Adventures of David in Croatia
One of our Trustees, David, is partially deaf-blind. His story takes us on his holiday to Croatia, through his eyes.

PA Training
Our PA and Employer training team have been awarded new funding!

PA and Employer training calendar
See our calendar of PA and employer training available until December 2017.

Hub Epsom is reopening!

Pugsley’s Patch
Pugley’s Patch - with carers in mind.

Call to Duty
Call to Duty is back and the question this time is: Is my PA entitled to a pension?

Life as a disabled PhD student
Our trustee, Mike, tells us about his experience undertaking a PhD course as a physically disabled person.

Healthwatch Surrey
“What we have achieved for local people”

Liberty Link: a fond farewell
Liberty Link’s editor bids you all a fond farewell.

SILC is managing its Carbon Foot Print
SILC recognises the importance of environmental concerns and our printers at Bluetree Design & Print Ltd. have been awarded a mark of responsible forestry from the FSC.
Chair’s Remarks

Welcome to SILC’s Summer 2017 Liberty Link newsletter!

I am sitting here in my kitchen, looking out at my kitchen garden on a very soggy day as I write the chairs notes for the last magazine version of Liberty Link and it is with very mixed feelings that I write this message to you.

I am glad and heartened that we have been able to secure a further three year contract from Surrey County Council (SCC) to support Direct Payments in Surrey.

However the contract is for a reduced service consisting of a peer support and personal assistant service and the administration of carers one off direct payments. This means that although there will be a transitional period as we transfer the direct payment finance work we do over to Surrey County Council, in future, we will no longer be providing support for Financial Monitoring or Supported Managed Accounts.

The funding for the services that we will continue to provide has been reduced by 65% which I am sorry to say means the level and range of services we are able to provide will change. As a result of this and with huge sadness to all of the SILC Trustees we are having to restructure the charity and therefore having to say goodbye to several members of staff who are being made redundant in the coming weeks. Details of the scope of our new contact with Surrey County Council can be found overleaf.

Jo Komisarczuk, Chair of SILC
Having had surgery three weeks ago on my hand I can value the mixed blessing in being told to slow down and stop trying to do everything at once!

Sitting here looking out at my kitchen garden as it sags under the weight of the rain, which is currently almost torrential here, I can only wonder at how big the runner and French beans will be getting in this weather. Not to mention wondering and worrying if the apples, pear and plum trees will snap branches with all the extra weight on them, but also knowing that I can do nothing about it.

Sometimes you just need to accept the advice given, and sit still and let time and my body work its amazing task of adapting and renewing the changes made by my recent surgery.

A little like the wonderful team of people I have the pleasure of working with here at SILC who I am certain will adapt and grow from the changes we have had to make.

Can I just wish all those leaving the organisation in the next few weeks well in this, the next phase of their lives, and to the staff who are staying I wish them well as they adapt to the changes and differences. Also a huge thank you to Richard, Jon and Joan who have spent many hours working through what the changes will mean for us as an organisation and for being there for all staff during this very difficult time.

Although for financial reasons this will be the last printed version of Liberty link we are hoping that Surrey county Council will agree to us sending out regular bulletins to you along with information they send out and we will also be providing regular news updates on our website www.surreyilc.org.uk

Jo Komisarczuk
Chair of SILC
Changes to our support for users of Surrey County Council funded direct payments

From September the 1st there will be substantial changes to the level and range of services that SILC is able to provide for Surrey County Council funded Direct Payments. This is because we will be working to a new reduced contract with Surrey County Council which also has a substantially lower level of funding.

The services affected are:

**Supported Managed Accounts**
We are no longer able to offer Supported Managed Accounts (SMAs) to people whose Direct Payments are funded by Surrey County Council. Existing users of SILC SMA’s will be transferred over to Surrey County Council’s new Specialist Direct Payment Support Team.

Our intention is this will be done in a way that does not affect the care support that people receive.

**Financial Monitoring Support**
We are no longer able to offer help with completing Surrey County Council direct payment reconciliations, however up until October the 1st, we are able to continue to help with reconciliations for the period April to June.

Between October 2017 and March 2018 we will be helping people to transfer over to Surrey’s Pre Paid Account. For those people who wish to the option of completing their own reconciliations will still be open to them.

**Direct payment information, advice and support**
We are still able to offer information and advice to help people who are eligible for care funded by Surrey County Council decide whether a Direct Payment is the best option.
Unfortunately we are no longer funded to provide the level of support we have been able to in the past to support people to manage their Direct Payments on an ongoing basis. However we are still available to provide Peer Support along with our Duty telephone contact service and lots of direct payment information will continue to be available via our website.

Unfortunately we can no longer afford to produce Liberty Link, but updated Direct Payment information and SILC news will still be available on our website and we hope to agree an arrangement with Surrey County Council for them to include Direct Payment updates from SILC in the correspondence they send out.

**Personal Assistant Recruitment and Employment**

We are still able to offer information, advice and support to help people recruit and employ Personal Assistants.

This includes:

- Advice and information about the responsibilities of being an employer.
- Support with drafting adverts, job descriptions and contracts.
- Our PA Finder service and help placing adverts in newspapers, on other websites, etc.
- Support with application forms, interviews, etc.
- Following up references and DBS checks.
- Help setting up PA employment including payroll, employer’s liability insurance and pensions.
- Training for both Personal Assistants and employers.

All of SILC other services will remain unchanged but as a result of these changes we have had to restructure the way SILC is organised and that has unfortunately meant losing a large number of staff.

We are 100% committed to continuing to provide a responsive and quality service but ask you to bear with us while these difficult changes to the service are underway.
Accessible holidays and places to visit
by Brenda Griffiths

Are you longing for a holiday break or just want to have days out with friends or family?

“In years gone by people with disabilities (particularly those in wheelchairs) had very limited choices.”

There are many options open to people with all disabilities and although the planning may take a little longer, especially if you need special facilities or equipment, most find the challenge an extremely exciting experience.

In years gone by people with disabilities (particularly those in wheelchairs) had very limited choices. Together with my circle of friends in the Disabled Drivers Association we were reckoned to be extremely adventurous in the 1950s when we organised a week in a Pontin’s holiday camp!
There weren’t many accessible hotels in those days except those which were specially designed for disabled people and their families.

**What a difference since the Access legislation became law.**

Nowadays there are such a wide variety of places available, from self catering accessible caravans and cottages, bed and breakfast places in England, or full board hotels in Britain and abroad; to more expensive cruises, where all meals, activities and entertainment are provided on board. Some cruise ships also provide coaches with lifts from ports throughout the cruise. There are guide books, such as the ‘Rough Guide to Accessible Britain’, obtainable from most good bookshops.

For days out we are spoilt for choice in Surrey. The National Trust have worked hard to make their properties accessible to all and most large shopping centres have parking for Blue Badge holders.

The sting in the tail is that just as some things improve, government cutbacks have forced some people to give back their Motability cars, so they can no longer get out and about...

Funny old world.

*Brenda Griffiths*  
Vice Chair of SILC

“Some cruise ships also provide coaches with lifts from ports throughout the cruise.”
We caught the feeder coach outside the library in Camberley at 9 o’clock, were taken to Dover, and through Eurotunnel to Calais. On our arrival, we joined our tour coach and departed for an overnight stay at Reims, just north-east of Paris.

After dinner, my guide (Sandra) and I went for a walk in the dark outside the hotel to see what else was around and found a really large warehouse type building which turned out to be a Costco type step-up. We went in and I seemed to find the beers pretty easily.

“Can I help you?” “How much for the beers?” I said. The assistant walked over to a plastic box on the shelf, pressed a button, and the price came up in very large numbers which is so accessible for me as I’m partially sighted. I thought it was brilliant.

I ended up buying two beers and we continued our evening stroll before returning to the hotel a while later. I do think our shops over here should start using this kind of system.
In the morning we were back on the coach and made the 12 hour journey down to Porto di Ancona in Italy, found a meal and went to our cabins for a great night’s sleep. We woke in the morning to a lovely breakfast buffet and set off on the ferry for Split, Croatia’s second largest city. The holiday season (July and August) was over so it was a little disappointing in Split as most of the shops were closed!

We went on to Dubrovnik, in southern Croatia near the Bosnia and Herzegovina border, where we were due to stay for three nights. The next day we went in to Bosnia and Herzegovina with a tour group, to the city of Mostar, where we saw the famous 600 year old bridge, Stari Most.

*the Stari Most bridge*

The bridge cost over 9 million Euros to reconstruct in 2003 after it was destroyed in the Bosnian War in 1993.

We saw a brown bear walking through the woods at one point! We were told they were wild and quite often walked in to people’s gardens. After walking for a while, we finally reached a large lake with what must have been hundreds of swans, geese and ducks. We stayed here for a while then made our way back to the hotel for the night.
The next day we were homeward bound. We were back on the coach and heading to a hotel in Niederau in western Austria. I’d stayed here before, once with my wife and another time with my daughter doing a holiday called “Little Trains of Austria”. The next day we were on the coach again and off to Belgium for the night then back to the UK via the Eurotunnel.

I feel the trip really did take my disabilities in to account (I am partially deaf-blind). Everyone was really nice and I do recommend it. Best place to start is www.visit-croatia.co.uk

David, SILC Trustee
Our PA and employer training team have been awarded new funding

PAs are able to claim up to £10 towards their travel costs and where required, there is funding to assist with ‘backfill’ while the PA is attending training sessions.

With feedback from IEs, the SILC Support with Confidence (SwC) training has been arranged in a modular form (six modules) so that PAs can either be ‘Working towards Support with Confidence’ or they can attend half-day/one-day sessions on an ad-hoc basis.

All individual sessions are certificated. We hope that this will allow IEs to plan ahead and arrange alternative staff cover if needed.

It is suggested that ALL PAs have as a minimum:

- **Health & Safety**
- **Safeguarding**
- **First Aid**
- **Person Centred Care**

For training dates, please visit: www.pafinder.org.uk
Training calendar until December 2017

More dates are likely to be added in the future, so please still check www.pafinder.org.uk and navigate to the Training page. You could also email our training team directly with any questions at training@surreyilc.org.uk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support with Confidence - Module 2</th>
<th>25th October</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning - Role of the PA, Duty of Care</td>
<td>25th October</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afternoon - Continuous Professional Development, Information Handling</td>
<td>25th October</td>
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<tr>
<th>Support with Confidence - Module 4</th>
<th>26th October</th>
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<tr>
<td>Morning - Health &amp; Safety, Infection Control</td>
<td>26th October</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afternoon - Food, Fluid, Nutrition</td>
<td>26th October</td>
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<tr>
<th>Support with Confidence - Module 5</th>
<th>6th December</th>
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<tr>
<td>Morning - Mental Health, Dementia, Learning Disabilities</td>
<td>6th December</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afternoon - Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults, Safeguarding of Children</td>
<td>6th December</td>
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<tr>
<th>Support with Confidence - Module 6</th>
<th>24th October 7th November 10th November 7th December</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All day - Emergency First Aid at work</td>
<td>24th October 7th November 10th November 7th December</td>
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Good Boss sessions

This is a chance to meet other employers. These are interactive sessions covering a diverse range of topics such as contracts of employment, keeping records, setting boundaries (should my PA be my friend?), what to do if it all goes wrong, confidence building and how to say no! We also invite guest speakers from insurance, payroll services etc. to discuss these areas with you.

There is free parking and lunch is provided.

For further details contact Bob Hall - training@surreyilc.org.uk

See training available for IEs (Good Boss training) and PAs: www.pafinder.org.uk
We are very pleased to announce The Hub Epsom is set to re-open its doors in September!

As you may already be aware, in December 2016, significant damage was caused to Hub Epsom’s original location at 131 High Street by a fire that started in an adjacent building.

Hub Epsom’s new location will be: **28 West Street, Epsom, KT18 7RJ.**

Please keep an eye on the Hubs website to find out the exact opening date.

If you would like any support in the meantime:

Give us a call 01372 744 479

Send us a text 07704 288 772

Send us an email info@thehubepsom.org.uk

Visit our website thesurreyhubs.org.uk

Or you can just pop in when we’re open!
New study/research regarding dementia

A very impressive consortium of organisations are initiating an important piece of research and need to involve people who are suffering the onset of dementia, and their carers.

It is called Technology Integrated Health Management (TIHM). The list of consortium members are:

- Surrey and Borders Partnership
- Alzheimer's Society
- University of Surrey
- Royal Holloway University of London
- Kent/Surrey/Sussex Academic Health

The research will examine how the latest technology is able to improve the quality of life for people with Dementia and their carers.

Please consider participating in this highly valuable study/research.

To have meaningful results the Consortium needs at least 1,400 families.

Please call 01932 722 247 or make your interest known at tihm@sabp.nhs.uk

Alternatively visit the website www.sabp.nhs.uk/tihm
“Please offer me a seat”

Last year, Transport for London (TfL) launched a new badge and card to help customers who are less able to stand get a seat when they need one.

The badge and card can be used on all TfL services: London Underground, London Overground, TfL Rail, Buses, DLR, Trams and River Services.

You can apply for a badge and card at tfl.gov.uk/campaign/please-offer-me-a-seat

There's no need to explain your reasons for the badge and card to either TfL staff or fellow customers. Please remember the badge and card doesn't guarantee you a seat.

If you struggle to stand while using public transport, there is a free badge and card available to help you alert fellow customers that you need a seat.

Action For Carers are now running the carer support network for all areas in Surrey.

Should you, as a carer, have anything you would like to discuss or enquire about please contact:

Tel: 0303 040 1234,
SMS: 07714 075993 or
email: CarerSupport@actionforcarers.org.uk
Free First Aid training for carers

The British Red Cross offers a range of first aid courses for people over the age of 16 who want to learn first aid for their everyday life.

You don't need to have any previous experience; just a willingness to learn and take part in practical exercises (led by their friendly trainers) which build your confidence in dealing with emergency scenarios.

You can find a course near you at: www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk

Winter Flu Jabs

If you are caring for someone, you may be concerned about how being ill will affect you as a carer, and the person you care for.

If you are the main carer for an elderly or disabled person who may be put at risk if you fall ill, and/or if you are in receipt of Carer's Allowance, you should be offered a free flu jab according to government policy. This service is usually available between September and February.

Visit your local pharmacy for more information.

Stephen Pugsley, Carer Support Adviser, SILC

We have some dates at Royal Surrey hospital in Guildford:

- 20th Sept 2017 - 1.30 - 4pm
- 4th Oct 2017 - 11.30 - 2pm
- 15th Nov 2017 - 1.30pm - 4pm
There is usually an independent living adviser on duty here at SILC from 12 noon to 2pm, Monday to Friday, to answer general queries. You can contact duty by email at duty@surreyilc.org.uk or by phone on 01483 458 111.

Our Call To Duty feature answers some of the questions our advisers are most frequently asked while on duty.

**Q**

*Is my PA entitled to a pension?*

**A**

**Pensions for PAs**

As you may be aware, all employers, even those who only employ one person, are now legally required to set up a pension scheme for their employees and pay pension contributions, if the employees are eligible.

Your PA will fall into one of three categories.

1) **Entitled worker**

An entitled worker can pay into a pension scheme if they choose to but their employer isn’t required to make a contribution or to set up the pension scheme.

If your PA earns under £5,876 per year in their work with you, they would be classed as an entitled worker.
2) Non-eligible jobholder

A non-eligible jobholder isn’t entitled to be automatically enrolled in a pension scheme but can choose to opt in.

If your PA chooses to opt into a pension scheme, you will be required to set one up and may need to pay a contribution into it. If your PA earns between £5,876 and £9,999 per year in their work with you or if they earn over £10,000 but are aged 16 to 21, or over State Pension age, they would be classed as a non-eligible jobholder.

3) Eligible jobholder

An eligible jobholder must be automatically enrolled in a pension scheme, though they may then choose to opt out.

If the PA doesn’t opt out, the employer will need to make a contribution to the pension. If your PA earns £10,000 or more per year and is aged between 22 and State Pension age, they would be classed as an eligible jobholder.

Eligibility table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Earnings per year</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>16 to 21</th>
<th>22 to State Pension Age</th>
<th>State Pension Age to 74</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under £5,876</td>
<td>Entitled worker</td>
<td>Can have pension but employer doesn’t contribute</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between £5,876 - £9,999</td>
<td>Non-eligible jobholder</td>
<td>Can opt in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£10,000 or more</td>
<td>Non-eligible jobholder</td>
<td>Eligible jobholder auto-enrolment</td>
<td>Non-eligible jobholder</td>
<td>Can opt in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When will I need to set up a pension scheme?

You should receive a letter from the Pensions Regulator, an organisation which is responsible for regulating workplace pensions and making sure employers comply with their automatic enrolment details.

The letter will include what’s known as a staging date, which is the date when the law comes into effect for you.

You can also look up your staging date online at http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/employers/staging-date.aspx

You will need to know your PAYE reference, which is available from your payroll provider.

How do I set up a pension scheme?

Your payroll provider should be able to support you with setting up a pension scheme.

There are various pension providers but not all of these will accept small employers or be suitable for your PAs.

The Government has set up a pension scheme called National Employment Savings Trust (NEST) which accept all employers who need to provide a pension scheme.
Who covers the employer’s contribution into the pension scheme?

If you receive a direct payment from Surrey County Council and providing access to a pension scheme has an impact on the amount of your direct payment, Surrey County Council will adjust your direct payment to cover this.

If you receive a personal health budget (PHB) from the NHS and providing access to a pension scheme has an impact on the amount of your PHB, the NHS will adjust your PHB to cover this.

How much is the employer’s contribution into the pension scheme?

By law, you and your employee have to pay a minimum amount into the pension scheme. This is currently set at 2% of your PA’s earnings. You, the employer, must pay at least 1% of this.

The minimum contribution will increase over time. The dates when this will happen and the percentage increases are shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Total minimum contribution</th>
<th>Employer minimum contribution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 05/04/2018</td>
<td>2% (including 1% staff contribution)</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/04/2018 - 05/04/2019</td>
<td>5% (including 3% staff contribution)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/04/2019 onwards</td>
<td>8% (including 5% staff contribution)</td>
<td>3%</td>
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</table>
My PA is self-employed. Do I need to set up a pension scheme?
No. If your PA is self-employed you don’t need to set up or pay into a pension scheme for them.

I’m using a care agency. Do I need to set up a pension scheme?
No. If you use a care agency the agency is responsible for setting up and contributing to pensions for their eligible staff.

Where do I find further information about pensions?
- The Pensions Regulator has a helpline, 0845 600 1011, which is open from 9am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday. Their website is www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk
- Your payroll provider should be able to give you advice and support with pensions.
- You can contact SILC on 01483 458111 or by email at duty@surreyilc.org.uk. There is usually an adviser on duty from 12 noon to 2pm, Monday to Friday.

Unfortunately this is the last edition of our Liberty Link newsletter. We will continue to update our website and also expand our Q&A section.

www.surreyilc.org.uk
In 2014, after several years away from academia, I decided to return to university to begin a part-time PhD in history. I had been dealing with increased health problems for quite some time, and had become pretty demotivated and demoralised. But I remembered how much I had enjoyed studying before, and how it gave me a sense I was achieving something and helped me to keep on an even keel.

After considering it carefully, I decided that although it would be difficult it was something I could do, and wanted to do. So I applied to Royal Holloway, University of London (actually located in Egham!), as it has an excellent history department and is not too far from me in Woking.

After being accepted and beginning the course in September 2014, much to my disappointment I soon found I needed to put my studies on hold due to more health problems, and wasn’t in a position to officially start them again until the following September.

Overall since then things have gone very well – I’ve been really enjoying the work and feel much more motivated now that I’ve got a major goal to aim for.

I’m interested in the history of alchemy and witchcraft in seventeenth-century England, and I’ve spoken at two conferences, one at Royal Holloway and one at the Institute of Historical Research in London, which were both very good experiences.
I’ve also been to seminars, talks and courses in both Egham and London. My supervisors and my department have been really helpful, in fact most of the college staff have been. There have been some irritations of course, particularly lack of disabled access at the college’s building in central London.

On a personal level, my chronic pain is pretty tiring and means I need to pace myself so I can keep it under control, so I sometimes find it frustrating I don’t have more energy available for my studies.

I also had something of a crisis with my health blow up unexpectedly last summer, which meant I was unable to get any work done for three or four months. Fortunately, since then things have gone really smoothly.

I would also say that despite the personal challenges, I’m really glad I decided to go for it and start my PhD, in fact the challenges make me even more determined to carry on and see it through to completion. I’m looking forward to several more years of very enjoyable study.

Mike Moorwood
SILC Trustee
Improvements to care homes
As a result of our care home visits across Surrey, individual care homes, Surrey County Council and the regulator are all acting on our findings. This will result in a broader and better range of activities for residents and an improved quality of life.

People in mental health crisis continue to get vital support
Our research with people using Safe Havens in Surrey highlighted to decision makers how vital this service is to users, and was a key piece of evidence in the decision to continue funding the Safe Havens in 2017/18.

Healthwatch visit leads to regulator action
Safety concerns raised by Healthwatch volunteers during a visit to a care home prompted a CQC inspection and subsequent closure of the home. The CQC said: “the information passed to us...was invaluable and led to our early inspection where we found very similar concerns and more, and are taking enforcement action...”
Using public experiences to improve services

We’ve shared many experiences with commissioners across Surrey and more than 100 directly with the CQC, all resulting from information shared by the public. To take just two examples:

- A relative shared serious concerns about the care of her elderly uncle on a ward at Epsom hospital and as a result the regulator investigated and the commissioner visited.
- We reported what we’d heard about a lack of wheelchairs at Ashford hospital, and new wheelchairs have now been ordered.

Improvements to GP booking system

Patients told us about problems in booking appointments at one particular GP surgery, where the system had recently changed. We escalated this to NHS England and as a result improvements have been made. NHS England said: “thank you for drawing the patients’ concerns to our attention so that we can follow these issues up with the practice”

To find out more visit www.healthwatchsurrey.co.uk or call us on 0303 303 0023

Liberty Link 2007-2017 - A fond farewell

A quick something from Liberty Link’s editor:

“It has been my absolute pleasure to be Liberty Link’s editor since Winter 2012. From our big features like the Independent Living Fair in 2015, to the size change to A5, to me searching for and creating regular sections like our ILA’s Call to Duty and carer’s Pugsley’s Patch sections, I have thoroughly enjoyed my time creating this newsletter for all of you. Unfortunately due to funding cuts, we must make some sacrifices, and ending our production of Liberty Link is one of those sacrifices. We will continue to update our website with upcoming news and events in addition to expanding our Q&A section.”

Doug Payne
Communications Officer, SILC