

January 2010

# Press releases



**self**unlimited

Choices for people with learning disabilities

# News Release

Immediate

19 October 2009

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## National Charity Calls For Action On Down's Dementia

A leading charity has backed calls for a national response to the growing number of people with Down's syndrome who have dementia.

There are 40,000 people in the UK with Down's syndrome, and experts say up to half of those in their 50s may have Alzheimer's disease, as they are prone to the condition earlier than others.

Self Unlimited – the charity for people with learning disabilities - wants the issue to be given more prominence in national plans for dementia care. Campaigners say the issue was barely mentioned in the Government's latest green paper on the subject.

The charity, whose headquarters are in Leicestershire, provides services to people with learning disabilities across England, including special units for people with dementia, and is planning to build more as part of a national restructuring of services over the next three years.

But it says the growth in cases of dementia among people with Down's syndrome needs more recognition by policymakers and more funding from Government. Lack of funding for specialist services in this area can mean that younger adults with learning disabilities who develop dementia are placed in older people's homes due to financial pressures as opposed to this being an appropriate solution to their needs.

Self Unlimited led a Lottery-funded research project which concluded in supporting the assertion that there needs to be specialist approaches to providing care to this especially vulnerable group of people. Patrick Wallace, Self Unlimited's chief executive, said: "This is a significant issue that deserves greater recognition. Providing the right kind of care for the growing number of people with Down's syndrome developing dementia is a challenge for everyone in this sector. It's an important part of our plans to provide services that meet the individual needs of people with learning disabilities. So, of course, we would love to see more attention, and more investment, in this area."

Care services minister Phil Hope has been reported as saying the green paper did look at the problem, and that plans to redesign the care system would benefit people with Down's syndrome as much as any other group.

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For further information

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date: 28<sup>th</sup> October 2009

# press information

## Charity Gift Fayre

Self Unlimited is holding a Christmas Gift Fayre at its Blackerton centre, near East Anstey, on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> November, with all money raised going towards the provision of its vital services.

The South West services of Self Unlimited, based at Blackerton, is one of eight regional bases across England that offer housing, occupation and employment opportunities for adults with learning disabilities. Self Unlimited aims to maximise choice and opportunities and provide support to enable people to take as much control in their lives as possible and to strive towards achieving personal goals.

The Gift Fayre, which commences at 10.00am and finishes at 4.00pm, promises to be an enjoyable event, with a number of stalls selling Christmas cards and other locally produced arts and crafts on show,

Admission is free whilst tea/coffee and other refreshments will be available for purchase.

For further information on the event, please contact Sylvia Boyles on 01398 341252 / 341292 during office hours.

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## **Rise in Down's pregnancies raises questions about how society treats people with learning disabilities**

A leading national charity hopes news of a steep rise in Down's syndrome pregnancies will prompt a debate about how Britain treats people with learning disabilities. The number of such pregnancies has risen by more than 70% in the last 20 years but nine out of ten are terminated.

Self Unlimited – the charity for people with learning disabilities – says people with Down's Syndrome now live longer, healthier and happier lives. It says this is partly thanks to medical science but in large part due to the work of organisations such as Self Unlimited. The charity provides and is developing a further range of services so that people with learning disabilities can live within local communities, rather than in specific, isolated communities.

Self Unlimited says too few people understand that people with learning disabilities, such as Down's syndrome, are able to live happy, safe and fulfilled lives and be part of society. It hopes the news that Down's syndrome pregnancies have risen from 1,075 diagnoses in 1990 to 1,843 in 2008 will highlight the issue of social care for people with learning disabilities and prompt a debate.

The charity says it has huge concerns that constraints on funding from national and local government is making it increasingly difficult for it to meet the demands of today's people with learning disabilities and in the future.

The rise in Down's pregnancies is mainly due to increasing maternal age, but the number of Down's syndrome babies fell by one per cent, due to improved antenatal screening with nine out of ten families opting to terminate Down's pregnancies. Campaigners say families undergoing screening during pregnancy should be given non-directive counselling and accurate, up-to-date information about Down's syndrome.

Patrick Wallace, Self Unlimited's chief executive, said: "This is a sensitive issue, and I think it raises the wider question about how we treat people with learning disabilities in our society today. That's something that certainly would benefit from being debated. Our charity works to provide people with learning disabilities with whatever level of support they need, from a full-time care worker to helping them to find work. I think this latest news about Down's syndrome pregnancies raises questions about whether or not our society yet believes people with learning disabilities can live worthwhile lives in Britain today. We certainly know and believe that to be absolutely true, and we are very concerned that national and local government should invest sufficiently in this area so that everyone with learning disabilities can have the services they need to live happy, safe and fulfilled lives as part of our society.

The Leicestershire based charity provides services to people with learning disabilities across England.

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date: 3 November 2009

**This document is for immediate release**

# press release

## **The Tamarisk Trusts joins forces with Self Unlimited**

The Tamarisk Trust is going to become part of the Self Unlimited Group; Self Unlimited is an established charity that provides services for people with learning disabilities in eight regions across the country.

Increasingly within the voluntary sector, charities are working together to pool their resources to bring maximum benefit to the people for whom they provide services. For organisations with very similar aims, the harsh economic climate and the open competition for both Government funding and charitable donations makes joint working a sensible and cost-effective solution.

Julie Riley, Chief Executive Officer of The Tamarisk Trust, sees the opportunities that joint working will bring. "By working together, the two organisations will be better able to provide an improved range of sustainable services and to reach out to far more people with learning disabilities in London.

"The Tamarisk Trust will retain its distinct local character and will continue to provide services as normal under the current name and charity number, but in future this will be as part of the Self Unlimited Group.

"The Tamarisk Trust will become the operating name of Self Unlimited in London. This is not a cost-cutting exercise, but an arrangement that will improve how we utilise our existing resources and, in due course, support an expansion of our service delivery".

The Boards of both organisations are working to formalise the governance structures, which it is anticipated will be achieved by the end of November 2009. The day-to-day operations of the new Self Unlimited Group will continue as a seamless transition is made and their operational teams begin to design and deliver services together into the future.

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# News Release

Immediate

3 November 2009

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## ***Fears over Government's New Budget System for Social Care***

A national charity says the Government must work harder to explain its new payment system for social care.

Self Unlimited - which supports people with learning disabilities - has raised concerns after research revealed more than 80% of care service users have little or no understanding of the Government's new personal budgets system for social care.

The system, which is being introduced over the next year, will give people entitled to social care a personal allowance to spend on the services they choose, rather than having them allocated by local authorities.

Patrick Wallace, Self Unlimited's chief executive, said: "These figures indicate that the Government has to do more to explain what's happening to the most important people, the service users.

"Local authorities and organisations such as Self Unlimited face a huge task preparing users for the shift to the system, and we are all anxious to avoid a difficult transition. We would welcome more Government support to explain what is happening to service users and what they need to do to ensure they get the care and support they need in future."

Of the 269 people questioned, 62% knew absolutely nothing about the new system. Among people with learning disabilities, the figure was 73%.

The research, carried out by think tank Demos and the Centre for Disability Research at Lancaster University, said local authorities need to be ready for a massive demand for personal assistants, education and leisure services, due to more than half of respondents wanting to change the care they currently receive in favour of such services.

Other services such as day centres – a key feature of Self Unlimited's plans for the future - are also high on people's wish lists.

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For further media information

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# News Release

Immediate

23<sup>rd</sup> November 2009

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## **National Charity Concerned Over Government's Social Care Plans**

A leading national charity for adults with learning disabilities has raised questions about Government plans to offer some disabled and elderly people free personal care.

Self Unlimited points out that just 128,000 people will qualify for the Government's new funding, announced in the Queen's speech, contrasting that with the 1 million-plus people in the UK with learning disabilities.

It says the plans to give free care to some people at home will divert cash from other services at a time when social care budgets are spiralling downwards, leading to reduced levels of service elsewhere. The charity says the bill fails to address the big issues affecting social care.

Patrick Wallace, Self Unlimited's chief executive, said: "We are happy that this Queen's Speech has put social care on the agenda, but there are far larger challenges to be faced than are covered in this bill.

"The Government is pressing forward with the personalisation agenda – tailoring social care services to the individual and providing more choice – and we support that, but it is putting huge pressure on the system at a time when money is particularly short.

"Local authorities are being forced to cut social care budgets drastically, some by as much as 20%. They will now be expected to find at least another £250 million each year to fund this new proposal, and they will not be able to do this without cutting funding in other areas of social care. The fear is that this bill could drain public resources without having a real effect on quality of life for the majority of people who need social care."

He pointed out that Self Unlimited, like other charities and organisations in the field, is undergoing huge transformations to adapt to the personalisation agenda. At the same time, they face reduced income from local authorities and greater difficulty securing funds from charitable donors due to the credit crunch. The charity is now looking for new ways to generate income so that it is less dependent on central funding.

Self Unlimited, whose headquarters are in Leicestershire, provides services to people with learning disabilities across England.

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For further information, contact

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# News Release

Immediate

26 November 2009

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## **National charity applauds lifting of Paralympic Intellectual Disability ban**

A leading national charity has welcomed the news that athletes with learning disabilities can once again take part in the Paralympics after the International Paralympic Committee voted to have a ban on them lifted.

Self Unlimited – the charity for people with learning disabilities, which supported this year’s Leicester-based Special Olympics - is delighted that people with learning disabilities are again able to compete in the Paralympics.

But it says they need more funding if they are going to be able to compete on the world stage.

Earlier this year, members of the successful East Midlands Cycling Team, who all use services provided by Self Unlimited, took to the track in the Special Olympics, a national competition specifically for people with learning disabilities.

The end of the Paralympics ban opens the door for athletes like them to attempt to qualify for the bigger stage of the Paralympics, which has a growing worldwide audience.

Patrick Wallace, chief executive, said: “This is fantastic news for people with learning disabilities, and allows those who have exceptional talent in the sporting world to show off their ability in a high profile, international event where athletes are increasingly recognised for their abilities, not their disabilities. We would be delighted to see participants in the Special Olympics go on to compete in the Paralympics, and to shine on the world stage.

“Self Unlimited is committed to giving people the opportunity and support they need to live fulfilling lives, and sport can play a big part in that.”

“At long last there’s some kind of parity for learning-disabled athletes who can meet the Paralympics standard and it is another important step forward to creating a fully inclusive sports system. A number of athletes who starred at this summer’s Special Olympics in Leicester might now fulfill a dream of playing at the highest level of sport. The re-inclusion of people with learning disabilities in the London 2012 Paralympics will build on the work of the Special Olympics and accelerate awareness and understanding of people with learning disabilities. We hope athletes

with learning disabilities can now benefit from the same level of support afforded to other Paralympic athletes, which has been denied for the past nine years.

“Ever since Sydney 2000, they have been excluded from the Paralympic Games, which has prevented talented sportsmen and women having access to much needed resources and the opportunity to fulfill their sporting ambitions. The success of the nationals in Leicester, including the very high standard of competition, has provided a timely reminder to us all that athletes with learning disabilities have more than earned the right to compete on the world's biggest sporting stage.”

The charity is calling for more funding, warning that unless it is made available, athletes will not be ready to compete at the London 2012 Games and will remain excluded despite the ban being lifted.

The ban on athletes with intellectual disabilities had been in place since it was found that most of Spain's intellectual disability basketball team at the 2000 Sydney Paralympics were not disabled.

As a result, “sports intelligence” tests will form part of the new, more rigorous classification process.

Tessa Jowell, Minister for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, was reported by the BBC as commenting: “I've been involved in this campaign for the last four years so I know it wasn't a simple decision. But nobody who's been at the Special Olympics would doubt that its competitors are every bit as committed as the Paralympians.”

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# PRESS RELEASE and Invitation to Press

**For immediate release**

Date: 6 October 2009

## ‘Voices of Tomorrow’

**Community for All 2009**

**The Alexandra Suite, St Mary’s Road, Swanley, Kent**

**6.30 until 9.00 pm**

Jonathan Shaw MP, Minister for Disabled People and Minister for the South East, will be speaking at the Sevenoaks District Partnership Group’s *Community for All* event ‘**Voices of Tomorrow**’ at the Alexandra Suite in Swanley on Tuesday 13 October. Attendance has been so oversubscribed that places have been awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

Each year, the District Partnership Group plans and delivers a high profile event for mainstream community leaders to promote and celebrate the work being achieved locally towards the establishment of a truly inclusive community for everyone. Guests represent all areas of civic life, including business, faith, sports and leisure, and town and district councils.

The ‘Community for All’ events showcase the contribution that people with learning disabilities make to their local communities, as well as raise awareness of the difficulties that many face in their day to day lives. Community leaders are encouraged to involve people with learning disabilities far more in their strategic planning processes, while the important steps that many have already taken to embrace inclusive practices within their own working environment receive well deserved recognition.

‘**Voices of Tomorrow**’ will focus on young people, what they consider inclusion is about, and why they feel it is important. As well as a steel-drumming performance by local people of all ages, a representative from Lloyds TSB will present the Lloyds TSB Sevenoaks District Partnership awards to organisations and individuals who, throughout 2009, have strived to help create a welcoming and inclusive district community.

Last year’s overall winners were Kent Police for their work involving people with learning disabilities - for including individuals in the roll out of their race and diversity programme at the Police Training College and for their local ‘on the street’ support.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Sevenoaks District Partnership Group is one of twelve groups set up by the Kent Partnership Board for people with learning disabilities to work towards the Government’s vision of *rights, choice, independence* and *social inclusion* within local communities.

Members of the Sevenoaks Partnership Group include self advocates, families, community groups and support agencies such as the YMCA, Self Unlimited, Mencap, Values Incorporated and Voluntary Action within Kent. They have been working together over several years within local communities across the district to ensure that people with learning disabilities are fully included in all aspects of civic life. The title given to their collective work is ‘Community for All’.

Their achievements were recognised in 2007/8 by the Group being given the Kent County Councils Strategic Managers’ Award for contribution to partnership work and the community. They were also privileged to be asked to speak at last year’s Learning Disability Today Conference on the subject of ‘Community Inclusion’ and have shared lessons learnt from their work with colleagues in the USA and Australia.

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