WEST LOTHIAN SERVICE USERS NEWSLETTER

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Hi! My name is Claire.

Welcome to my Newsletter!

I am a service user with a severe and enduring mental health problem, and I produce Newsletters to help share information about issues people may experience and support available in the West Lothian community.

I am a volunteer for the Mental Health Advocacy Project (MHAP) and a member of their Management Committee. I enjoy researching news and services. If you have any ideas, you think may be of interest for future Newsletters, or if you have details about a local service, please contact MHAP on 01506 857230 or email admin@mhap.org.uk

Health

Heatwaves and mental health



It is important to know that hot weather can have an impact on not only our physical but our mental health as well. It may therefore disrupt our sleep leaving you tired. You may also find it hard to concentrate. If you are already stressed and anxious things may become too much to cope with. You must take care of yourself when it is hot. Part of this is to stay hydrated during the day as if you do become dehydrated you may develop headaches and feel fatigued. As heat can affect your energy levels you should rest if you feel you need to. For your overall wellbeing try and stay connected with family and friends. It is the case that certain medications which includes some antidepressants, antipsychotics and anti-anxiety medications can have an impact on how the body controls temperature in addition to affecting sweating and the bodies response to dehydration. The result may be that you overheat more easily and any side effects that you may experience due to your medication may become more noticeable. In particular if you take Lithium and become dehydrated it can affect levels of Lithium in the body.

You should remember that extreme heat can affect some medicines so be careful that you store them correctly. You must continue to take your medications when it is hot so

don’t stop any medications without contacting your GP, pharmacist or healthcare professional. They are there for advice and support.

New weight management scheme



There is a new weight management scheme across the Lothian area which will help thousands of people. £8 million is being spent to provide the service. There will now be better access to support for weight management, and this is part of the Obesity pathway innovation programme (OPIP). A total of £16 million has been secured for the OPIP across Scottish health boards. These new programmes are being delivered in partnership with the Defence medical command, the Digital health and care innovation centre and Edinburgh Napier University. The new Limitless programme is for people who live in the Lothians. There is also a Stride programme specially for armed forces personnel and their families. With both these programmes there will be access to an app which offer support

from healthcare professionals, community services and specialist teams with the aim to improve weight management and overall health.

There is the plan to deliver Limitless and Stride programmes across Scotland and for it to become a standard for people looking to manage their weight. It hopes to reduce waiting times for support and allow access to safe, person-centred care. For the Limitless programme, over the next three years aiming to reach 10,000 patients across the Lothians. For both programmes there will be faster access for type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure. It is the case that around 1 in 3 adults in Scotland suffer from obesity. Over the past 10 years there has been a 40% increase in type 2 diabetes, and the figure is higher in deprived areas. Care provided will include digital support, psychological screening, rehabilitation and fitness assessments.

Local News

The Ootsider social enterprise



West Lothian social enterprise the Ootsider is based in Pumpherston. It makes outdoor coats and changing robes which have been extremely popular with campers, wild swimmers and hillwalkers. New items being made include wheelchair coats and Parkinson's jackets. It also helps the homeless. Recently after a donation of £4,000 25 extra outdoor coats are to be made for rough sleepers. They function as a coat and bag during the day to a sleeping bag at night. In addition, with profits from the community interest company more sleeping coats have been made and donated to the homeless.

New airport link for West Lothian



In July a new bus route was introduced from West Lothian to Edinburgh airport. The all -electric bus operator is Ember and will run the service from Livingston bus station and Edinburgh airport. This will run every 20 minutes from stop E and it will take between 34 and 51 minutes. It will stop across Livingston, Uphall, Broxburn, Newbridge, Mid Calder, East Calder, Calderwood, Wilkieston and Ratho.

You will be able to purchase your ticket online. An adult single from Livingston bus station and Edinburgh airport costs £4.45. Ember buses have Wi-Fi, onboard toilets and wheelchair space which can be accessed via a lift. If you have a Scottish bus pass you can travel for free. You will be able apply for a bus pass if you are aged 5-21 years, are over 60 or have a disability. You can still book online for free as a concession and present your bus pass on the day. Also, pets are welcome.

Third sector services in West Lothian

This year there is an increasing demand for third sector services in West Lothian with less money available. West Lothian Council's voluntary organisation budget has been the same at around £944,000 for several years. Most of this budget goes towards council services with £360,000 made available for charities. This year there has been over £1 million of applications for the fund. It is vital therefore that more investment is needed to keep and expand services. These services help vulnerable residents, tackle poverty and isolation and improving health and wellbeing. A total of 43 charities applied for funding with only 16 being awarded any money. 43 applications received totalling £1,234,652,91 with the budget available being £362,613. Applications were assessed by a panel with representation from NHS, Voluntary Sector Gateway and a range of council services including anti-poverty and Business Gateway. Ten of the rejected organisations engaged for one-to-one feedback from officers.

Five services were funded a total of £569,467 in service level agreements. They are as follows;

- West Lothian Action Project £190,000
- HcL Transport £82,119
- VSG £63,770
- Citizen's advice Bureau £76,266

- Linlithgow Heritage trust &
  Bennie museum £6,1170

Pilot project to help blind bus passengers



There has been a new pilot project in West Lothian aiming to help blind bus passengers. It was introduced in December last year and has been hailed a great success. The project involved a collaboration between West Lothian council, Lothian country and sight Scotland veterans. It aimed at helping Linburn centre residents. Blind travellers would be able to access public transport information to assist them to travel to Livingston shopping centre and wider destinations. This involved using NaviLens technology which is a first for Scotland. West Lothian council has now installed new NaviLens codes at bus stops in Wilkieston and Livingston bus terminal. These codes are interactive colourful QR codes that blind or partially sighted users can scan with their smartphones. They will have real-time audio with transport information such as bus services and estimated time of arrival. It also provides information on local facilities making it easier to find their way around.

Drummond Miller's office – law firm



The Bathgate office for Drummond Miller's has reopened after being refurbished following a flood. It will be restarting it's family law drop-in clinics which provides free legal support and guidance on a range of issues, including separation, divorce and child law. They will be held every second Wednesday from 4-5pm, last entry at 4.45pm. Drummond Miller has a long history in Bathgate, and the refurbished site creates a modern and welcoming space for clients. You can call the Bathgate office on 01506 656 645

Their website is www.drummondmiller.co.uk

Support services/Groups

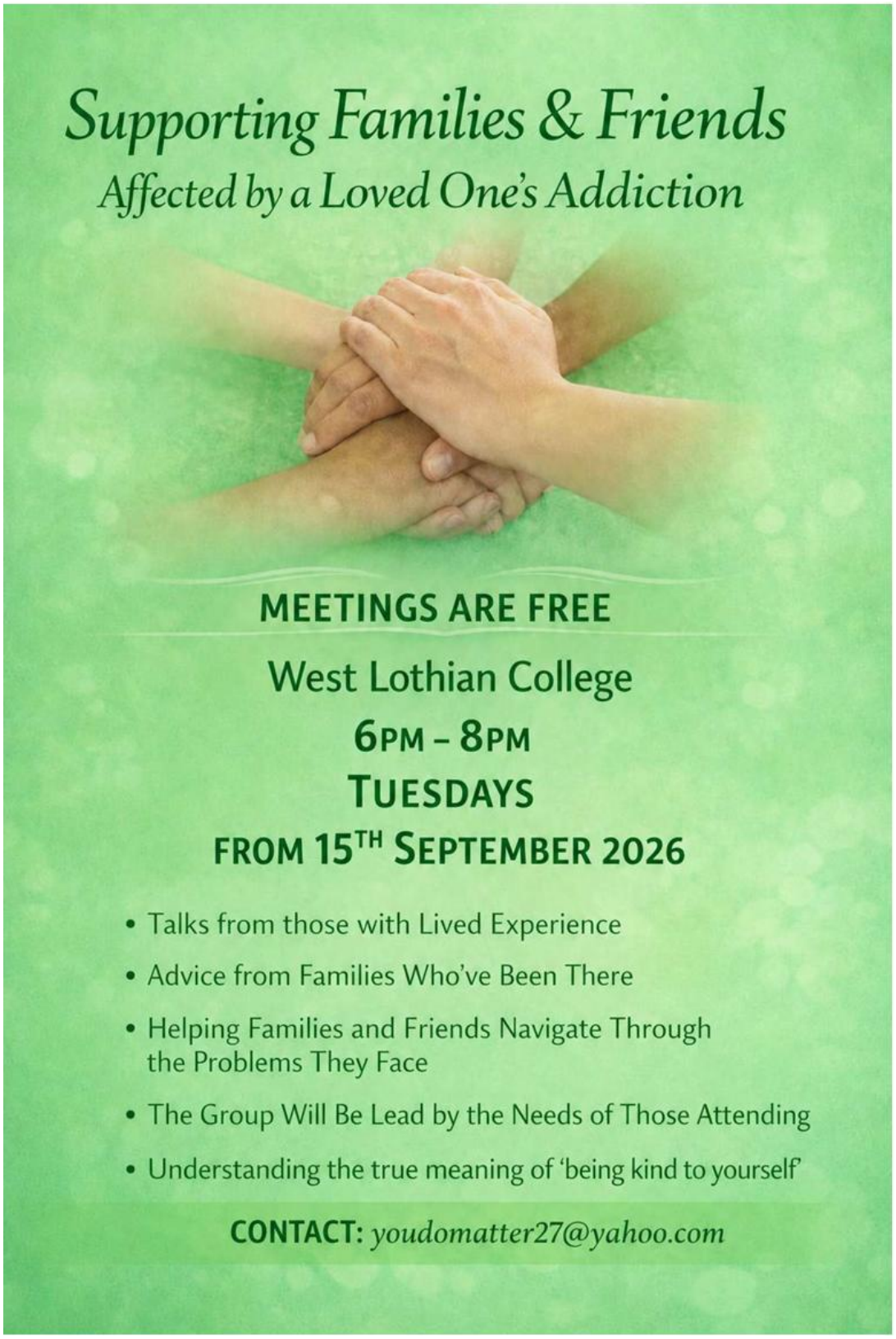
New advocacy service for West Lothian



A new initiative has been launched in West Lothian which will offer a free advocacy service to the public. It has been made possible through a partnership between the Scottish Library and information council (SLIC) and Advice Direct Scotland, a national charity. This new face-to-face service will be available at Almondbank library, Bathgate Library, Broxburn Library and West Calder library. There will be trained advocates from Advocacy.scot – run by Advice Direct Scotland. They will offer help with applying for Social security benefits; indeed, some people may not be able to access online services.

The aim is to encourage people to use their local libraries and access not only books, but digital resources, learning opportunities and community activities. For more information visit www.advocacy.scot or call 0808 196 8901.

Addiction support



The Vennie, Knightsridge



The Vennie, Knightsridge allows children from age 5 and teenagers to explore a wide range of interests and skills and reach their full potential. They will have the opportunity to socialise, learn and grow. Activities include weekly clubs, events, delicious food and a community garden. You can visit the website for schedules and to book. You may be interested in sports, arts and crafts, music or just socialising. There is also a bike lending library where families can borrow bikes.

Tuesday	5-7pm Boy's club	
Wednesday	5-7pm Creative Horizon	
Thursday	5-7pm Girls club	
Friday	session 1	2-4pm 5-10years
	Session 2	4-6pm 11+years

For more information you can contact the Vennie on 01506 376463 or email: admin@thevennie.com

West Lothian Schoolbank

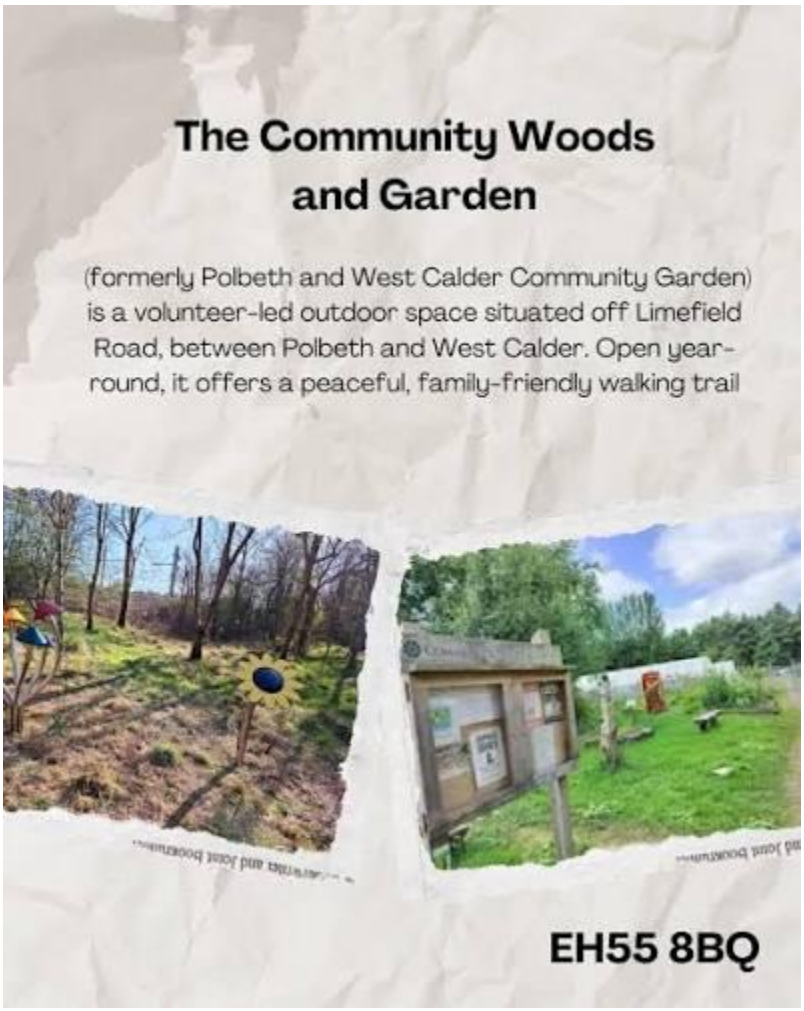


West Lothian schoolbank provides families in need with a new school uniform and any other clothing and equipment needed for the school day. A referral is required from professionals, headteachers, social workers, and West Lothian council and the Advice shop. To find out how to make clothing donations you can visit the how you can help page on the website. There is also a drop-off points page for a list of locations in West Lothian making clothing donations. Every year there is a summer school uniform donation appeal from May-August every year. This asks the public to donate a uniform pack (typically 3-6 items) for a child. You can register via the school banks Facebook page or via email. admin@schoolbank-westlothian.org There is a sponsor a child sign up form, and you can scan to access this on the website.

If you want to help you have the option of filling a bag with essential items to a value of £15. There is a list on the website which includes white polo shirts, socks, tights and hygiene products. For any questions you can email the schoolbank.

You can drop off items at Dyrburgh House, Kirkton Campus, 3 Meikle Road, Livingston EH54 7OE.

West Lothian sustainability projects



There are two sustainability projects that operate across two locations in West Lothian, Polbeth community hub in the village hall and the community woods and garden, near Parkhead farm, West Calder. In the village hall there is a sustainable fashion initiative and a community shop that redistributes local produce and surplus food. The fashion initiative is funded through the Pates Hill wind farm community benefit fund. The community gardens were created in 2013 which developed a green space for local children to access. There is now woodland trails, a growing space and community workshop. There are two permanent part-time staff members for the projects that co-ordinate volunteers. Those attending the projects get to spend time with others, learn new skills, grow their own food and can purchase affordable goods including clothing and books. Accessing green space can also improve wellbeing.

Opening hours

Community woods and garden, Polbeth and West Calder – Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 9-4pm closed Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Polbeth community hub – Mon-Friday 10-3pm. Closed weekends.

Community shop and fridge – Tuesdays-Thursdays 10-2pm. Fridays 9-12pm.

How to volunteer- Typical roles include

Sustainable fashion and recycling (Polbeth community hub)

Textile and fashion volunteer

Sort, checking quality and preparing clothing stock on Mondays.

Community fridge and shop assistant

Help organise and distribute surplus food.

Event supporter

Help setting up eco-fairs and community reuse events.

Garden and woodland sustainability (West Calder and Harburn CDT) Roles available include;

Hands-on environmental work like organic food growing, Maintain vegetable beds and gardens and harvest fresh fruit and vegetables to supply local community cafes.

Path maintenance or woodworking. Learn to build sheds, planters and items out of reclaimed timber. You will join the outdoor team.

To apply visit the Community woods and garden volunteer page and contact their co-ordinator.

Age requirements. You must be 16 years or over to volunteer. For 14 to 15 year olds Youth volunteering is often supported for specific local projects or school initiatives such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award. This must be arranged in advance.

Under 14s cannot volunteer independently but there are community planting days or weekend eco-events at the garden. The child must be accompanied and supervised by a parent or legal guardian.

Volunteering

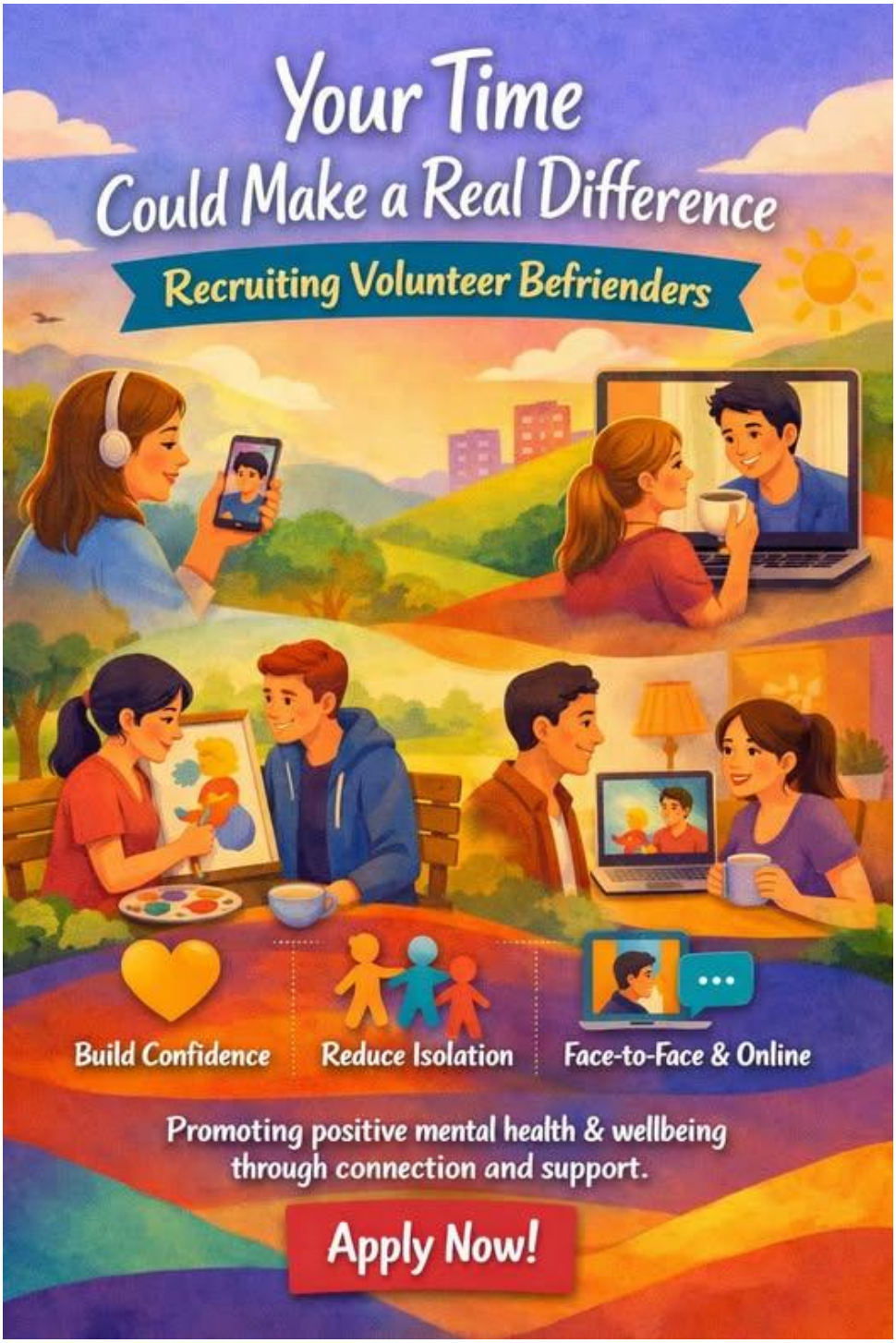
Lanthorn Food Project



West Lothian Youth Action Project community garden



Volunteer Befrienders wanted for West Lothian Youth Action Project



If you would like more information, you can read the full pack and apply at the following link:

https://www.wlyap.org.uk/integr8-befriending-service

Benefits

Energy information



In the UK, millions of households have energy bills left unpaid. There is a total debt of £4.79 billion and from July the cost of energy has increased further. This means more people will be at greater risk of financial hardship. For England, Wales and Scotland Ofgem data indicates that more people are in debt which amounts to 15% of customers. These figures are for customers who have been in debt for over 3 months. For customers who are struggling paying for their energy they can agree to a repayment plan which can write off any debt or help with purchasing household appliances such as fridges and washing machines.

Around 22 million energy customers which amounts to around 40% of bill payers are on fixed energy tariffs. This means a person will pay a fixed unit price for electricity and gas usually for a year. However, the exact amount you pay still depends on how much energy you use. In addition, if the energy price falls you will not benefit if you are on a fixed energy tariff. Changes in how you pay for your energy and being more energy efficient may reduce your bills. Ofgem has reported that those customers that receive quarterly energy bills rather than via direct debit will usually pay around £140 more every year. Around 7 million households still use this payment method. You can save energy by improving draught protection, changing your cooking habits, bleeding your radiators and spending less time in the shower.

Energy support



You can set up a suitable payment plan or arrange temporary credit on prepayment meters. You may qualify each year from the £150 warm home discount scheme or secure a grant from the British Gas energy trust. You have the option of contacting West Lothian council about the Scottish welfare fund (crisis grants), household support or cost of living funds. Home energy Scotland give free advice on energy efficiency, grants and interest free loans for things like insulation and boiler upgrades. You can visit www.homeenergyscotland.org or call 0808 808 2282.

Advice direct Scotland is a free service providing tailored support and debt advice for those living in Scotland. You can access support via the Advice direct Scotland portal or call 0808 196 8660. If you are in debt there is free, impartial debt advice from Citizen's Advice Scotland. For extra support there is tailored billing, accessible prepayment meters and advance warning of power cuts.

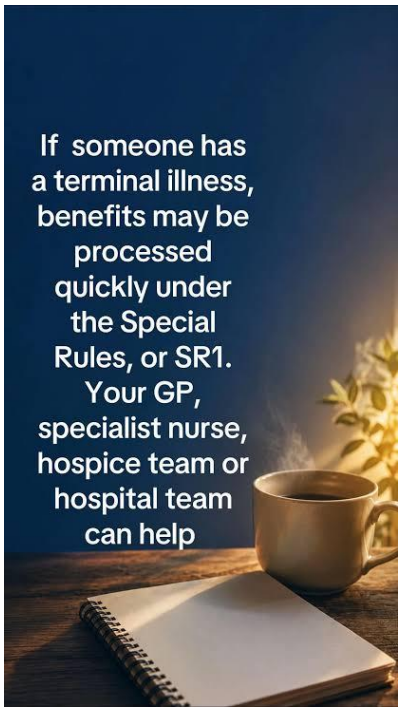
Pension boost for grandparents



Grandparents are now able to boost their state pension by £359 each year by helping with childcare for the under twelves. By doing this they will be able to apply for free credits. Parents must first confirm that care was provided. In addition, there is no minimum hours of care that are required. Credits are called specified adult childcare credits. Between 2016 and 2025 there were 160,000 successful claims made from grandparents or other family members. The parents themselves must be working so they would not need credits from child benefit to go towards their own state pensions. So, you would get £6.90 a week, or £359 a year. The credits can be claimed back to 2011. This is really

helpful if you are short of the minimum 10years required for any state pension or under 35 years needed to get the full rate.

DWP special rules for end of life



The DWP has special rules for end of life, or SREL. This means people with a terminal diagnosis can skip assessments as well as waiting periods and other criteria required for benefit applications. This is not the case for pension payments. At the moment you cannot claim your pension before your state pension age. These special rules mean you can get quick and easy access to PIP, ESA, UC and Attendance allowance without needing a medical assessment. Currently, you must have an illness that will worsen over time, or your Doctor or medical profession has said you may have 12 months or less to live. If it is not known how long you may live you can ask your medical professional to support your benefits claim. It is possible to defer your state pension until a later date which would increase your payments but there are financial risks involved. You need to defer for a minimum of nine weeks to get increased payments later. If you do not claim your pension, it is automatically deferred.

General News

Mobile phones in West Lothian schools

It has been decided to not introduce a complete ban on mobile phones in West Lothian schools. They will be introducing responsible use of mobiles in class and out. This will be reviewed by December when proposals by the Scottish government will be announced. The EIS has stated that the policy was not going far enough and there was more needing to be done to protect the mental health of pupils.

Across West Lothian mobile phone use is managed via responsible use agreements, teacher led use and that phones are out of sight during class. Positive relationship guidance will be implemented and exemptions for medical, accessibility and additional support needs. Case studies and consultation shows that there are many practices already established in West Lothian, but they require more clarity and consistency. Most bullying takes place during break times at school when pupils are able to access their phones. Pupils have said that the use of mobile phones should be teacher led.

Social media curfew for 16 and 17 year olds.



16 and 17 year olds from next spring will be blocked from using certain apps from midnight to 6am. This is being introduced to protect young people from online harm, including poor sleep. However, this curfew will not be mandatory. Last month an under 16 social media ban was announced. This included introduction of restrictions on platforms like Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and X.

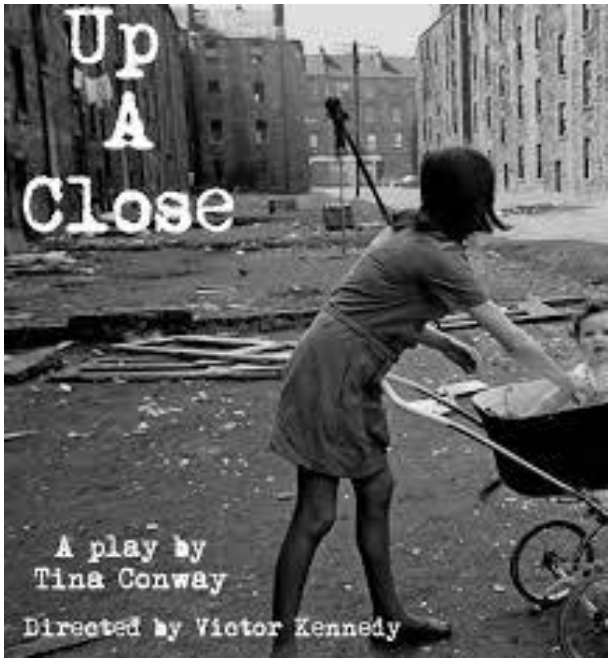
A public consultation had shown that that as young people gain greater independence as they turn 16, parents and children still want to be protected from the most addictive online features that can harm their wellbeing. It is vital that young people get enough sleep and are able to focus on school and college and spend time with family and friends.

People are also campaigning for the government to introduce greater protections for undern 18's using chatbots. At the moment there are only plans for taking regular breaks.

Research company Savanta in May tested three different social media restrictions, rationing to 15 minutes a day, a no-access curfew from 9pm to 7am and a complete deletion of social media apps. Curfews were found to have the strongest benefit to sleep quality. Young people reported they went to bed earlier, had better concentration in lessons, felt less stress and interacted more with their families. Curfews meant however that some children felt isolated and cut off from friendships due to them being unable to use platforms such as snapchat. Some also reported feeling irritable with fluctuations in their mood.

Events

Howden Park centre "Up a close"



The play "Up a close" is showing at Howden Park centre in Livingston on Wednesday, 9th September. It was written by Tina Conway and explores life in Glasgow from A female perspective in the late 20th century. "Up a close" is Tina Conways first play. She has a background in Glasgow and has many memories to draw on for inspiration.

There are two showings on Wednesday 9th September at 2.30pm and 7.30pm. A standard ticket costs £21 + Booking fee and concession tickets cost £19 + Booking fee.

You can book via boxoffice@reconnectcharity.com or call 01506 340700.

West Lothian mental health day



Carers of West Lothian Cold water therapy session



Carers of West Lothian is offering a cold water therapy and outdoor swimming introductory session. It is on the 20th August from 10-11.30am. It allows those taking part to experience the benefits of swimming in cold water. It is taking place at Avon Lagoon, Linlithgow. You will need to have good mobility to access the lagoon, and you must complete a risk assessment and medical form. You will require your swim clothes, old shoes, towel and warm clothing. Tow floats and gloves are provided. You can book your place via the Eventbrite website. www.eventbrite.co.uk For additional information on the cold water therapist visit www.thecoldwatertherapist.co.uk

Guided tours of Queensferry crossing



Fauldhouse fair



Whitney Houston tribute





Useful contacts

Advice Direct Scotland	0808 196 8660 www.advicedirect.scot
Advice shop	01506 283000 www.westlothian.gov.uk
Advocacy.scot	0808 196 8901
Breathing Space	0800 83 85 87 www.breathingspace.scot
British gas energy trust	01733421021 www.britishgas.co.uk
Carers of West Lothian	01506 448000 www.carers-westlothian.com
Citizens Advice Bureau	01506 432 977 www.cabwestlothian.org.uk
Community woods & Garden Falkirk & West Calder	01506 872 931 www.communitywoodsandgarden.co.uk
West Lothian Council	01506 280000 www.westlothian.gov.uk
Drummond Miller	01506 656645 www.drummondmiller.co.uk
Ember buses	0131 510 4007 www.ember.to
Fauldhouse community dev. Centre	01501 773 699 www.fauldhouse.org.uk
Home energy Scotland	0808 808 2282 www.homeenergyScotland.org
Ootsider	7825 230966 www.theootsider.co.uk
Samaritans	116 123 www.samaritans.org
West Lothian Schoolbank	www.schoolbank-westlothian.org
West Lothian youth action project	01506 431430 www.wlyap.org.uk
Westspace West Lothian	www.westspace.org.uk
Whitney Houston tribute	0131 220 4348 www.boxoffice.concertsbycandlelight.com
Voluntary Sector Gateway	01506 650 111 www.voluntarysectorgateway.org