WEST LOTHIAN SERVICE USERS NEWSLETTER

Health	Page
Digital and social care app	2-3
MHO's in West Lothian	3-4
West Lothian overdose alert	4-5
Support Services/Groups	
CAB Advice	6
MC flyer	7
Support for carers	8-9
Nicola's charity	9-10
Depression resour.	10
Braid house	11
Spark charity	11-12
Rainbow Rascals	12-13
Breakfast club	13
Mind and media	14
W.Lothian 50+ Net.	15
General news	
Driving update	16-17
Local news	
New Gov. scheme	18
Pothole information	18
Grant scheme	19-20
W.L Clothing bank	20
Sentinel study	21
Benefits	
New energy supp.	22
Benefit changes	22-23
State pension info.	24
Local Groups/Events	
CoWL Festival	25
Ratho canal cruises	26
JLS Live Falkirk	26-27
CoWL coldwater swimm.	27
The Larder Live music	28
VSG fair	29

Hi! My name is Claire.

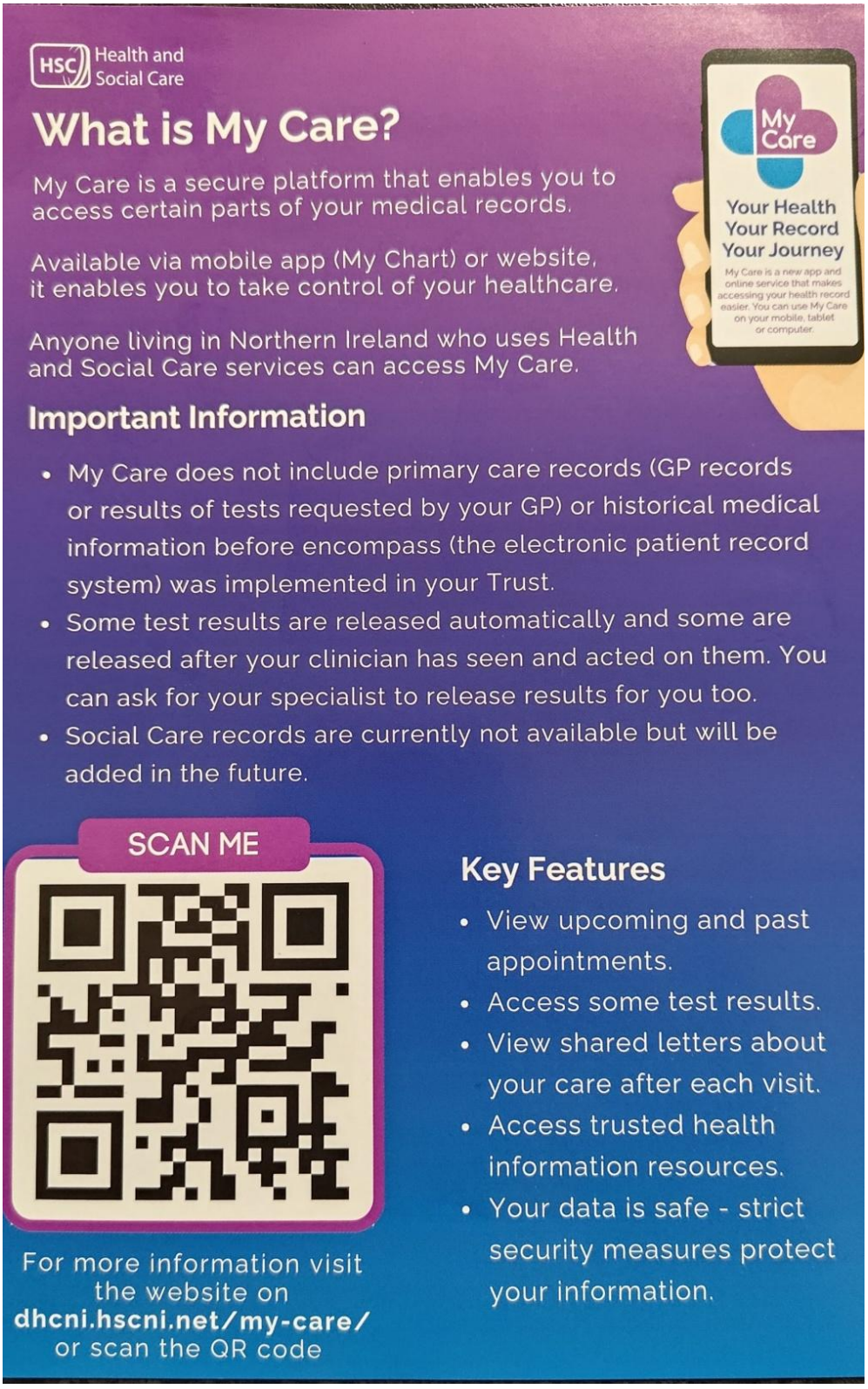
Welcome to my Newsletter!

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

Digital and social care app



In April this year a new online digital and social care app was launched in Scotland called mycare.scot It allows you to access your health records securely, lets you view appointments, digital letters, vaccination records and medication information. In the future people will be able to book appointments, access test results and integration with GP services and social care. This app is part of a phased digital front door programme. To get started with mycare.scot you need a ScotAccount which lets you access public online services safely and will allow you to create your profile. To do this you must verify your identity, either with a valid photo ID or answering personal security questions. Next, select to share your details to create your mycare.scot profile.

To verify your identity, you will require.

- Your email address
- Your phone number
- A valid photo ID
- Access to a mobile phone, tablet or computer with a camera

mycare.scot support and information. Contact the national contact centre on 0800 030 8014. For more information visit www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/mycare

MHO's in West Lothian

The ageing population in West Lothian means that there is an increasing demand for mental health officers (MHO's). MHO's are qualified social workers who work with and ensure the rights of people affected by worsening mental health. The council must provide these officers to administer guardianships. These are appointed by the court to allow decisions to be made regarding personal, medical and care to adults (16+) who are not able to do so themselves due to incapacity. These powers may be given to a family member, friends or local authorities. MHO's in West Lothian also supervise appointed guardians as well as carrying out duties on behalf of the chief social work officer when the local authority is the welfare guardian. Currently there are around 510 active welfare guardianship orders in West Lothian. 430 are held by private individuals and 80 by the chief social work officer. In West Lothian at the moment there is a manager, 10 MHO's and one community care assistant. The team also has an MHO in the integrated discharge hub at St. John's which deals with applications for welfare guardian ship required to allow discharge from hospital. There are 6 MHO's who undertake MHO duties under the Mental health act as well as their role as Team managers and social workers within various practice teams across the council. There is a social care emergency team (SCET) which carries out duties out of hours and at weekends. There are 3 MHO's employed by the (SCET) with a number of locum/supply MHO's also providing cover. Just now there is no waiting list for allocation of officers but there is still the need for more

investment in planning the workforce and development of services. Information for this article sourced from www.dailyrecord.co.uk

West Lothian overdose alert



Currently there is an increase in overdoses in the area. Incidents recorded were found to be linked to heroin and benzodiazepines. In addition, the presence of opioids such as nitazines which increase the risk of overdose. These substances can cause sudden collapse, particularly if injected or smoked. You can spot the signs of overdose, and these include seizures or fits, blue or pale lips and slow or noisy breathing. You must call 999 if you suspect overdose and administer naloxone if it is available which can save lives.

For local support or to access naloxone you can contact the West Lothian recovery service. You can call 01506 353453 or visit the office in South Bridge Street, Bathgate. The service offers a community-based rehabilitation programme called Foundations of recovery. It consists of group and individual sessions. You will learn how to manage cravings, cope with stress and maintaining your recovery. In addition, you will be able to

access volunteering, education and employment opportunities. On the website you can get more information on what is available near you. Visit www.changegrowlive.org

West Lothian drug and alcohol service

Same day prescribing clinics are delivered by the West Lothian drug and alcohol service (WLDAS) at locations throughout the county. The following drop-ins are available.

- Monday 9-12 Bathgate health centre
- Tuesday 1-4pm Howden health centre
- Wednesday 1-4pm Strathbrock health centre, Broxburn
- Thursday 11.30-2.30pm Whitburn health centre
- Friday 9-12 Blackburn health centre

Clinics offer access to treatment and support for opiate use. Note that on the day prescribing is for opiate use only. If you are wanting help for alcohol use this will be assessed at drop-ins on the day, but you will not start detox or medication at the first meeting. For more information call 01506 282 845. WLDAS offers services for both Adults and young people and also support families and carers affected by alcohol and drugs in West Lothian. These services are easy to access and are flexible and timely. WLDAS also offers art therapy. If you feel this could help you and want more information, contact 01506 430 225 or email enquiries@wldas.org You can visit the website at www.wldas.com

WLDAS is based in Sheil walk, Craigshill, Livingston. Counsellors at WLDAS see people via appointment only following a referral and a decision will be made on if this is the right service for the client. WLDAS will accept self-referrals from across West Lothian.

Support Services/Groups

Citizens Advice Bureau child maintenance advice

5



mhap
Mental Health Advocacy Project
(West Lothian) SCIO



MHAP is looking for new members to join its Management Committee.

This independent organisation is based in Broxburn Partnership centre and provides information and support for anyone with a mental health or addictions problem in West Lothian.

Peer support

Your opinion matters

Control stress & anxiety

Work with experienced professionals

Management Committee

Have a positive experience

Make a difference in your community

Build confidence & self esteem

build friendships

be a team player

For more information please

contact MHAP: Tel: 01506 857230 Website: www.mhapwl.org Email: admin@mhap.org.uk

OSCR Scottish Charity Regulator www.oscr.org.uk Registered Charity SC011560

MHAP is funded by West Lothian Council NHS SCOTLAND

Support for adult children carers

Caring for aging parents checklist



Provide your aging parents with the right support for them to enjoy a great quality of life in their own home for longer.



1 Involve your parents in the discussion

The earlier that you start talking about this, the more that many older people are accepting of some extra support.



2 Assess your older parent's needs and what they could need some support with

There may have been something that has sparked some changes in your elderly parent, such as a fall, or a medical condition worsening.



3 Consider what support you can offer personally

If you live locally to your parent, then it might be that you can take on some caring responsibilities yourself.

4 Look at how to help elderly parents from a distance

If you can't offer much support to your elderly parent personally, it's worth looking at how you can help from a distance.



5 Looking into caring for elderly parents and getting paid in the UK

There may be some financial help available from the government.



6 Look into paying for elderly care and any other benefits

Additionally, for the person doing the caring, other potential benefits for the aging parent might include attendance allowance.



7 Arranging professional care for your elderly parent

There are ample of options to consider when arranging professional care for your elderly parent.

8 Consider what else could provide peace of mind

A personal alarm with a panic button could also be a good option for reassurance that help is always on hand if needed.

Taking Care
Part of AXA Health



Support for adult children carers

Carents are offering a free eBook on looking after elderly parents. It allows you to plan ahead, reduce risks and to respond quickly when it matters. Other popular downloads include essential tips to plan for an emergency, Dementia care and COPD Toolkit. Visit the website to download for free at www.carents.co.uk You can also contact them hello@thecarentsroom.com . As well as eBooks there are toolkits, planners, checklists and research all offering support specifically for adult children who care for an ageing parent. You can also join the online community where you can access a network of other carents where you can share your journey and get support.

Nicola's charity



Nicolas charity supports women in West Lothian. It has been found that people with ADHD and autism benefit not only from specialist services but are also supported by other community opportunities such as those that Nicola's provides. They improve wellbeing and confidence as well as mental health. Physical exercise can also be extremely helpful as well as taking part in drama, art and music. Nicola's charity offers exercise such as yoga and nature walks as well as coffee mornings allowing people to connect. Ther are also hobby groups. The charity ensures people have access to the right support. You can call Nicolas charity on 01506 650111or visit their website at www.nicolas-supporting-women.com

Depression resource



ithrive Edinburgh has a depression resource. It consists of practical information and tools which includes;

- Factsheets Offering tips and information to help manage mood and boost wellbeing
- Worksheets and self-help activities
- Podcasts and videos
- Apps and tools

To access this trusted resource visit

www.ithriveedinburgh.org.uk

If you have any suggestions, you can send them to ithrive@health-in-mind.org.uk

Braid house day centre



Braid house day centre provides day care for people aged 50 years and over and is for people with complex care needs such as dementia, Parkinson's disease or mental health problems including depression, anxiety and loneliness. Clients can meet others and take part in social activities and have a nutritious meal. It offers help with personal care and supports independence and wellbeing. To access support, you can call the day centre directly and they will arrange a visit and start date. You can also contact a social worker by completing a self-assessment online at www.westlothianhscp.org.uk A social worker will then get in touch. If this does not happen you can call them on 01506 280740. For extra support with completing the form call Braid house on 01506 430615 or email contact@braidhouse.com

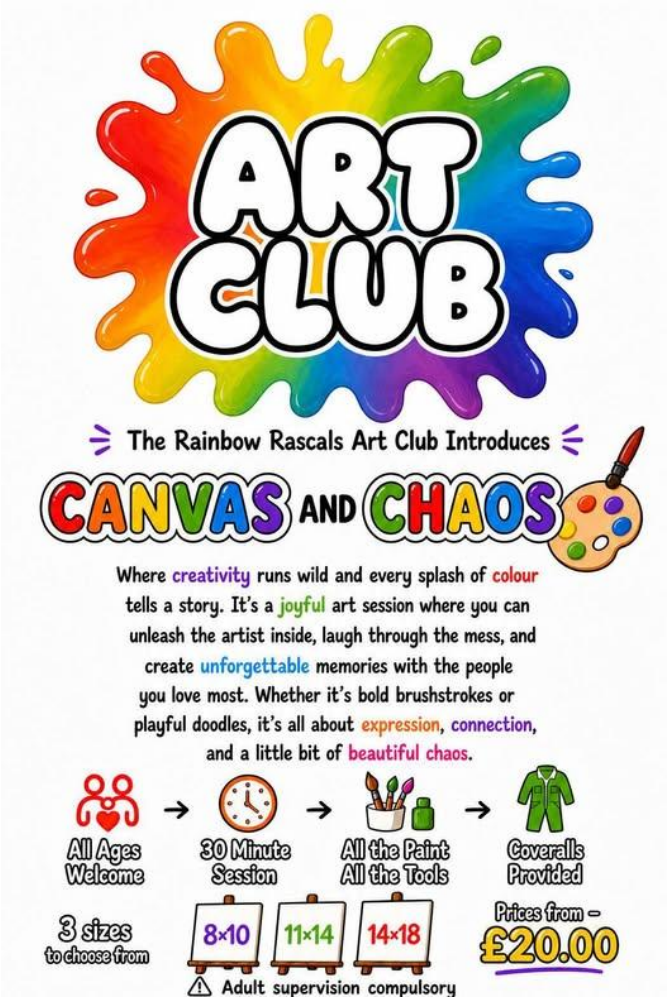
Spark charity update



The Spark charity has purchased the former library at Craigshill for £1 under community asset transfer. Sparks has been awarded more than £60,000 to create a new permanent home through refurbishment of the former library. It is hoped the facility will help thousands and will be a venue for community groups and training opportunities. The charity will continue to offer a variety of activities whilst enhancing the mall area. Alex Fleming, chief officer at Spark "This funding means we can secure a long-term home where we can continue to grow, create opportunities and make a real difference for those who live, work and visit our community". The council's community asset transfer committee agreed to transfer the library building in March. It is suggested that it's social value of £500,000. In the past 18 months membership and volunteer numbers have grown significantly as well as the type of activities and events on offer. Spark was founded as the Craigshill good neighbour Network nearly 40 years ago. To contact Spark, you can call 01506 442093 or visit their website at www.sparkscot.com

Rainbow Rascals

Opening soon is a new play and education centre for children with additional support needs. It is based at 11A Oakbank Park way in Livingston and will be new service for



Scotland. It will be for children of all abilities and families can connect and support each other. As well as play and learning opportunities Parents will be able to access wellbeing and parenting support as well as education around different conditions. Smaller play sessions will also be offered which creates a calming environment. There is also the plan to deliver services which include expert advice, workshops and tailored sessions. In June you will be able to explore what is available and book your sessions on the website. Call 01506 534563 or visit www.rainbowrascals.uk

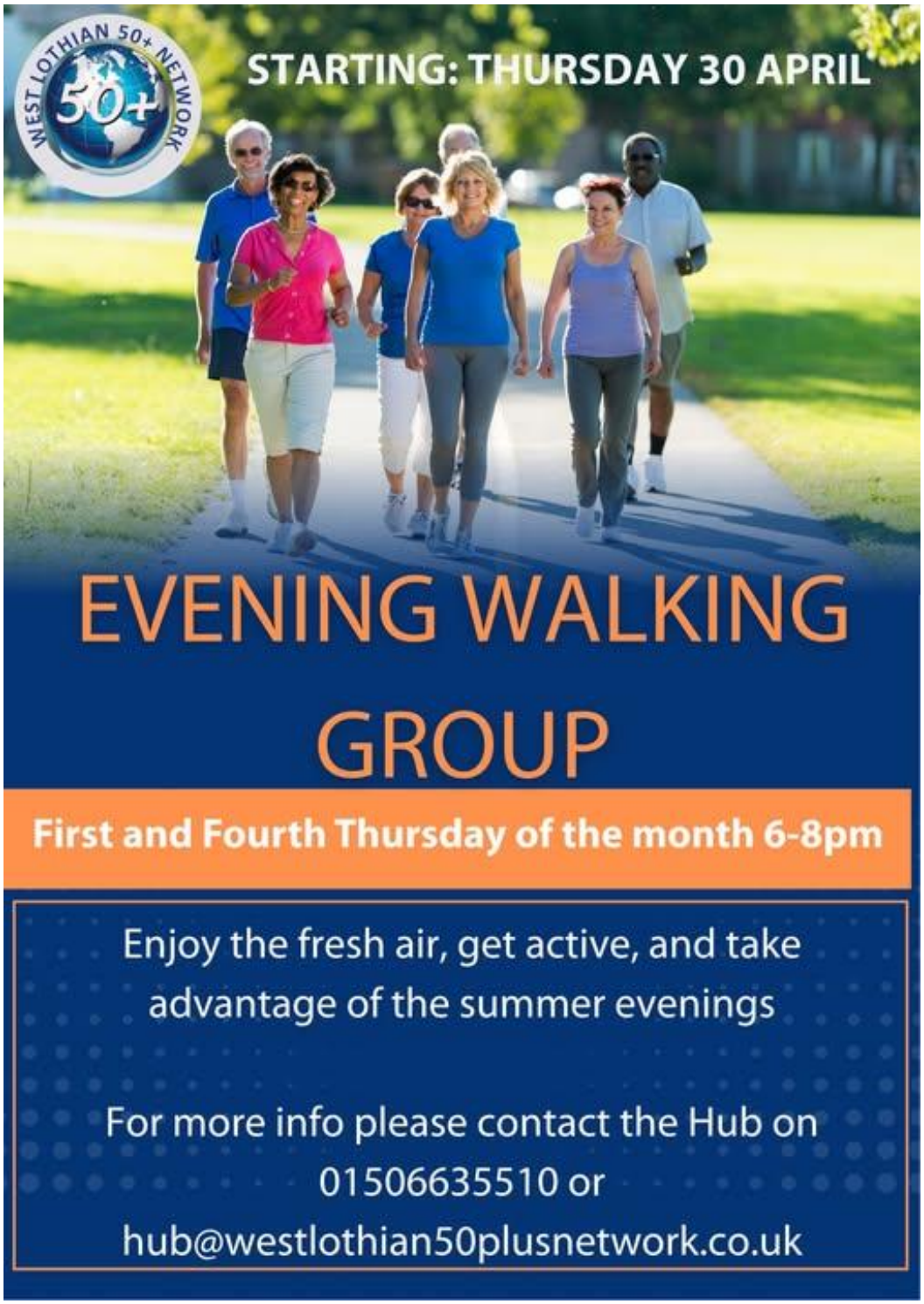
Whitburn Breakfast club



Mind & media ambassador initiative

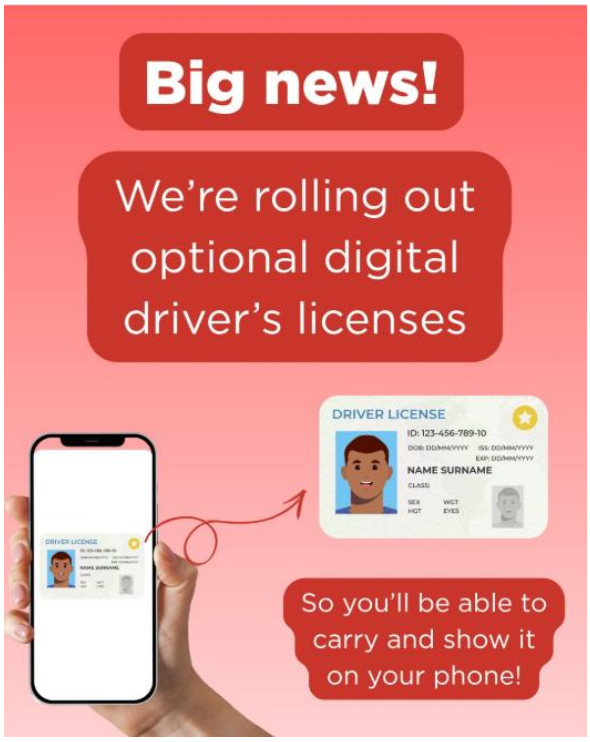


West Lothian 50+ Network



General News

Driving update



There are now new driving rules for younger drivers. Soon, new drivers under 24 will be banned from carrying more than one passenger aged between 14-20. For the first 6 months after getting a licence they will not be able to drive at night between 11pm and 6am. This is being done to reduce fatal road crashes.

There are also changes to the Test booking system. From May 12th this year only the learner driver can book, change or cancel a car test. From 31st March you are limited to two changes per booking. From the 9th June you can only move your test to one of the three closest centres to your original choice.

Digital driving licences will become an optional alternative to physical cards accessible via a government smartphone app. It has been proposed that there will be a reduction in the legal driving limit to 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood with a 20mg limit for learners and newly qualified drivers. Drivers aged 70+ years may be required to take mandatory eye tests every three years.

AI powered cameras are being used more frequently for speed, seatbelt and mobile phone enforcement.


Changes to driving test booking rules in 2026
Rule
Old rules
New rules
From when
Number of changes allowed
Up to 6 changes
Only 2 changes
Since 31 March 2026
Who can book your test
You or your driving instructor
Only you
From 12 May 2026
Who can manage your test
You or your driving instructor
Only you
From 12 May 2026
Where you can move your test
Any test centre
Only to the 3 nearest test centres
From 9 June 2026
GOV·UK

Local News

New government scheme.



In Scotland there is now a new government scheme that will save armed forces families up to £6,000 per child each year in childcare costs. This is being offered to children aged 9 months- 3 years and will benefit hundreds of families across Scotland. It will be rolled out in September this year. Further details will be provided to eligible families in the coming months.

Pothole information



The issue of potholes in West Lothian continues in the minds of local residents who are worried about damage to vehicles and local infrastructure and safety. West Lothian has its own funding and technology to combat potholes across the county. A part of money raised through council tax for 2026/27 will be used for local roads and pothole repairs. This year the council announced a £6 million investment in roads. This includes £2.2 million for A, B, C and U class roads. A specialist Pothole Pro machine is now being used which means quicker repairs and more efficient removal of rubble.

Residents can report road defects via the West Lothian Councils online form or call 01506 280 000 for emergencies.

Take a break Scotland grant scheme



The take a break grant scheme is for parent carers of disabled or seriously ill children and young people aged 0-17 years. The grant is to help people to get a break from their caring duties. This year £3.3 million has been made available to the take a break Scotland fund which is provided by the Scottish government. There is also an extra boost meaning that this year there will be a total investment of £13 million in the scheme.

In Scotland there are around 694,000 unpaid carers which includes 27,000 young people. The grant is around £350 and aims to improve quality of life by allowing people to access a break for themselves and with other family members. It can also pay for an extra carer when required if on an outing. The fund can be used to gain entrance to zoos, theme parks or music festivals, gym membership for the carer or family, dance or drama clubs, horse riding and swimming lessons, trampolines and much more. If a child is not looked after by the local authority, they can apply.

Applications opened on 5th May and closes on Monday 22 June 2026. To qualify you must have lived in Scotland for at least 6 months. You must provide care for a child or young person with a disability or who is seriously ill aged 0-17 and who lives with them. For more

information on eligibility and what you can apply for and to apply online visit www.takeabreakscotland.org.uk

Clothing bank projects



There are currently clothing banks at our Lady of Lourdes Primary and there are also recycling hubs at Winchburgh academy and West Calder High school and Dedridge primary. These initiatives are supported by the School bank West Lothian and provide new or high quality used uniforms, shoes, school items and PE and sports kits such as football boots and dance wear helping children outside school on pursuing their interests. Access to school items is so important for the health and well-being of pupils, improving attendance and respect for each other. This is a vital resource with the increased cost of living.

You can access support through referrals from family support workers, a family link worker, or a local social worker. Referrals are also accepted from headteachers, housing officers, Women's aid, Health visitors and other agencies including West Lothian Council, CAB, Homestart and the West Lothian Advice shop.

Families can also apply for a school clothing grant through West Lothian Council if you receive certain qualifying benefits. You can donate good quality, second-hand uniforms, jackets and unopened, new underwear/socks are also accepted.

There are donation stations including the guest services desk at the centre, Livingston where you can make a donation. Between May and August, the charity runs a sponsor-a-child campaign where individuals or groups can buy specific uniform items or a warm jacket for a matched local child in need. The school bank has its own website which you can visit for more information such as drop off points. Visit www.schoolbank-westlothian.org

Sentinel Pilot study

Are You a Carer or Health & Social Care Worker?

We Want to Hear from You!

Sentinel

Sentinel is a pioneering initiative aimed at enhancing psychological safety, resilience, and trauma management for carers and health and social care workers.



Your insights are essential to help us test tools that will provide carers and health and social care workers with the mental health support they need.

Take Part in Sentinel's Pilot Study

You will receive six weeks of access to the Sentinel app where you can explore personalised wellbeing tools and interactive modules designed to help manage stress, enhance recovery and build long-term resilience.

How to Participate

Complete our survey by scanning the QR Code or visit:
https://hass.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bqrEUmteHRCKfye

FIND OUT MORE

Your Participation Matters!

By taking part in our study, you're helping us develop a digital device that can help support carers and health and social care workers through the challenges they face.

This study involves completing an initial and final survey in addition to testing the Sentinel app for 6-weeks. This study is open to all adults 18 years and older.

University of Strathclyde Glasgow

For further information please contact:
Sentinel – hass-sentinelprojects@strath.ac.uk
University of Strathclyde
40 George Street, Glasgow, G1 1QE

www.sentinel-health.com

Benefits

New energy support payment



There is a new energy support payment being developed for the terminally ill in Scotland. The proposed amount is £450, and this will help people who face higher energy bills (up to 75% more) due to running medical equipment and maintaining higher temperatures. It will be delivered through Social Security Scotland using existing rules for terminal illness (SRTI) data. People would not need to apply separately. This payment will fill gaps in existing support such as the winter heating payment or warm home discount which often doesn't cover extra costs faced by those with terminal conditions. For tailored advice the terminally ill or their carers can contact the Marie Curie support line on 0800 090 2309 to speak to energy support officers.

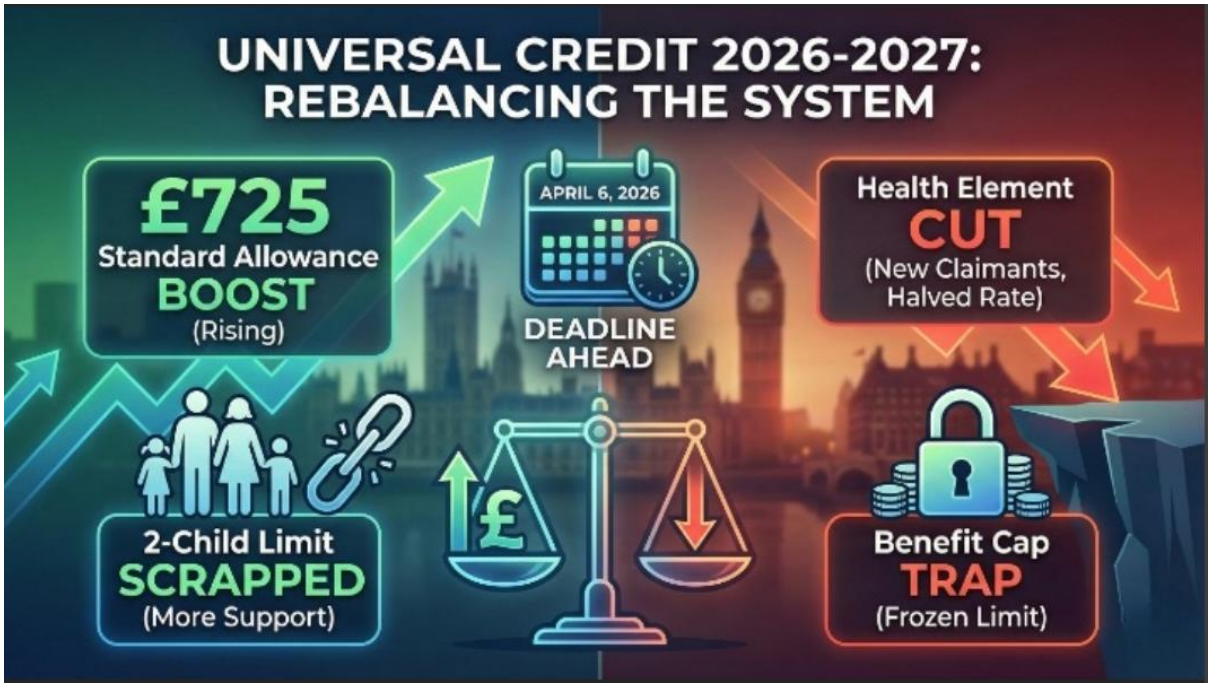
Benefit changes in Scotland

Nearly all legacy (DLA) and carer benefits (carer's Allowance) have been transferred from the DWP to SSS.

Pension age disability payment has replaced attendance allowance and cases moved fully by the end of 2025/early 2026

Carer support payment changes. From March 2026 this new system is being expanded to include a new carer additional payment for those looking after more than one person.

Scottish Adult DLA. Adults previously on DLA will be moved to this new Scotland only benefit.



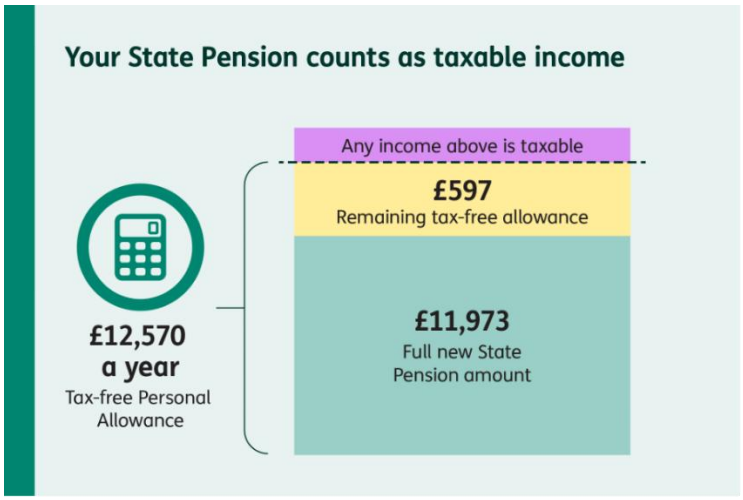
From April this year new claimants will see a 50% reduction in the health element of Universal credit. If you already receive the limited capability for work-related activity payment before April this year you will be protected and will get the full amount.

In Scotland people on income-related ESA are being moved to UC via “managed migration”. This will happen until 2028/29. You will receive a migration letter stating you must apply within 3 months to avoid your ESA stopping. If you apply on time, you may get transitional protection if your UC is lower than your old benefit. There is no need for another work capability assessment if you are on income-related ESA. If you move to UC, you will get two extra weeks of income-related ESA. You do not need to repay it. For advice you can contact advice Scotland (0808 800 9060).

In Scotland you must inform your local council if you move to UC. Your council may change your council tax reduction. There is a help to claim service if you need help applying for UC. You can also speak directly with the DWP or a welfare rights advisor.

Many people in Scotland qualify but don’t claim all the benefits they are entitled to such as the Scottish child payment. You can use the Turn2Us benefits calculator to check your entitlement under the new 2026 rules.

State Pension information



Tax in retirement. The HMRC says people in retirement are allowed an income up to £12,570 before the start paying any tax. (your personal allowance). Indeed, your pension counts as taxable income and also includes any personal pensions, savings and investments. These figures are all combined to determine your yearly income. If it exceeds £12,570 you will pay tax. Just now the full, new state pension is £241.30 per week which is around £12,547.60 per year. Those who get the full amount could begin to pay income tax even if they just earn £30 elsewhere over the course of the year. It is predicted that the next annual rise for the state pension will exceed the personal allowance threshold. The government has however reassured people that if they only have the state pension as income that they won't have any tax bills to pay.



The state pension age will be rising from 66 to 67 for both men and women over the next two years. This gradual shift will directly affect people born between April 1960 and March 1961. For those born after these dates there will be a fixed state pension age of 67. More increases are expected in around 2040s. The amount you receive in state pension will depend on your NI record. To get any payment you must have a minimum of 10 qualifying years. To receive the full £241.30 per week you need around 35 qualifying years. A qualifying year is a year in which you have accumulated NI credits, contributed NI payments or have made voluntary contributions. As of 2023, only around half of pensioners eligible for the new state pension were receiving the complete sum

Local Groups/Events

Carers of West Lothian Awakening Festival



Carers of West Lothian is hosting an Awakening Festival this year on the 14th June from 1pm-6pm. It allows carers to engage in wellness and community activities. There will be live bands, DJs and singers, fairgrounds and inflatables along with new attractions including live wrestling and BGT's Vinnie McKee. To book visit the website www.cowl.org.uk or you can call 01506 448000. In addition, CoWL is now expanding its community passes and is now offering Jupiter Artland which is a spectacular sculpture garden based near Edinburgh. It is set in 120 acres with over 30 sculptures on display. You must book at least 48 hours in advance and there is a high demand over the school holidays so book early. You can apply for a maximum of two applications each month. To get your tickets you need to register with CoWL. You can complete the registration form on the website.

For urgent support for carers there is a West Lothian Social work out of hours line at 01506 281028 or 281029

Ratho canal cruises



The Seagull trust has just launched new audio-described canal cruises in partnership with RNIB Scotland providing people with the opportunity to enjoy the beautiful union canal. The new audio system describes the canal environment and points out landmarks and sounds of the water journey. The audio described cruises are free and is supported by volunteers and charitable donations. Cruises are on selected dates and advanced booking is recommended. You can book at 07511 055 081 or email rathobookings@seagulltrustcruises.org.uk

JLS Live at Helix Park Falkirk



JLS will be performing at Helix Park Falkirk on the 11th June this year. Gates open at 5pm. Under 16s must be accompanied by an adult. For full information visit www.kelpieslive.com . JLS have had an incredible career and have won a BRIT Award and have sold over 6 million records and 2 million live tickets. After a break in 2013 they have made a comeback in 2020 and have been touring ever since.

Accessible ticket holders are entitled to one complementary carer ticket.

There is also VIP admission

Seating tickets are available in grandstands.

If you have any questions you can email: support@xfire.live

To purchase tickets, visit www.kelpieslive.com

Carers of West Lothian Cold water swimming



You can learn the basics of cold water therapy including how to use your breathing and explore the benefits of swimming in cold water. This is taking place on August 20th at 10am. For more information on the cold water therapist visit: www.thecoldwatertherapist.co.uk A risk assessment and medical form is required, and no special equipment is needed, just swimwear, old shoes, a towel, and warm layers for afterwards. Tow floats and gloves are provided. The session lasts 1hr 30min at Avon Lagoon, Mains road, Linlithgow EH49 6QD. This is a free event. To book visit www.eventbrite.co.uk

The Larder Live music event



Whitburn volunteer fair, Voluntary Service Gateway



VOLUNTEER FAIR

TUES 2ND JUNE 2-4PM

AT WHITBURN COMMUNITY CENTRE

MANSE ROAD, WHITBURN, EH47 8EZ

Come along to find out about volunteering opportuinties available in the local community!

WHITBURN Community Development Trust
'At the heart of the community'

VOLUNTEERS' WEEK



Useful contacts

Advice shop	01506 283000 www.westlothian.gov.uk
Braid House	01506 430 615 www.braidhouse.com
Breathing Space	0800 83 85 87 www.breathingspace.scot
Carers of West Lothian	01506 448000 www.carers-westlothian.com
Citizens Advice Bureau	01506 432 977 www.cabwestlothian.org.uk
Carents	077667864233 www.carents.co.uk
West Lothian Council	01506 280000 www.westlothian.gov.uk
Cyrenians Opal	01506 815815 www.cyrenians.scot
ithrive Edinburgh (Health in Mind)	0131 270 6087 www.ithriveedinburgh.org.uk
JLS Helix Park Falkirk	01324 590 600 www.kelpieslive.com
The Larder	01506 412819 www.thelarder.org
Rainbow Rascals	01506 534563 www.rainbowrascals.uk
Ratho canal cruises	07511 055081 www.seagulltrust.org.uk
Samaritans	116 123 www.samaritans.org
Sentinel	www.sentinel-health.com
Take a break Scotland	01904 571093 www.takeabreakscotland.org.uk
Voluntary Sector Gateway	01506 650 111 www.voluntarysectorgateway.org
West Lothian mind & media initiative	07592161712 https://bit.ly/4e4UY1K
WLDAS	01506 430225 www.wldas.com
West Lothian 50+ Network	01506 635 510 www.westlothian50+network.co.uk
Westspace West Lothian	www.westspace.org.uk