

1991

SURVIVAL GUIDE

FOR PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES IN NORTH BEDFORDSHIRE



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Introduction

by Dominique Joyeux

My mother had a stroke five years ago and at that time I did not know where to turn for advice or help. There was no one local organisation or person that had a knowledge of disability, rehabilitation, entitlement to benefit and access to counselling etc. Unfortunately this is still the case.

There are however, many voluntary and statutory bodies that can offer help to those with special physical needs in the North Bedfordshire area. The "Survival Guide" is trying to put together those who have the means to help with those who need it.

In North Bedfordshire, there are over 200 people referred to the Health Authority that have acquired new, permanent disabilities, every month ! This pamphlet is a guide for those newcomers, as well as to those who are old hands at trying to make sense of what services and help are available to the disabled.

Because this is the first time that a comprehensive information pamphlet has been published specifically for North Bedfordshire's disabled community, then there will obviously be some useful names and addresses that I have overlooked. If you know of a service or organisation that should have been included, then please contact me on 266736 or Daniela Vuolo on 350 931 or 270102 at the Reference Section of Bedford Central Library.

The 'Survival Guide' would not have seen the light of day if it had not been for the financial help and the printing facilities provided by Texas Instruments. Thanks are also due to the skilfull illustrator Sian Ellis; to the graphic designer Chris Ward and for the publicity provided by the Bedfordshire Times.

Dominique Joyeux

January 1991

Benefits & Advice

Fact: Disability leads to extra costs.

Fact: Most disabled people have a lower income than non-disabled people.



There is no automatic right to payment or an explanation of special services available when you become disabled, however severely you have become incapacitated. Everything has to be claimed for. But there are various organisations and publications that can help you.

It is very important to get a **Social Worker** allocated to you as soon as possible when disability strikes. If you are in hospital any length of time, one should be allocated to you. If not, do ask your doctor to have one visit you. If he gives you a number to phone, do not be shy to use it. A social worker understands the various channels open to help you with getting benefits and can put you in touch with local helping and caring organisations. The department of social workers can be contacted directly via their Duty Desk. Phone 345331.

The written "Bible" of services that are available and benefits that can be claimed is called the "**Disability Rights Handbook**". This is the most thorough explanation of your rights as a disabled person or as their carer. It covers benefits, compensation, housing matters, retirement, appeals and care needs. It costs £4.00 post free and cheques should be made payable to the Disability Alliance and sent with your name and address to the Disability Alliance, 25 Denmark Street, London WC2H 8NJ.

The **Department of Social Security** have a phone line which is free to callers, that can answer questions on financial benefits offered by the DSS. The number is 0800 666 555, but during the day-time it will invariably be engaged. It is perhaps best to phone up after office hours and leave your name and number and a time that they can call you back on their answer-phone.

There are two documents that the DSS print especially for the disabled that are useful for finding out what services and benefits they offer. One called "**FB28. Sick or Disabled ?**" is a guide to benefits if you are sick and disabled for a few days or more, and should be available from the Bedford branch of the DSS. Further pamphlets that may be of use from the DHSS are the free prescriptions leaflet (P.11); the free glasses leaflet (G.11) and the leaflet that

covers free dental treatment (D.11) Ask for the Stationery Department on 365155.

A pamphlet called "**HB6. Equipment and Services**" is a very clear and easy-to-read booklet that covers what equipment and services are at present available through the National Health Service, local authorities, voluntary organisations and central government. The booklet is obtainable free of charge from the Leaflets Unit, P.O.Box 21, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 1AY.

If you feel the need to talk to somebody who is not from the statutory bodies or National Health Service for advice on disability, then one option is to telephone **DIAL. Bedfordshire DIAL** (Disability Information and Advice Line) is in Luton, though there will hopefully be one operating in Bedford by the end of 1991. The volunteers that answer on the DIAL number can answer queries on benefits, daily living aids, housing, community services, legislation and most of the topics that trouble the disabled. Because it is staffed by volunteers, they are only available from 9.30a.m. to 12.30p.m. Monday to Friday, or ring at any other time and leave a message on the answering machine. Phone 0582 400461. They will get back to you.

Another source of information is the **Citizens Advice Bureau**. Although they do not deal uniquely with disability topics, they will be able to help with a lot of the problems faced by the disabled. Their office is closed on Wednesdays but open during the week from 10a.m. till 3p.m. They are situated at 38 Mill Street, or telephone 354384.

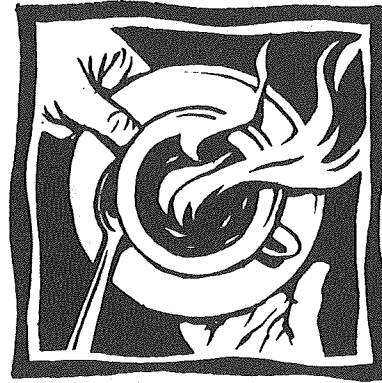
If you wish to continue or restart work with a disability then contacting Bedford's **Disablement Resettlement Officer (D.R.O.)** might prove beneficial. Based at Job Centre in Allhallows, the D.R.O. can advise on suitable job opportunities, employment rehabilitation, how to get special aids for your employment (like back rests or special chairs) and cash help for fares to work. Registering as a disabled person and obtaining a Green Card from the Job Centre could help too. Bedford's D.R.O. is Tony Bertasius and is available on extension 51 on 341122. You will have to phone a week or two in advance of an interview, because Bedford's busy Resettlement Officer covers the large area of Mid and North Bedfordshire.

The three main benefits that you should be aware of, are **Mobility Allowance, Attendance Allowance and the Invalid Care Allowance**. Ask any of

the above bodies if you are entitled to one, two or all three of these allowances.

Caring and Carers

Through the Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS) there is a group which can be contacted called "Good Companions", telephone 352086 and ask for Mrs Vesey. The members of "Good Companions" will visit on a regular basis, people that are old or infirm. They provide company or do the occasional bit of shopping and generally act as good neighbours.



There is a Carers' afternoon group that meets on the last Tuesday of every month between 11a.m. and 2.00p.m. at the **Barkers Lane Social Centre**. It provides a welcome and precious opportunity for Carers of the disabled to meet, to get things off their chest or just talk. They have occasional speakers to talk on subjects like "Welfare Rights", "The Role of the Social Services" and they are offered a lunch that costs under a pound. The day centre is happy to care for the disabled relative during this time. Transport is not normally provided for the Carers Group but should this be a problem the centre organiser may be able to help. Phone either Peter King at Social Services (363222 and ask for his extension) or Pam Naylor on 352210.

A similar carers group that meets in the evenings is the Bedford branch of the **National Carers Association**. It meets in the Silver Room at Barkers Lane Social Centre on the last Thursday of every month between 7.30 and 9.30p.m. People who care for members of their family that are disabled, have the chance to swap information, provide mutual support and to talk about other things than disability. Phone Ian Hurren on 742475 or Joan Foster on 210854. Own arrangements have to be made to look after the cared for, but an option is to contact the **Saint Raphael Club**. The Saint Raphael Club are a group of disabled adults who meet every Thursday at the Goldington Social Centre from 7.30 till 9.30p.m. They enjoy various activities such as games, outings, slide shows, talks or demonstrations by visiting speakers and social gatherings. Contact Tom Clingo its chairman on 356130.

There may come a time when the carer will feel that they can no longer cope with the day-to-day duties and obligations that caring entails. If there is no family or close friend to share the caring with, then it is perhaps time to turn to their social worker. A social worker on the Duty Desk at Social Services (tel:345331) will be able to explain the options open to the carer. This may include a short-term stay for the adult disabled at a local authority residential home.

Bedford Social Services offer short overnight (as well as weekend) breaks for the elderly. It gives their carers a 16 hour (from 6.00p.m. to 10.00a.m.) break from responsibility and is called the **Bed and Breakfast Scheme**. People using the scheme will be provided with supper and breakfast and their personal needs will be met by Care staff. Three residential homes offer this overnight stay, "Highfield", Avon Drive (tel.267196), "Puttenhoe", 180 Putnoe Street (tel.261396) and "Rivermead", Halsey Road (tel.851573). The cost of this scheme is under £6 per night.

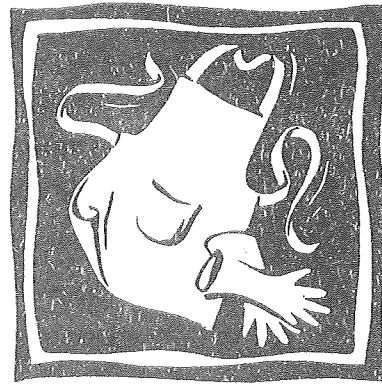
Many carers for adults find that if residential breaks are planned carefully and introduced gradually, they can work well. There is a very useful 30 page pamphlet entitled "**Taking a Break**" - a guide for people caring at home. Send a large stamp addressed envelope (at least 10" by 6") to Taking a Break, Newcastle-upon-Tyne X, NE85 2AQ.

"**Sunflower House**" in Bedford is a short stay bungalow, primarily for children and young people with disabilities. There are periods during the year when adults up to the age of 35 can also stay at "Sunflower House". The staying time varies from one night to two weeks. The bungalow is adapted for people with disabilities and exudes an air of homeliness. A stay at "Sunflower House" is free for children in full-time education and not in receipt of benefit. For adults it is £37.50 a week. For more details ring the Social Services Duty Desk on 345331.

'**Bedford Care**' is an outreach of the Church and one of the most established of Bedford's organisations of volunteer carers. They will provide transport and domestic support (like shopping) to those who would otherwise remain house-bound. Transport is provided with a small mileage charge for those needing to get to hospital or get to a social activity in the Bedford area. When you telephone 'Bedford Care' on 215500, the operator will say "Calls to this number are being diverted." Do not worry, this is normal practice and a few seconds later you will be put through to the volunteer on duty at the time.

Help Within the Home

The **Bedfordshire Adult Training Group** (tel:347999) can sometimes help with jobs that need doing around the house. The group can help with decorating (charging £3 a day per man), can install insulation for a fifth of normal cost, collect furniture and provide gardening teams to tidy up the back garden. The group uses trainees who are undergoing 12 months on the Governments Employment Training Scheme. It is worth phoning them to see if they have the relevant trainees available to undertake the work that you need doing.



If you are an elderly home-owner that needs work doing on their house, whether it be repairs, maintenance or security, but think that the costs may be prohibitive, then contact Mrs Beverly Fellows, 45 Goldington Road, Bedford. (If you suffer from a physical disability then this scheme may also be able to assist you). She is the project manager of a Borough Council/Harpur Trust/Anchor House scheme to help out the elderly with housing maintenance and finance. They can obtain the services of reliable builders, as well as advising on finance. Their advice is free and they can arrange building society "interest-free" loans for repairs, where the capital needs to be repaid only when the property is sold. For more details telephone the "Staying Put" project on 325 933.

The **Bedfordshire Housing Aid Centre** is based at 68 Tavistock Street, Bedford. The Centre does not own property but its advisers give free advice and help on housing benefits; they are able to lobby the local authority in certain cases; they can help people facing impending homelessness; they will advise on advocacy; they can tell people whether they need a solicitor or not and are able to give guidance and sometimes help on matters relating to housing. Their premises are wheelchair accessible with two interview rooms. Their telephone number is 328488

If you are disabled and neither you nor your next of kin can cope with the day-to-day running of the house, you may be able to ask for the services of a "home help". Home helps are people that can provide practical help with domestic tasks, including shopping and cashing your order book. You pay for this service according to your means. Contact the Social Services on 345331 and ask for the Home Help Department.

If you can no longer physically do those things around the house that you used to, then some aids and equipment for daily living may come in useful. The first people to contact are the **Occupational Therapy Department** at Bedford Hospital (tel:355122). You can be referred to them through your doctor. They will assess your needs, give advice and suggest the necessary aids or adaptations your property needs. These may be aids for helping with the cooking, getting up the stairs, getting into the bath etc.

Once you have got the basic aids from the Occupational Therapists you may want to try out, and buy more, helpful aids and gadgets. You can visit the appliances and aids on show at **Kidmans** (354090) on Castle Road or **Bedford Mobility** (266666) on Windsor Road. Or you can phone for their brochures. **"Boots"** (356231) in the Harpur Centre stock their "Independence in the Home" catalogue which features a very wide range of specially designed aids.

For a day out with a difference, why not visit **Naidex 91** at the Alexandra Palace in London? Taking place on October 9th, 10th and 11th 1991, the huge exhibition space is full of equipment and services for the disabled, displayed in the manner of an Ideal Home Exhibition. This annual show-case for the novel as well as the more established gadgets covers bathroom and toilet furnishings, body supports, handicrafts, kitchen equipment, toys, rehabilitation equipment and wheelchairs. For more information ring 0892 544027.

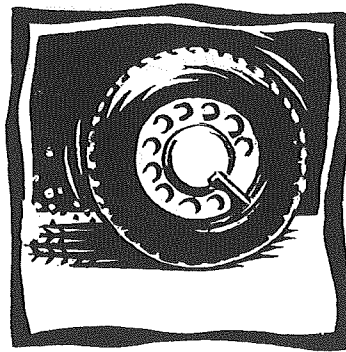
For advice on any piece of equipment specifically designed for the disabled, whether it be the price, where to get it from and whether or not it exists, telephone the **Disabled Living Foundation** on 071 289 6111. They have 15,000 items for the disabled fed into their computer and usually know what items are on the market, the nearest person to get them from and how much they cost.

British Gas are looking to help their disabled customers in the Bedfordshire area. By telephoning 0582 481810 and asking for extension 467, you will be in touch with their **Home Service Advisers** department. These advisers will visit disabled customers in their own homes without charge, where necessary, and will provide an after-sales service, investigate enquiries or complaints and if appropriate carry out cooking tests on appliances. They conduct free gas safety checks for the registered disabled and can supply special taps and knob extensions for those with arthritis or a similar problem that restricts people from operating gas fires, wall heaters and cookers with ease.

British Telecom publish an annual, updated guide to the equipment and services they provide for their disabled customers. This guide can be sent to you free of charge by telephoning 100 and asking for FREEPHONE Telecom Sales.

Mobility

There are 2,450 registered wheelchair users in Bedford and the surrounding villages (figure courtesy of the Disablement Services Authority). The majority of these have their wheelchairs on a long-term loan from the Department of Health free of charge. Their doctor will have referred them to the hospital Physiotherapy or Occupational Therapy Department who will have decided what walking aid is the most appropriate to the individual.



For those people of limited mobility who need the occasional wheelchair to shop, to go on holiday or to use on other special occasions there are a number of options open in Bedford. **Age Concern** at 11 Cross St (tel:352038) have some wheelchairs available as do the **British Red Cross** (tel:349166) at 99 Ashburnam Road. The British Red Cross can also refer to their other branches country-wide, if you need a wheelchair at your holiday destination. If you are going abroad, they might be able to use their contacts with the Red Crescent and the International Red Cross to secure the loan of a wheelchair, there.

The commercial hire of wheelchairs is possible from **Kidmans** the chemists in Castle Road (tel:354090). Kidmans ask for a £15 deposit and charge £2 for a days hire and £10 for the week. **Bedford Mobility** (tel:266666) situated on Windsor Road also ask for a returnable £15 deposit. They charge £5 for the first day's hire and £1 for each subsequent day.

It might surprise you to learn that 3,000 orange **Disabled Parking Discs** are issued each year in Bedfordshire by the Social Services arm of the County Council. As each disc is valid for 3 years, this means that there are nearly 9,000 cars on the roads of Bedfordshire with these orange badges. To obtain one of these parking discs you must prove that you are permanently disabled

and fill-in the application form sent to you by phoning 363222 and asking for extension 2359.

If you can't afford a taxi and can't make it to a bus, then the **Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS)** might be able to provide the necessary transport and escort to take you to hospital, chiropodist or clinic appointment. The charge is about 25 pence a mile. Please note that the WRVS volunteers are not paid and give up their own time to provide this service. Phone 352086.

North Bedfordshire has a dial-a-ride bus service in operation. Called '**Door to Door**', it provides a service for people who are unable to use public transport. Booking is done by phoning 24 hours in advance and the cost is 70 pence a trip. North Bedfordshire's new scheme has two minibuses with tail-lifts in operation. To use this service you must complete a simple registration form and pay a pound signing-on fee. For more details telephone Door to Door on 271087

If you are a disabled driver or a driver for the disabled, then it is well worth contacting the **Disabled Drivers Motor Club (DDMC)** for advice or even joining their club. DDMC offers free advice on mobility problems, conversions and insurance discounts. The club has 15,000 members who pay a £7 annual subscription. This entitles the member to 15% discount when joining the RAC, concessions on ferry trips, a handbook and a bi-monthly magazine which is perhaps the best/most interesting journal for the disabled on motoring and disability issues. This club and its journal, although concentrating on mobility issues will advise on any disability topic including home helps, allowances etc. Telephone 08012 4724 or write to DDMC, Cottingham Way, Thrapston, Northants NN14 4PL.

If you are claiming Mobility Allowance and drive (or someone drives for you) a vehicle that is uniquely for your use (ie not for somebody-else's pleasure or business use) then you will be entitled to a **free road licence tax disc**. This will save the user £100 a year. Telephone the Blackpool Department of Health and Social Security on 0253 856123 and ask for the Mobility Allowance unit. They will send you details and a vehicle license exemption form to complete.

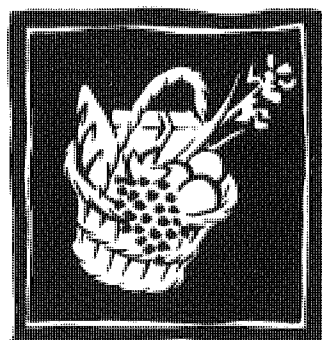
Tripscope is a nationwide travel and transport information and advice service for disabled and elderly people. The kind of questions Tripscope have found answers to include, How do I use British Rail trains? Where do I get my wheelchair mended in New York? And how do I get an electric wheelchair into

a taxi ? Tripscope's information is free of charge and if the question will take a long time to sort out, they will phone you back to save your telephone bill. Tripscope is not a travel agency nor a booking agency but they do provide all the information necessary for journeys to be arranged and undertaken with confidence. Phone 081 994 9294.

Finally, there is a useful booklet entitled "Door to Door" issued by the Department of Transport and endorsed by Princess Anne. The guide brings together basic information about transport for people with disabilities. The guide covers benefits, taxis, cars, buses, rail, sea and air travel and is obtainable from the Disability Unit, Room S10/21, Department of Transport, 2 Marsham St, London SW1P 3EB or phone 071 276 5257. The booklet is usually sent free of charge to individuals with disabilities.

Shopping

A convenient day-out shopping can be had at Milton Keynes and Peterborough where steps do not have to be negotiated and all conveniences are accessible. **Shopmobility** (tel:94 670 860) at Milton Keynes have a fleet of 45 push-wheelchairs and 6 electric ones available from 10.00a.m. on shopping days. It is advisable to book at all times; the electric ones a week before and with the pushers a few hours ahead. Identification showing name, address and signature must be provided and although there is no charge for this service, there is a collection box for voluntary contributions.



Until Bedford sorts out a coherent access plan for its own town centre, then shopping for those of limited mobility will remain an awkward undertaking. Peterborough is the next nearest shopping place of convenience. Their **Shopmobility** number is 0703 313133 and operate in the same way as Milton Keynes.

There also exists in Bedford a clothes shop that comes to your door. Called "**The Travelling Shop**" (tel; Pat on Oakley 5248) it caters for fashion and underwear for 50 year-olds and over. In its range are overalls, blouses, skirts

and trousers that cater for sizes 10 to 30. The service is convenient, reliable and not expensive.

Another way of shopping from home is to order the catalogue called "**The Special Collection**" (phone 061 228 0626). Recommended by the Disabled Living Foundation, the catalogue has one hundred pages of clothes for people who have difficulties in dressing or wearing clothes with the 'usual' styling or fastenings. The catalogue is produced by the established mail order firm J.D.Williams and provides clothes available in sizes from 10-36, avoiding awkward back-fastenings and fiddly buttons in unreachable places.

Leisure

The Bedford Tourist Information Centre, situated at 10 St. Paul's Square (tel:215226) publish a pamphlet entitled "Where to go in the Bedford Area". It costs 75p and details places of sport, leisure and general interest in Bedfordshire, sometimes pointing out the accessibility of the places mentioned. Each venue has a telephone number conveniently marked against it and can therefore be contacted beforehand.



Bedford's new multiplex cinema run by Cannon is situated on Newnham Avenue by the river. The six cinemas (according to its designers) have ramps and slopes leading to all parts of the building, with special parking places directly outside the cinema. In the cinema itself there are "spaces for wheelchairs adjacent to ordinary seating so that wheelchair users can sit with ambulant friends". In addition the cinema is fitted with induction loop systems which will help patrons who have hearing difficulties and have hearing aids.

If reading is one of your interests and you are house-bound for a few months or for the foreseeable future then the **Special Services Department** based at Bedford Central Library may be able to help. This service already provides 250 house-bound people in North Bedfordshire -as well as 90 residential homes- with ordinary books, large-print books, spoken-word tapes and music. The department is headed by Mrs Anthea Slark (tel.350931 on extension 140) and they visit homes fortnightly with no charge to the borrower.

Bedford PHAB (Physically Handicapped and Able-Bodied) are one of the social clubs open to the residents of North Bedfordshire. Bedford PHAB meet every Friday evening from 7.30 till 9.30p.m. at Bedford Youth House, 9-15 St. Mary's St. Bedford. PHAB have a mix of young handicapped and able-bodied members who partake in group activities like sports, competitions, music, outings, discos and holidays. Although featuring a mixed-age range, the majority of members are aged between 14 and 25 years. Phone Jane Hurren on 742475.

A different age range is catered for by the 3 clubs run by the **Bedford Association of the Disabled** at Barkers Lane. Meeting fortnightly on Friday, Monday and Tuesday from 2.00-4.00p.m. these 3 clubs provide social afternoons featuring quizzes, games, competitions and outings. Own transport has to be arranged. Telephone the Secretary of these clubs, Miss Reith, on 355617 for more information.

For gardening enthusiasts with disabilities there is an organisation called "**Horticultural Therapy**" at Goulds Ground, Vallir Way, Frome, Somerset BA11 3DW. They give advice on garden design, special tools, easy maintenance plants and easy gardening methods for the disabled. The two garden centres in North Bedfordshire that have considered the disabled in their plans are **Willington Garden Centre** with four wheelchairs at customers' disposal and **Frosts Garden Centre** in Woburn Sands which has two. They both have special parking places and wide aisles and large toilets.

North Bedfordshire Age Concern's Guildhouse Club on Harpur Street is a drop-in centre for senior citizens. Club activities include cards, snooker, bingo, dressmaking, art, woodwork and patchwork. A chiropodist makes visits, as does a ladies' hairdresser and a gentleman's barber. A hot meal and hot drinks are also available. The Guildhouse have brand new lifts that can accommodate wheelchairs or people that don't want to use the stairs. Telephone 352038 for more details.

The **Residential Yoga Centre** situated at Ickwell Bury (7 miles south of Bedford) specialises in teaching people how yoga practise can overcome physical and mental problems related to all types of chronic diseases like multiple sclerosis. Visitors are welcome on a residential or daily basis and the menu is vegetarian wholefood. For a brochure and further details telephone 927271.

The **Hastingsbury Community College** supplies 160 day-time and evening courses for 2,800 students throughout the academic year. What makes Hastingsbury different from other local colleges is its accessibility for the disabled. If you undertake a sporting option you will find advanced and spacious changing room facilities. Being next door to the Ridgeway School for the disabled, they also have well thought-out access to all their rooms. You can find out more about the courses they provide and how to enrol by telephoning 852756 between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Exercise and Sport

If you are the sporting type and your disability doesn't stop you from continuing a sport, then you may be entitled to substantial discounts. For a downpayment of 50p you can buy a **Recreation Privilege Card** (also known as the Passport for Leisure). By filling in a short application form at the appropriate venue at Robinson Pool, at the Bunyan Centre for badminton or Mowsbury Park for golfing and squash; you will be entitled to half-priced admittance from thereon. If you have any problems telephone the Town Hall (267422) and ask for Welfare Rights, Leisure and Tourism Division on extension 145.

Until the Oasis pyramid pool is completed, the nearest public swimming pool to Bedford that has been especially kitted out with the disabled in mind is at Flitwick. Situated half-a-mile from Flitwick's Tescos, they keep the pool temperature at a constant 85 degrees. They have a hoist for getting people in and out of the pool and it is in use throughout the day. On Sunday evenings between 6.30 and 7.30 the pool is for the exclusive use of the physically disabled. The pool on Friday mornings is used by people who belong to clubs whose members have disabilities. For more details ring 0525 717744.

There are two organisations in Bedford which provide access to especially-heated pools. "**Waterwise**" (tel:855988) run by Anne Preston, takes classes for adults and children who can benefit from water-related exercises on Friday evenings (5.45-6.45) at a pool near Kempston during term-time.

'Young Arthritis Care'(contact Liz Mines on 350901) provides young people with disabilities access to a heated hydrotherapy pool in Bedford on Tuesday evenings from 5.30 to 6.30 Both the above organisations charge a pound per session and both require that someone accompany the person swimming while in the water. Both operate during term-time.

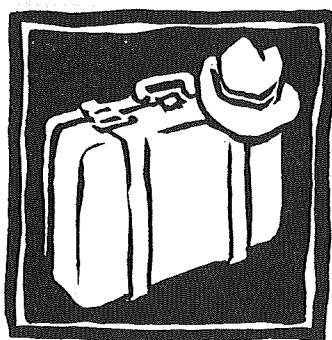
If you are in a wheelchair and feel athletic enough to play basketball, then it will be worth contacting the **Walford Lions**. Meeting at Hastingsbury School in Kempston on Monday nights in term time, they train for fun and for club matches. Purpose-built sports chairs have been purchased for use by club members. If you would like to join in the training, contact Gina Walford on 853694.

"**Action Sport**" are a small team based at the Bunyan Sports Centre and the Town Hall, that have a good general knowledge of what sporting facilities exist in North Bedfordshire. They look for new initiatives to support as well as answering queries about existing sporting facilities for able-bodied and disabled. Telephone 341098 and leave a message on their answerphone if they are not available.

Holidays

There is a **Holiday Bureau**, run by North Bedfordshire Age Concern at 11 Cross Street (behind the Guild House in Harpur Street). This bureau led by Mrs Stevens (tel:352038) organises holidays during the summer at holiday villages on the coast and would be suitable for people with limited disabilities. The only qualification for these well-organised trips is that one partner (if you are a couple) should be over 60 years of age. For one week's holiday the cost is about £170. This price covers all travel, outings, escorts and full board at the holiday village for the week.

One of the most established and best-organised of the private holiday companies that cater for the physically disabled is called **Winged Fellowship Holidays** (tel:071 833 2594 and ask for their colour brochure). They offer one



or two week breaks at one of their ten special holiday centres with or without the carer. They have different themes for their fortnights like Fishing, Music, Birdwatching, Drama, Photography and offer activities for special age groups like those for Youth(16-30) and 30-45 year-olds.

The price ranges from £140-£240 a week (depending on the activity) for the disabled guests and £95-£280 for the spouse/carer. There is 24 hour caring supervision and shorter breaks for Respite Care can also be arranged. If the prices seem unaffordable, the Department of Social Security can often consider claims for Income Support especially when this enables the carer to take a break.

RADAR (The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation) publish a helpful booklet for holiday travelling. "Holidays in the British Isles" is an annual and continually updated guide to accomodation and facilities available in the U.K. for disabled holiday-makers. It is one of W.H.Smith's best-selling books and is always in stock at the Bedford branch. It costs £3.00.

The **Beaulieu Motor Museum** stage an annual event for disabled people with static displays and a cavalcade of motoring. Tickets are available in advance for able-bodied helpers and disabled people from the following address, The Motor Museum, Events Dept, John Montagu Building, Beaulieu, Hants. Or phone 0590 612345 to find out about this big June event.

The Bedfordshire branch of the **British Red Cross** organise a week's holiday at the end of September for adult handicapped persons with any disability. The venue is a holiday camp in Suffolk with activities and outings arranged. Suitable transport is arranged according to one's needs. The Red Cross provide volunteer carers on the outing which costs only £120. The price includes accomodation, food and activities at the camp. Contact the branch Welfare Officer at 99 Ashburnam Road or telephone 349166.

The **Holiday Care Service** are a national charity that offer free advice and information to people who are elderly, disabled, lone parents, carers or financially hard-up. People telephone 0293 774535 or write to the Holiday Care Service explaining their particular needs, what type of holiday they are looking for, where they want to go and the sort of budget they have. The Charity then provide detailed information on holidays and access in the U.K. or abroad to meet those requirements. They do not make reservations or bookings. For more

information write to them at 2 Old Bank Chambers, Station Road, Horley, Surrey RH6 9HW and include a stamp addressed envelope.

Help !

There may come a time when coping with disability becomes too much. Deep feelings of loneliness and despair can affect anyone at any time, in any walk of life. For someone in need of emotional support, talking about and sharing those feelings can be the first step towards resolving them. If that crisis point arrives, telephone the **Samaritans** on 211211. They are available by phone 24 hours a day and will treat calls in absolute confidence. If you prefer to see someone face-to-face then it is possible to call in at their Bedford base situated at 23 Foster Hill Road from 8 in the morning until 11 at night.

"**Network for the Disabled**" is an organisation to be turned to for legal advice relating specifically to the problems that disability brings. They cover Education, Consumer Rights, Housing, Housing Benefits, Care and Wardship Proceedings, all matters relating to Income Support and the Social Security System, complaints to the Ombudsman and small claims in both contract and tort. They will also give advice on Wills and Trusts and assist in small Probate matters. These are professionals with a friendly manner with access to solicitors in private practise and practising members of the Bar. Phone 071 831 8031.

The **Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association (BPHA)** run a scheme that offers peace of mind to those living alone and who might need urgent aid and assistance. BPHA sell, rent and operate the **Homelink III**, which is an especially designed telephone that also acts as an alarm unit. By pressing a red button on the unit or on a portable pendant, the owner is immediately put through to the central Bedford office where the operator will ask (through a speaker on the phone) what kind of service the owner requires. The operator can either send round one of their mobile wardens or inform one of the rescue services. The price is £249 which compares favourably with similar alternatives advertised nationally. It is possible to rent the Homelink telephone for £3 a week. For more information telephone 272837 and ask for Mrs Woodley.