

[take issue]

Give your view and get involved

YOUR LETTERS

Hospital parking

We at Macmillan Cancer Relief were delighted with your article last month highlighting the huge problem of hospital parking charges (p7).

Our own research found that three out of four hospitals in the UK are charging patients up to £30 a day for parking.

Cancer patients in particular have to make frequent, and often lengthy, journeys to hospital and incur exceptionally high travel costs as a result. Macmillan believes that they should be exempt from hospital parking charges and that their travel costs should be fully reimbursed without a means-test. This is what we told the Commons Health Select Committee and is what we hope it will recommend to the government at the end of its inquiry into NHS co-payments.

For more about the benefits and financial help available to people affected by cancer, go to www.macmillan.org.uk/abetterdeal or free phone 0800 500 800.

Ayesha Owusu-Barnaby
Head of Campaigns and Public Affairs
Macmillan Cancer Relief

No digital radio

In your reply to the letter about digital radio ('Radio daze', December, p74), you

Charities Aid Foundation

I welcomed your December article on different ways to give to charity but why was there no mention of Charities Aid Foundation accounts? They are such an easy way to fund giving.

Sonja Rose, by email

You are not the only reader to have asked this. The simple answer is that we just didn't have



space to include everything. But we did refer people to the foundation's website – www.allaboutgiving.org – which provides information about charity accounts and other ways of donating.

For some people, a charity account is a convenient way to fund charity giving but you do pay a small contribution to administer the account, so the donation will be slightly less than if you give to the charity directly. However, you get a number of benefits, including a charity debit card and chequebook, as well as the option to make your donations anonymously.

said analogue and digital radio will operate side-by-side until the government is sure that most of the population has digital coverage. I live on the Isle of Skye and can't get any digital TV or radio other than by subscribing to Sky. From past experience, I'm pretty sure we'll be the last to get it. Does this mean that we will have no TV or radio for some time?

Dorothy Davidson
Isle of Skye

If you can't currently receive terrestrial digital broadcasts (such as Freeview), you could consider Sky's Freesat service, which gives access to 200-plus

digital TV and radio stations for a one-off payment of £150. See www.freesatfromsky.co.uk or call 0870 240 5651 for more details.

We'll be looking at the issue of coverage in more detail in our April report on the future of television.

Disabling access

In your December issue, you looked at problems disabled people face in getting access to places. They can have problems accessing services, too – as in the case of those disabled people who rely on an enduring power of attorney (EPA) to ensure that they get the best returns on

their assets in order to pay for care.

The best deals are now available only with online-only accounts, but the majority of banks I've approached either do not allow an attorney to set up an online account or, if they do, not accounts with the best interest rates.

Peter Stone
Woking

Many of the banks and building societies we contacted told us that they will allow access to all their online accounts – provided that the EPA document has been registered with the Public Guardianship Office and that the attorney can provide proof of their own identity and address.

You should register an EPA once there is reason to believe that the donor is, or is becoming, mentally incapable of managing their own financial affairs. Go to guardianship.gov.uk or call 0845 330 2900

for more information on how to register an EPA.

O2's free texts

The number of free texts on my O2 tariff doubled recently to 100. However, when I checked, I saw I was still getting only 50. I contacted O2 and it immediately agreed to increase them. I expressed my surprise that it hadn't been done automatically, and was told that, for existing customers, it was done only 'on request'. A bit sneaky, I thought.

Ken Thompson
Sutton

O2 told us that it's not obliged to move existing customers on to new tariffs. So it pays to keep a regular look-out for whether your tariff has been updated. If it has, contact O2 to make sure you receive any new benefits.

Log on to www.switchwithwhich.co.uk/mobiles to compare mobile phone tariffs.

we want to hear from you

'Take issue' is your page. It's your chance to have your say – on something you've read in *Which?* or simply something you've come across. We'd love to hear from you. Just email or write to the addresses below. And don't forget: if your letter is printed, you'll receive a *Which?* book of your choice.



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Scottish housing

Hot on the heels of news that home information packs are to be introduced in England and Wales comes the announcement that Scotland is to get a new housing bill.

The new system allows for a single survey scheme, which will give buyers far more detail on properties and simplify the whole buying and selling process. It's hoped the single survey, commissioned by the seller at the start, will provide in-depth, quality information on the condition of a property and stamp out the problems of buyers pursuing a purchase they won't be able to afford because of 'offers-over' prices that are unrealistically low.

We've long argued for such a bill. We think it will benefit sellers and buyers alike and will put an end to the multiple surveys which have plagued housebuying in Scotland. We hope that it's implemented without delay.

GETTING LEGAL ADVICE

We're always urging consumers to shop around before hiring someone or buying anything. And the same applies when looking for a legal adviser.

But how can you shop around if you don't know what to look out for or need to find out? The Department for Constitutional Affairs, working with industry and consumer groups, including Which?, has come up with seven key questions for consumers to ask, which should help them get the best deal for their particular circumstances.

The questions include whether the lawyer

has experience of the type of case, what will be involved, and how much it will cost. Consumers should also ask what they can do if something goes wrong or they're not satisfied with the service provided.

Go to www.which.co.uk/campaigns for more.



Report slams irresponsible marketing of food to kids

Brand leader Cadbury is just one of several big names shamed in a report from Which?.

Childcatchers: the tricks used to push junk food to your children exposes 12 of the dirtiest marketing tricks used by firms to promote unhealthy foods to children.

In the course of our research for the report, published last month, we uncovered more than 40 examples of irresponsible marketing tactics, many of which parents may not be aware of. We've always been concerned about marketing tricks that happen behind parents' backs – for example, 'text2win' competitions, promotions that are linked to internet and computer games, brands incorporated into games, as well as sponsorship and

endorsements. But our findings are especially alarming in the light of recent figures, which show that 14.5 per cent of under-11-year-olds in England are overweight or obese.

We're campaigning to stop the advertising and promotion to children of foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt. You can help. Show your support and share your views by logging on to www.which.co.uk/kids-food now.

● Visit www.which.co.uk/campaigns for more about all our campaigning activities.



Irresponsible: 'text2win' competitions that promote unhealthy food to children

CAMPAIGNING BY YOU

Mary Dixon, from south-east London, has set up a website to help people find pubs and restaurants that are wheelchair-accessible. Yourlevelbest.com lists around 4,500 venues all over the UK which meet the minimum criteria of a wheelchair-accessible entrance and toilet. Mary, a wheelchair user herself, says: 'Full compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act could take years but I'm not going to wait around complaining. People need to know now where they can go!'

Visit www.yourlevelbest.com or call 020 8355 4328. Go to www.drc.gov.uk for more about the Disability Discrimination Act.



contact us

Share your campaign speakout@which.co.uk
Speak Out, PO Box 44,
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roundup

● Food safety scores

Two campaign successes: Norwich and Southwark Councils are publishing online hygiene inspection results for their food premises. And Hammersmith and Fulham Council has agreed to give us the hygiene inspection reports we requested (see 'Dangerous days out', July 2005) and, from April, will publish inspection scores online.

● Scottish legal body

We're pleased to report that Scotland is to get a Scottish Legal Complaints Commission. The new independent body will investigate consumer complaints about legal practitioners which the Law Society has not been able to resolve.

● Financial needs

You can now read our evidence to the Treasury Select Committee on the need for core financial services (credit, pensions, advice and so on) that all consumers can benefit from. Go to www.which.co.uk/campaigns.