



Press Release

The scandal continues same old flawed assessment process in the same inaccessible building

The disgraceful and embarrassing situation regarding St Mary's House, Norwich continues with a new company taking over disability assessments. On 1st March Maximus, a foreign owned outsourcing company take over the contract for carrying out the notorious Work Capability Assessment (WCA). They take over this failed service from Atos in the same inaccessible building in Duke St, Norwich.

Disabled campaigners and our supporters will be demonstrating between 12.30 – 1.30pm on Monday 2nd March outside St Mary's House against this double gross injustice.

Maximus, a company with a history of disability discrimination and improper practices, will be paid more than double what Atos was for the contract. Meanwhile very little will have changed: Maximus will be using the same building which is not accessible to disabled people. Many staff will remain the same as they move across from Atos and, most significantly, the fundamental flaws of the assessment which tests functionality as opposed to employability will continue.

Mark Harrison, CEO of Equal Lives said "What a great way to start a new contract with a significant proportion of your customers unable to access your service because they can't get in your building for their disability assessment! The only way to ensure a fair and just social security system is to scrap the Work Capability Assessment and bring benefit tests back within the public sector in a building which disabled people can access. Changing one private sector provider for another does nothing to address the core problems. The jobs market is completely inaccessible to most disabled people for a variety of reasons – lack of support, inaccessible work environments and discrimination; these are the things that need to be addressed."

Press/TV/Radio: Interviews are available

Mark Harrison, CEO Equal Lives: 07825 600195 or 07979 400564



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About Equal Lives

Equal Lives is a user-led human rights organisation supporting all disabled people in Norfolk. It was formed in 1996 by groups of disabled people in Norfolk. The organisation is led by a Board of Trustees all of whom are disabled people and elected by and from its membership. The organisation undertakes a wide range of services including:

- Comprehensive advice that covers all Department of Work and Pensions benefits relating to illness and disability. We offer support, advice and information to families and carers of disabled people
- Providing advice and support to people considering or using Personal Budgets or Direct payments in Norfolk
- Support for vulnerable adults and juveniles detained in police custody
- Advocacy support for users of mental health services to make sure that their views and concerns are heard by others
- Advice and support to people considering or using Direct Payments in Suffolk with our Suffolk Independent Living service
- Projects and activities with our membership and others to work towards achieving Equal Lives

<http://equallives.org.uk/>