



IA UPDATE



March 2026

Welcome

We're busy finalising Information Day and hope you like our event programme, featuring talks, workshops, special guests, a product exhibition, lunch – and cake! Please note: booking closes Monday 6 April.

Our March round-up covers events from around the network, volunteering news and more. Don't forget, we love hearing from you too so please get in touch, whether it's to share your story, give us feedback or let us know about your events: marketing@iasupport.org

WaterSure scheme consultation outcome for 2027

Defra's WaterSure scheme (for England), introduced in 1999, has alleviated the high cost of water bills for qualifying households, including people with bowel conditions.

On 6 March 2026, the government announced a 'major reform' of the current WaterSure scheme following last summer's six-week public consultation, which explored the need to extend current qualifying benefits, including capping bills for single occupiers, among other proposals. The reforms are set to come into force in early 2027, bringing 53,000 extra households into the scheme, and will be funded by an additional £1.14 onto the bills of other water customers.

Eligibility currently requires someone in the household to provide medical evidence of Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, weeping skin diseases, incontinence, desquamation (flaky skin disease) or renal failure requiring home dialysis. They must also be on at least one of the following benefits to qualify: Universal Credit, Pension Credit, Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income-based Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit.

The changes will, for the first time, bring Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) into the legislative list of qualifying benefits and see a maximum household income of £25,745 in line with the average household in receipt of Universal Credit.



The changes will mean that low-income households who use high amounts of water can qualify to have their bills capped. They must have a water meter and either a specific medical condition or three or more children living at home. The need to provide a medical note to prove a medical condition will also be removed.

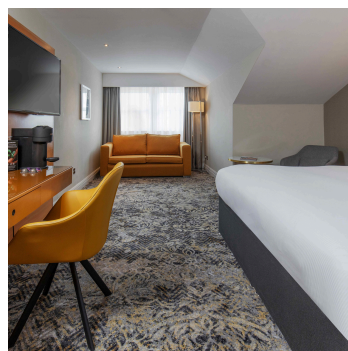
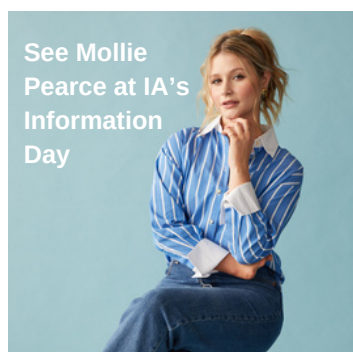
The reforms will ensure companies use the lowest possible average bill as the cap for WaterSure. This could be the overall average or the metered average – whatever is lower. Likewise, the cap will be adjusted so a single household only pays for the average volume used by one person.

James Taylor, Director of Strategy at disability equality charity Scope, said: "Life costs more if you are disabled, and it's very good news that more disabled families will qualify for discounted water bills."

You can find out more in Defra's '[Summary of responses and government response](#)'.

The latest WaterSure advice can be found on [Citizens Advice](#).

Information Day programme, 25 April 2026



We're looking forward to welcoming you to IA's Information Day on Saturday 25 April 2026 in Warwickshire, and are delighted to now share the event programme, as follows:

09.00 Exhibition open, browse and chat with company representatives

10.00 Welcome followed by 'A brief history of the Bryan Brooke Medal' - Professor Gordon Carlson CBE, BSc (Hons), MB ChB (Hons), MD FRCS, Consultant Colorectal Surgeon

10.35 'With every setback, there's a comeback: Learning to trust your body again' - [Zoey Wright, World Champion Fitness Model](#)

11.15 Refreshments break, browse exhibition and chat with company representatives

11.45 Workshop session 1 (Note: Workshops 1, 2, 3 & 4a will run during this session)

1. 'Dietary guidelines for people without their colon' - Sophie Medlin, Consultant Dietitian

2. 'Preventing kidney disease by the correct hydration' - Shelagh Bickerton, Lead Clinical Nurse Specialist for Acute Kidney Injury

3. 'Mental health matters' - Carrie Helman, Psychotherapist and Aileen MacArthur, Humanistic Counsellor

4a. 'Internal pouches – debunking the myth' [Workshop session 1 only] - Internal Pouch Subcommittee & St Mark's Hospital Pouch Specialist Nurses

4b. 'Your medication and you' [Workshop session 2 only] - Uchu Meade, MRPharmS (Consultant), Consultant Pharmacist

12.25 Workshop session 2 (Note: Workshops 1, 2, 3 & 4b will run during this session)

13.05 Lunch, browse exhibition and chat with company representatives

14.00 The Bryan Brooke Lecture: 'The emergency ileostomate: problems and potential solutions' - Professor Susan Moug BSc (Hons), MB ChB, PhD, FRCS, Consultant Colorectal Surgeon

14.45 'Stoma care nursing: where we came from and owning our direction for the future' - Natasha Rolls RN, Lead Stoma Care Nurse Specialist and Chair, ASCNUK

15.15 Refreshments break, browse exhibition and chat with company representatives

15.45 'An audience with Mollie Pearce' - [Mollie Pearce, TV Personality and Disability Campaigner](#)

16.30 'Lifetime Achievement Awards' - Professor Gordon Carlson CBE, BSc (Hons), MB ChB (Hons), MD FRCS

16.40 Q&A Speaker Panel – an opportunity to ask the experts. Questions may be submitted in advance

17.00 Close of conference - Professor Gordon Carlson CBE, BSc (Hons), MB ChB (Hons), MD FRCS

19.00 Gala dinner & entertainment (where booked): Pre-dinner drinks from 7pm, dinner to be served from 7.30pm plus announcement of the IA Innovation Award

Information Day 2026, Chesford Grange Hotel, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 2LD

Date: IA's AGM (*for company law members and board members only*): Friday 24 April.

Information Day: Saturday 25 April, from 9am to 5pm; where booked, gala dinner from 7pm.

Booking closes Monday 6 April: <https://iasupport.org/infoday26>

Evening celebration for committee members and Support volunteers

Ahead of Information Day, join us in celebration of your fantastic contributions to IA. On Friday 24 April we are inviting committee members and One2One Support volunteers to join us for a relaxed social evening, where you can reconnect with friends and acquaintances from other groups, or meet up for the first time. This is an opportunity to join your fellow volunteers and rejoice in your successes alongside those of your predecessors, as we celebrate IA's 70th year over a buffet dinner and a glass of something fizzy!

Pre-registration will apply and we are looking forward to receiving confirmation of those attending from your group by Tuesday 7 April 2026. Reservations can be emailed to info@iasupport.org, providing the names of your committee and/or your support volunteers who will attend.



Royal Stoke University Hospital to become UK's largest robotic surgery centre



In February, [BBC News reported that The Royal Stoke University Hospital is set to become the UK's largest robotic surgery centre](#), following a £12m investment from the Denise Coates Foundation, a local organisation that seeks to improve lives and wellbeing through charitable grants and donations.

The funding will play a significant role in expanding access to robotic surgery across Staffordshire.

[Read our article about robotic-assisted surgery](#), which was originally published in the IA Journal, autumn 2024 edition.

How old is your ostomy?

In light of IA's 70th anniversary, we asked our Facebook followers this very question. The response showed just how popular this subject is! Here's a few uplifting comments we received:

- My ileostomy was 40 on 6 January. Can't believe that long.
- Got a younger one, eight years old and hates carrots – no surprises there!
- My permanent ileostomy was on 4th January 1993. Have never looked back.
- Coming up to 45 years, lived life longer with ileostomy than without it.
- Beryl was 7 on the 6 February, she didn't get a party.
- June 10th 1983 – 43yrs.
- Mine is 50 in May.
- Mine is 60 yrs.
- Having mine done 12th March.
- My ileostomy will be 11 in May. It gave me my life back.
- Had mine two years. I'm 73.



If you would like to share any positive experiences, anecdotes or memories of stoma life and living without limitations, please drop us a line at editor@iajournal.co.uk

Support Caroline as she takes on London Landmarks Half Marathon for IA

On Sunday 12 April, the streets of central London will close to traffic for the annual half marathon, which will see hundreds of people race past the capital's iconic landmarks. Among them will be IA's PR & Communications Manager, Caroline Bramwell, raising funds for IA with every step.

To support Caroline, please visit her Just Giving fundraising page or scan the QR code opposite.



Spain's Aena-operated airports no longer recognise Hidden Disabilities' Sunflower

Are you planning a trip to Spain or Spanish territories, such as Ibiza and Tenerife? If so, it's important to be aware that security staff at Aena airports no longer recognise the Hidden Disabilities' Sunflower badge/lanyard you may be used to using to signal that you have a hidden disability.



Instead, you will need Aena's own 'invisible disabilities' badge, as shown below right, which does the same helpful job for passengers with any type of hidden disability, including a stoma. It's a discreet way to let airport staff know you might need a little extra time, privacy or support. Find information, including how to get your badge, here.



Participants required for Sex-PROM Phase 3 recruitment



Researchers at St Mark's Hospital in London are seeking participants to help with their study of sexual dysfunction following pelvic colorectal surgery. The aim is to develop a patient reported outcome measure (PROM) that can be used to identify and treat symptoms of sexual dysfunction after benign pelvic colorectal surgery.

Criteria to help with the Sex-PROM

Have you undergone benign (non-cancer) pelvic colorectal surgery, such as fistula surgery, pouch surgery, proctectomy, stoma formation? Are you over 18, based in the UK and not a previous Sex-PROM participant? Would you like to share your experiences to help researchers develop the tools to help practitioners treat post-surgery sexual dysfunction?

The research team is in the final stages of this study and is looking for participants to complete a questionnaire twice, one month apart. If you are interested (and qualify based on the above), irrespective of your experience, please contact: LNWH-tr.sexprom@nhs.net

M&S launches stoma underwear for children

In March, Marks & Spencer launched a children's range of stoma underwear. The cotton-rich knickers are 'super comfy and stretchy, and have a hidden pouch designed for a stoma bag' and are sold in packs of five, priced £9.50.

To see the underwear range, which caters for children aged two to 16, visit www.marksandspencer.com and search product code: T718000L.



Birmingham Children's Hospital adaptive fashion show returns



On Saturday 13 June, patients from Birmingham Children's Hospital (BCH) will once again model bespoke creations on the catwalk to raise awareness of visible and hidden differences. Gorgeous adaptive outfits are currently in design, masterminded by local charity '[Inclusive Fashion](#)'.

The kids' fashion show, now in its fifth year, is in aid of [Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity](#), and is this time sponsored by The Scar Free Foundation. The organiser, Dr Andrea Jester, Consultant Plastic/Hand Surgeon at BCH and Carmen Burkett of Inclusive Fashion, also welcome input from other contributors wishing to support and enrich the lives of children with disabilities. Please contact andrea.jester@nhs.net for more information.

The show will take place at The New Irish Centre, 205 Wheelers Lane, King's Heath, Birmingham on 13 June, from 1-5.30pm. Raffle, kids' entertainment and refreshments provided. [Tickets through EventBrite](#).



IA Group News from Roy Bustin, Group Relationship Lead

Volunteer vacancies

Thank you to those groups who have let us know about volunteering opportunities in their area. We are starting to advertise these roles on our website. Check out the latest opportunities at: <https://iasupport.org/volunteer-vacancies/> If your group has roles that you would like to recruit for, please get in touch and we can work with you to find new volunteers to support our work.

Volunteer postcards

A reminder that postcards are now available for promoting volunteering with IA, as shown opposite. Groups can use these to give out at meetings and events to encourage others to consider getting involved. We are also including them in the new membership packs. If your group would like to order a quantity, please contact National Office and we can arrange for these to be sent to you.

Group events

Did you know that you can advertise your group events on our website at: <https://iasupport.org/events/> This is the place to showcase all the meetings happening across the UK and Ireland that people can attend. If your group has a meeting planned, please remember to add this to your group webpage so that we can help to promote it. If you require any help with this, please get in touch and we will be happy to offer assistance.

Group Volunteer network Zoom meeting – 1 June at 12pm

Our next volunteer network meeting will take place as part of Volunteers' Week on Monday 1 June. We do hope that you can make this lunchtime session, starting at 12pm. This informal meeting will take place on Zoom and is an opportunity to connect with other volunteers across the network. All volunteers are welcome, regardless of your role. If you would like to join, please email us at: volunteering@iasupport.org

