

Dear *M Finch*

**The Suffolk West Federation of Women's Institutes
2017 Resolution - Invisible Disabilities**

I am writing as a member of Great Ashfield and Badwell Ash WI regarding a resolution passed by Suffolk West Federation of WIs at their Annual Meeting this year. The resolution is as follows:

Many people in the UK have an invisible disability that may be overt or hidden but which substantially limits their daily life. This meeting urges WI members to educate themselves, raise awareness in their local communities, and push the Government for more recognition of and support for, these people who suffer in silence.

WI members would like to see further action to ensure that people with 'hidden' or 'invisible' disabilities get the right support. One example of such support is the 'Please Offer Me a Seat' badge for those less able to stand on public transport which is being launched by Transport for London. This is a scheme which could also be launched within all public transport in the UK. We would greatly welcome your support in encouraging local transport providers to adopt this initiative in Suffolk by writing to them on our behalf.

We are also keen to ensure that blue badges are available to those who require them. We would welcome your support for a review of the eligibility criteria for blue badges to ensure that people with 'invisible' disabilities who need accessible parking or easy access to facilities that enable them are eligible for a blue badge.

Members of our WI urge you to use your position to support any such schemes which will assist and benefit people with invisible disabilities such as Crohn's disease, mental illness, autism to name but a few.

We are concerned that people with invisible disabilities often face discrimination, and sometimes abuse from others, who do not understand why someone has a Blue Badge, may receive benefits or requires close, easy access to facilities like disabled toilets, when they do not fit the public perception of being disabled.

We urge you to support our resolution to raise awareness of hidden disabilities so that we can end this discrimination and ensure that people with 'hidden' or 'invisible disabilities' get the right support.

Yours sincerely
Gael Peake
(Great Ashfield and Badwell Ash WI)

As a fibromyalgia sufferer I have had years of this and endorse further the need; and deplore the erosion of benefits for this particular patient group.