



Making a Difference

Bristol Disability Equality Forum Annual Report 2007 - 2008



(Annual General Meeting 2007)

"There can be no inclusion without us playing a full part in the process."

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Forum Advisors

Advisors represent an area of Bristol or an organisation.

Kay Bath - Citywide

Daphne Branchflower - North Bristol and Co-Vice Chair

Steve Bullock then Andrew Goodman - West of England Centre for Inclusive Living (WECIL)

Bas Chawdhary - North Bristol (sadly died August 2007)

Andy Coombs - East Bristol and Co-Chair

Lesley Doherty - Citywide

Ken Drinkwater - Citywide

Gabbi - South Bristol

Rae Gingell - East Bristol & Co-Vice Chair

Jennifer Keane - Dial-a-Ride

Julian Sandiford - Bristol & South Gloucestershire People First

Algy Seymour - Bristol Physical Access Chain (BPAC) and Co-Chair

Shirley Stanton - Co-optee

Mark Williams - Citywide and current Co-Chair

Jargon—buster

AGM = Annual General Meeting. A public meeting where we say what we have done over the past year, and what we plan to do next..

BPAC = Bristol Physical Access Chain.

DEF or Forum = Bristol Disability Equality Forum.

DES = Disability Equality Scheme.

PA = Personal Assistant or Support worker.

BSL = British Sign Language.

Direct Payments = the scheme where Disabled people employ their own PAs instead of the Council employing them.

Neighbourhood Partnership = a group of local councillors and service providers who listen to what local people say, then decide what the priorities in that area are.

Service provider = an organisation that is responsible for a service e.g. housing, nursery schools, care workers etc.

ACC = Adult Community Care - what used to be Social Services but without the children's services bit.

BRI = Bristol Royal Infirmary, the hospital near the coach station.

UBHT = the health authority that runs the BRI and other hospitals.

PCT = Primary Care Trust, an organisation responsible for **all** the health services in an area e.g. Bristol PCT covers all of Bristol.

DRC = Disability Rights Commission.

Social model of disability = seeing disability as something that is wrong with the ways we are excluded, **not** as something that is wrong with us.

National Service Framework = an outline of what services people will get and how they will be delivered.

Disablist = being rude or unfair to, or bullying or attacking, someone because they are a Disabled person.

Monitoring = Checking if an organisation does what its plans say it will, by the date they say promise (deadline) and that they do a good job.

Co — Chairs' Report



Mark Williams

Citywide
Representative

Current Co — Chairs

Algy Seymour

BPAC
Representative



(Andy Coombs - resigned during the year)

As some of you will know, Bas Chawdhry died in August 2007. He was an activist in several community organisations for many years and is missed by many. The Forum has certainly missed his gentle spirit and valuable contributions. Our thoughts are with his wife, children and grandchildren as they re-adjust to this loss.

We also said goodbye to Ruth Pickersgill this year, when she moved away. Ruth has been a hard working and committed member of the Disabled people's movement in the West of England, and an outstanding Equalities & Inclusion Manager within the Council; we lost a great ally in our campaign for inclusive education when she moved. We wish her all the best in the future and are sure that the area she has moved to will have already realised just how lucky they are!

The past year has been one of hard work and success. Three successes stand out:

- ♦ the campaign for our members right to decide the future of the Forum, not the Council;
- ♦ the campaign for an increase in Direct Payments; and
- ♦ the Inclusive Education working group negotiations to ensure positive action in June 2008 to increase the number of Disabled School Governors in Bristol.

All three were very successful and good examples of what Disabled people can achieve by working together to get real independence and equality.

Although the campaign about the future of the Forum was stressful, it injected a lot of energy into our membership and gave us several new volunteers. It also raised some exciting possibilities for the Forum's future. We are looking at the good and bad points about four different options. Three of the four options give us the chance to 'grow' into a more influential organisation. Members will get the chance to vote on these options in the autumn. (See page 7).

The coming year is going to be very exciting, so make sure you are involved.

Development Worker's Report



Laura Welti,
Forum Worker

It has been a very busy and successful year, with the Forum having done all the things in its 2007-08 workplan AND run a large campaign against the Council about the future of the Forum (see page 7). This would not have been possible without the very hard work of the Forum Executive and the commitment of the campaign Action Group.

The statement by the Council that it was going to give the Forum to another organisation to run was very stressful for Advisors but, in the end, very positive for the Forum. The members were so angry at not being asked what type of organisation they wanted the Forum to be in the future that they became very active and much more ambitious about what the Forum **could** be!

They also showed what you can achieve when you work together and have a 'can do' attitude - despite some feeling that the Council would do what it wanted, regardless of what the members said.

As a result of the successful campaign, Advisors and the campaign Action Group will research four options for the Forum's future and its members will get to vote for the one they want, by December 2008. The four options are:

- ◆ Become an independent charity;
- ◆ Join with one or more other groups as a partnership, separate from the Council;
- ◆ Be run by another organisation; and
- ◆ Stay in the Council.



(Natasha, Action
Group member)

Members will get a list of the advantages and disadvantages of each option with their voting form.

The Forum was also successful in getting the hourly pay rate Direct Payments increased. This is a really important success. It will put money in the pockets of Disabled people on Direct Payments now, and many more Disabled people in the future when the new ways of providing support (called Putting People First) are introduced.

(continued on Page 6)

Development Worker's Report

The Forum held several Open Forum meetings in 2007-08 including:

- ◆ An AGM with a presentation on what the Disability Rights Project had achieved;
- ◆ A meeting, in partnership with the Disability Rights Project, on Transport and on the Independent Living Bill; and
- ◆ A meeting in March 2008, where members persuaded the Equalities Manager to support the Forum to explore a range of choices about its future and let the members vote for the option they want the most.



These meetings were very well attended and the feedback was excellent - except the Transport part of the joint meeting. Those who came along were very frustrated that all the transport representatives either said they couldn't answer the questions, or blamed another organisation for the situation.

Next year promises to be very exciting as the Forum looks at:

- ◆ how it would like to develop and which option its members want,
- ◆ runs workshops for Disabled people on what is involved in being a school governor,
- ◆ works with Adult Community Care on a range of issues,
- ◆ holds new Advisor elections,
- ◆ starts to develop its website,
- ◆ Campaigns for equalities representatives on all Neighbourhood Partnerships, and
- ◆ Does all the work involved in becoming whatever type of organisation our members want the Forum to be e.g. changing the constitution, arranging the move, seeking more funding, etc.

We will also be sending Advisors on a range of training in the new skills the Forum will need if it does become independent of the Council.

I'm looking forward to the challenge and hope that you are too. I know that the Executive are - and several new people who want to become Advisors - why not join us!?

Campaign for Self-Determination

At the beginning of December 2007 the Equalities Manager came to an Advisors' meeting. She came along to tell Advisors that the Council had decided to give the Forum to WECIL to run.

Disabled people have been fighting for the right to self-determination for years so, although WECIL is a valued Disabled people's organisation, Advisors were angry that a decision had been made about the Forum without any discussion with members.

Fortunately, Wendy Stephenson (Chief Executive of VOSCUR) was also there and pointed out that the Council's actions broke almost every part of the Bristol Compact. The Compact is an agreement about how community groups, the voluntary sector and the Council will work together.



As a result the Forum got the Council to agree to hold a consultation until the end of March. In that three months the Forum had discussions with Council decision-makers at Advisors' meetings and at an Open Forum meeting about this issue. Every meeting was very well attended and every Disabled person who spoke wanted Forum members to decide the Forums' future, not the Council.

Throughout this campaign the Forum was supported by VOSCUR. They gave the Executive practical advice and support about the best way to go about the campaign. Without VOSCUR's support the Advisors and Action Group would have found the campaigning work even harder.

Then, in April, the Council suddenly agreed to what the Forum had been asking for - a year to look at all its options, find out which one its members wanted and start to make the changes necessary for it to happen.

This was a fantastic victory for not giving up and the value of working together to influence change! Now we have an exciting year ahead exploring the options of becoming a partnership, a charity, or run by another organisation.

By the autumn we will send this information to all our members and ask them to vote on the options by telling us what their first, second, third and fourth choices are. So, make sure your voice is heard - send your voting form back!

Adult Community Care (ACC)

Some of you will remember that, last year, we told you we had been successful in getting Adult Community Care to review the Direct Payments rate. They found out what Disabled people already knew - Bristol was paying a lower Direct Payments rate than some of the areas around Bristol, they promised the Forum they would try and find the money for an increase.



They were true to their word and, from 1st April 2008 the Direct Payments rate was increased to £10.50 ph, to cover the worker's pay per hour and the other costs of employing them.

The Forum has continued to work well with Adult Community Care in many other areas of its work, including meeting with either Annie Hudson (Director of ACC), or one or more of her Service Directors - Cathy Morgan, Wendy Fabbro and Jocelyn Mignott - every three months, to look at how the department is improving and what it is doing about issues affecting Disabled people.

Much of these conversations were about the Home Care Review and the government's plans to change how Disabled people get the support they need. These plans will give Disabled people much more control over what support they get and the Forum has been suggesting that the department work with the Forum next year, running workshops to raise awareness of these changes and build people's confidence in managing their own support.

The Forum has also had representatives on the Stakeholder Forum and the Physical and Sensory Impairments Board. Mark Williams (Vice Co-Chair) is a Forum representative on both groups. He says, of the Sensory and Physical Impairments Board:

"I have only been on this board a few months while it has looked at issues such as Orchard View (a very sheltered housing project) and the problem of support workers for Disabled students at the City of Bristol College. Also, on the topic of the National Service Framework on long-term conditions, I explained how parts of it go against the Social Model (of disability). For example, there is a major problem with concentrating on people's particular impairments as, under the Social Model, people should not be labelled as disabled by their impairments. It is society that disables us, not our own bodies."

Consultations

Despite the very busy year campaigning on the future of the Forum we still responded to a lot of different consultations from other parts of the Council. Our involvement ranged from one or two hours making suggestions to several days of discussions and written responses, depending what the consultation was about.

Short responses included:

- ◆ Piper Lifeline - about charging for safety alarms at home;
- ◆ Parks and Green Spaces Strategy;
- ◆ Community Cohesion Strategy;
- ◆ Neighbourhood and Housing Disability Equality Plan;
- ◆ Residents' parking scheme for the city centre;
- ◆ Blue Badge Strategy.

Longer consultations covered:

- ◆ Disability Rights Project - providing advice in its initial "setting up" phase, being an active member of its steering group and working with it on a joint public meeting;
- ◆ Special Educational Needs Strategy;
- ◆ Orchard View (respite unit);
- ◆ Home Choice Lettings;
- ◆ Housing Support Register;
- ◆ Home Care Futures;
- ◆ The Equalities Impact Assessment on the new Customer Services Points;
- ◆ Neighbourhood partnerships - The new system for managing neighbourhoods;
- ◆ The new Travelcard - which led to us having to sort out difficulties individual people were having getting their pass renewed.



The Forum was also involved in the National campaign for an Independent Living Bill. As well as encouraging people to sign the petition for the Bill we lobbied the Council. This involved distributing leaflets and encouraging local councillors to put pressure on their own political parties to vote for the Bill. A number of local Councillors have offered their support to this campaign, which we are still hopeful will eventually become part of our care system.

Finally, the Forum also took part in a number of consultation meetings about parts of the Council's Disability Equality Scheme e.g. employment of Disabled people and accessible communications.

Inclusive Education

The group's plans for this year included monitoring how well the Council is meeting the targets it set itself as part of the Council's DES, and negotiating more effective involvement of Disabled people in schools.

Unfortunately the Council did not hold any meetings to monitor the Education part of the DES. However we did get a DEF member on 4 school Inclusion groups and the Forum's Inclusive Education chairperson into classrooms as a guest speaker.

Your school
needs you!



We also successfully persuaded the Governor Training unit to work in partnership with us to organise workshops on what is involved in being a governor or member of a school's inclusion group. These will be in June 2008 and we hope they will lead to several Disabled people who have never been involved in schools before becoming a governor or joining a sub-group.

The Inclusive education group also met the Head teacher of the new Redlands School and of Claremont to discuss how they were going to ensure that Disabled pupils are included in the less academic side of school life, when the two schools are based on the same site. The group was disappointed that there were no plans at that stage and pointed out that drama clubs, sport, other lunchtime and after school activities, were good opportunities for inclusion. The headteachers agreed to explore these options.

The group also met with Heather Tomlinson (Director of Children and young people's services) and the Council Cabinet member for that department - Derek Pickup. One of the successful outcomes of these meetings was a promise that the Council would monitor how individual schools were actually spending the special educational needs budget that they now control. Obviously, as schools have only just been given the power to control these budgets it will be at least a year before any monitoring information is available.

Derek Pickup
Cabinet
member
For
Education



Heather
Tomlinson
Director -
Children's
Services



Rae
Gingell -
Inclusive
Education
Group
member



Scrutiny Commissions and committees

The Forum had representatives on two Scrutiny Commissions - Care and Communities and Quality of Life. It also had a place on the Council's Physical and Sensory Impairment Board. This deals with issues related to meeting Disabled peoples' support needs.



Peter Hammond - Scrutiny Chairperson

There are particular problems with the Scrutiny Commissions that we, and other Equalities Forums, have repeatedly brought to Council's attention but been largely ignored:

- ♦ The meetings are not accessible -the paperwork comes out a week or less, before the meeting and is, literally, at least an inch thick;
- ♦ The commissions decide on their programme of work for the year **before** they co-opt any Forum Advisors;
- ♦ The meetings can be ridiculously long and are full of jargon and/or inaccessible information.

However, we have had a positive impact on some of the issues on the agenda and raised some issues ourselves. In particular:

Scrutiny Commissions

We pushed for more appropriate Very Sheltered Housing (VSH) for younger Disabled adults, as it the provision still seems to as though the only residents are people over 65, and challenged the planned charges for Piper Lifeline system. Unfortunately the best I could get them to take on board was to reduce the impact on poorer Disabled people.

Physical and Sensory Impairment Board

We did a lot of work on the proposed changes at Orchard View Respite and improving assistive technology services for Disabled people on this committee. The Executive also met with the officer responsible to advise on the best ways forward.

The Forum also sat on a project board looking at home care in the Bristol area. This involved several meetings in a short space of time. A number of proposals were recommended which Adult Community Care (ACC) have now taken on, including more/better training in the Social Model and the setting up of a STAR (Short Term Assessment and Re-ablement) service, in which new users will get intensive support to help them regain their independence wherever possible.

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Disability
Equality Forum**

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**If you need this
report in a
different format
or community
language,
please let us
know.**

**Join a winning team -
become a member of
Bristol Disability
Equality Forum today !**



**Want to have some fun for a
change?**



**Then come along to a fantastically funny night of
Disabled people making the jokes, and do the
laughing, instead of being laughed **at!****

The Nasty Girls

Saturday 24th January 2009

**at
Royal Marriott Hotel, College Green**

Doors open 7.30pm.

**Tickets : £7 (waged), £4 (unwaged), £ 3 (members);
FREE to members who come to our AGM.**

**Book in advance by contacting the Forum office by:
contacting us in one of the ways listed in the blue
box above. BSL users should text in advance to con-
firm if interpreters available.**

**A Bristol Disability Equality Forum promotion sponsored by Bristol
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