

Your City - Your Voice



# BRISTOL DISABILITY EQUALITY FORUM

Annual Report  
2006 – 2007



Annual General Meeting 2006

**“there can be no inclusion without us playing a full part in the process.”**

Bristol DEF is supported by Bristol City Council

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## Forum Advisors

Kay Bath—Citywide representative

Daphne Branchflower—North Bristol representative and Co-Vice Chair

Steve Bullock—West of England Centre for Inclusive Living (WECIL)  
representative

Bas Chawdhary—North Bristol representative

Andy Coombs—East Bristol representative and Co-Chair

Lesley Doherty—Citywide representative

Ken Drinkwater—Citywide representative

Mary Feltham—Shopmobility representative and Co-Chair (left)

Gabbi—South Bristol representative

Jennifer Keane—Dial-a-Ride representative

Ron Preddy—South Bristol representative

Julian Sandiford—Bristol & South Gloucestershire People First representative

Algy Seymour— Bristol Physical Access Chain (BPAC) representative &  
Co-Chair

Mark Williams—Citywide representative & Co-Vice Chair

## Jargon—buster

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**AGM** = Annual General Meeting. A public meeting where an organisation lets people know what has been done over the past year, and what it plans to do in the next year.

**BPAC** = Bristol Physical Access Chain.

**DEF or Forum** = Bristol Disability Equality Forum.

**DES** = Disability Equality Scheme.

**PA** = Personal Assistant or Support worker for a Disabled person.

**BSL** = British Sign Language.

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

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

**ACC** = Adult Community Care the new name for what used to be the social services department without the children's services bit.

**BRI** = Bristol Royal Infirmary, the hospital just up the road from 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 a particular area e.g. North Bristol PCT covers North & East Bristol, and parts of South Gloucestershire.

**DRC** = Disability Rights Commission.

**BME** = Black and Minority Ethnic.

**LGB** = Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual.

**Social model of disability** = seeing disability as something that is wrong with the ways in which our needs are met, **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 anti-Disabled people e.g. bullying someone just because they are disabled.

# Co – Chairs' Report

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**Algy Seymour**  
BPAC Representative

## Current Co – Chairs

**Andy Coombs**  
East Bristol  
Area Advisor



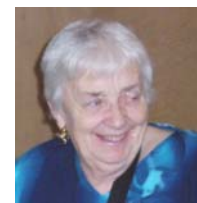
It has been another busy and eventful year—some of it good, some not so good.

The good news includes :

- ◆ Disabled people in Bristol voting unanimously for the Forum to be the lead organisation in monitoring and evaluating the Council's Disability Equality Scheme (DES);
- ◆ Successfully persuading Adult Community Care to review how much it pays people on Direct Payments for each hour of Personal Assistant (PA) support that it has been decided they need;
- ◆ Getting the Council to change its mind about moving the Forum to Knowle and to agree that we continue to have all our meetings in the Council House.

The not-so-good news was that we said goodbye to Mary Feltham (female Co-Chair) and Jane Beauchamp (temporary Administrator) and that lack of Admin support prevented us holding as many Open Forum meetings, or producing as many newsletters, as we usually do.

Mary has been involved in the Forum for a long time and was Co-Chair for over five years. Sadly, a worsening of her own, and her partners', impairments forced her to resign. She has put a huge amount of time and energy into the Forum over the years and is sorely missed. We wish her all the best for the future and hope to bump into her often.



On a more positive note Jan Beauchamp is now the Administrator for The Vassall Centre Trust. Jane joined the Forum as a trainee on the Council's Disabled people into employment scheme. We had hoped that Jane would stay on after her traineeship but this was not to be. She was a skilled and valued member of staff. We have missed her a lot but are sure she is doing well in her new job.

We have been a little disappointed at the slow rate at which the Council has organised the first meeting of each of the DES working groups. These working groups’ job is to monitor whether the Council is meeting the targets it has set for achieving the things the DES has promised. This is probably, in part, due to the Council having cut jobs in the Equalities team but we do hope that the problem does not continue into next year.

Next year will be very busy indeed as, as well as the DES work, we will be busy making sure that Disabled people and their issues are properly represented in the new Neighbourhood Partnerships. In future these partnerships will play a key part in managing the city. Look out for an article on this development in our Autumn newsletter.

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## Development Worker’s Report

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One of the big changes this past year is that the Forums’ office has moved! We are now based on the ground floor at 6 York Court in St Pauls and our office entrance is at the back. When someone pops by the entry system lets us see who’s there so, if your first language is British Sign Language (BSL), I will be able to see you signing. In practice, the move should make very little difference to our members as we will still be holding all Forum meetings at the Council House.



Along with the change of office the Forums’ Development Workers now have a new manager—Andrew McGrath. Andrew is the manager of the Community Development (Engagement) team which has now been moved to be part of Equalities and Community Cohesion. This means Gillian Douglas is now his manager.

As the Co-Chairs have reported, it has been a difficult year and one that has been very frustrating for all concerned. However, we are hoping to appoint someone as a 6 month temporary Forum Administrator in May. We had hoped the post could be permanent but unfortunately we can’t do that until the Council has reviewed its pay scales for Administrators. So, hopefully, we will be appointing a permanent Administrator in the Autumn.



# DEF AGM 2005-2006

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Over 40 people attended the Forum AGM, filling up Committee Room 1.

As well as reporting on the Forum's work over the previous year, and its plans for the next, the AGM focused on the issue of Inclusive Education for Disabled school pupils with presentations by:

- ◆ Ruth Pickersgill (Equalities Manager, Education)
- ◆ Carolyn Nabarro (Deaf Equality Officer)
- ◆ Listening Partnership—a Disabled Young People's group.

All the speakers are Disabled people active within the local Disabled people's movement.



Ruth Pickersgill's presentation was called 'What is Inclusive Education?' and covered

- ◆ definitions of what inclusion is and what laws cover it;
- ◆ what schools have to do to be inclusive now, and when the new Disability Discrimination Act (2005) comes into effect;
- ◆ What the council can, and can't, control about the education pupils get;
- ◆ What Disabled people can do to make sure there is more, and better, inclusive education.

Carolyn Nabarro covered the inclusion issues for Deaf young people who's first language is British Sign Language (BSL) - especially that, for Deaf young people, attending mainstream school often cuts them off from other BSL users and culture. BSL is the country's second language but it is only taught in special schools for the deaf. Also, deaf schools are being moved on to mainstream school sites that are not ready for them. This leads to Deaf people who have gone to mainstream schools with a 60% chance of experiencing mental and emotional distress. The Deaf community want to see BSL as one of the modern languages taught in all schools—that would be real inclusion for them.

Emma, Lisa and Peter, from the Listening Partnership shared their own experiences of education. They highlighted the disablist bullying Disabled pupils experience—in mainstream and special schools, the low expectations teachers have of what Disabled pupils can achieve, and the wider range of friends you can make if you go to a mainstream school.

## Adult Community Care (ACC)

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The Forum has continued to work productively with Adult Community Care in many different areas of its work.

The Executive met with either Annie Hudson (Director of ACC), Cathy Morgan (Director of Adult Physical & sensory impairments and Older people) or Jocelyn Mignott (Director Mental Health, Learning Difficulties & Procurement) every three months to review how the department is progressing on issues affecting Disabled people including



- ◆ experiences of residents of what used to be called The Bristol,
- ◆ how to encourage Disabled people to go on to Direct Payments,
- ◆ home care,
- ◆ lack of trained PAs, etc.

Perhaps the biggest success was persuading the department to review how much it pays people on Direct Payments for each hour of PA support they have been assessed as needing. Having completed the review, they are now looking at finding the amount of money needed. This is a very important step forward as poor rates of pay contributes to difficulties in getting, and keeping, trained PAs.

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. He says, of the Sensory and Physical Impairments Board: "I have only been on this board a few months while its 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, regarding a National Service Framework on long-term conditions, I pointed out that a major problem with knowing about people's particular impairments is that under the social model (of disability) people should not have to register as being Disabled." AND .....

# Consultations

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The DEF was involved in a wide range of consultations over the year from the Council, local health services and a Disability Rights Commission (DRC) funded project. We also had requests from many more but simply did not have the resources to meet every request. However, these requests (from community safety organisations and government initiatives) show how much more still needs doing.

Consultations that the Forum responded to included:

- ◆ The Council DES (October and January)
- ◆ The moving of the City Gate Walk-in Centre to the Bristol Royal Infirmary (BRI)
- ◆ North Bristol Primary Care Trust (PCT) plans to become a Foundation Trust
- ◆ UBHT (the health authority that runs the BRI) on their plans to become a Foundation Trust
- ◆ The Council's Private Housing Support Team on the issues faced by those who own their own homes, or rent from the private sector
- ◆ The proposed move of the Forums out of the Council House
- ◆ The DRC funded Disability Rights Project.

The Disability Rights Project was set up to support Disabled people to take legal action to **make** organisations providing goods and services comply with the DDA — from a solicitor's letter reminding them of the law, to a full-blown court case.

The Disability Rights Project consulted the Forum on the organisations not implementing the DDA in a significant way, on which Disabled people's organisations might like to/should be on a steering group for the project and what that steering group's constitution should be. Once it was formed, the DEF also had a representative on it—Andy Coombs. However, our other Co-Chair, and one of our Vice-Chairs, are also on it but representing different groups.

We intend to hold an Open Forum meeting on how this project is doing in autumn 2007—so keep a look out for further details.

# Inclusive Education

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The work of the Inclusive Education group over the past year has included:

## Law

In the past year, government proposed a new law and guidance affecting inclusive education. The proposed new law reversed the government's commitment to inclusive education, prioritising 'parent choice' over inclusion. There are two problems with this:



- ◆ for inclusion to work effectively, the money going into 'special schools' needs to follow young people into mainstream schools. Local authorities won't be given the extra money needed to fund both;
- ◆ most parents of Disabled pupils are not Disabled themselves, and probably most of them do not know a Disabled adult who went to a 'special school'. This means they don't fully appreciate the disadvantages of a 'special school' education. It is not a coincidence that so many people who have been to a 'special school' are in favour of inclusive education.

So, the Inclusive Education campaign worked with local MPs Roger Berry and Kerry McCarthy, letting them know the views of our members and to ask them to try and persuade the government that its proposal was not a good one. The Advisors found both MPs supportive of their views but, unfortunately, the government decided to go with 'parent power' over 'Disabled people power', not for the first time.

## Special Educational Needs

It was also involved in a conference for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCO). SENCOs are the people who assess and co-ordinate the support needs of Disabled pupils so they are key education professionals. A representative of the Inclusive Education group was able to share their experience and knowledge of inclusion issues and the difficulties some experience as a result of not having access to inclusive education.



## Next Year

The group's plans for next year include monitoring how well the Council is meeting the targets it set itself as part of the Council's overall DES, and looking at how to effectively engage and support more Disabled people to become school governors. If you are interested in either of bit of work, please contact the us (See back page).

# Scrutiny Commissions

The Forum had representatives on three Scrutiny Commissions in 2006-2007

- ◆ Physical Environment - Kay Bath
- ◆ Quality of Life - Mark Williams
- ◆ Social Developments - Daphne Branchflower.



We had hoped to have a Forum representative on two other Scrutiny Commissions but our request was turned down. The two commissions (Health and Children's Services) cover issues of great concern to Disabled people—education of Disabled pupils and health services—but neither commission felt it needed disability equality input from a Disabled person. To get round this, one of our Advisors used the part of the meeting where any member of the public can speak to get a disability equality perspective across to the Health Commission

This does, to some extent, reflect the difficulties we have had in persuading senior management within Education to even meet with Disabled people and hear what their concerns are, and in getting health services to acknowledge the social model of disability. They see us mainly as a group of patients with impairment-specific treatment needs, rather than a social minority being discriminated against by the way services are delivered.

Issues we have had some success with at Scrutiny Commissions include:

- ◆ Impressing upon Councillors the importance for some Disabled people of consistently providing the same carer, whether the service is privatised or council-run;
- ◆ that all swimming pools need to be accessible;
- ◆ persuading, along with others, that Ham Green Hospital (now Orchard View respite centre) should not be closed but improved;

However, Advisors are concerned that the disability equality perspective is not taken on board frequently enough. As one of the Forum Scrutiny Co-optees commented, "... my impact has not been great, (but) I have been listened to on certain topics."

Advisors also feel the meetings are not accessible because there is too much paperwork, too much jargon for anyone not a professional specialist to fully understand and meetings are far too long. Some have lasted as long as 6 hours!

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## **Want a better deal for Disabled people in your neighbourhood?**

Then why not become a Neighbourhood Partnership Equalities representative?

In future, the decisions about what needs sorting out the most in your neighbourhood will be decided by your local councillors and the people who live there. This is called a Neighbourhood Partnership.

This is a great opportunity to make sure that the things most important to Disabled people are among the priorities of your local neighbourhood partnership e.g. making sure the needs of people using pavements is a higher priority than the needs of car drivers in general, or, making sure bullying and harassment of Disabled people is tackled.

The DEF will be working with the other Equalities Forums in doing this work so, if you have experience of being a Disabled person and belonging to another equalities community (e.g. BME, LGB, young people) and/or would like to learn more about the issues affecting these groups, so much the better.

Training and support will be given and your expenses paid.

If you would like to know more, please contact Anna Wheeler or Laura Welti in one of the ways listed in the blue box on the left.

It would be great to hear from you.



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