

Newsletter

Spring 2009



Making a Difference

What Will The Lib-Dems Do For Us?

On 24th February the Labour party resigned as leader of the Council when the other parties joined together to defeat Council plans for dealing with everyone's rubbish.

The Forum had projects planned in partnership with the Council so, what will happen to them now the Lib-Dems lead the Council? We asked:

- ◆ what plans they have for improving disability equality in Bristol;
- ◆ what support they will give the equalities' organisations in Bristol;
- ◆ if they support the equalities forums' proposal to have an equalities representative place on each Neighbourhood Partnership;
- ◆ how they might help the DEF and its potential partners to establish a consortium of equalities forums.

Unfortunately, not all the questions were answered and others were, but only in vague terms.

When asked, Councillor Gary Hopkins (Lib Dem Equalities lead) was keen to stress that they are totally committed to sustaining and improving the city's record on inclusion of Disabled people, but pointed out that any plans are subject to the Lib-Dem Party Manifesto, which will be published soon ready for the local elections in June this year.



But Cllr Hopkins said there is an urgent need to speed up access of Disabled people to all public venues in the city. He is aware that such access is needed in order to improve the quality of life for Disabled people and at the same time address the discrimination of venues which are still inaccessible to people.

When asked if he would support the DEF plans to set up a consortium with other voluntary groups in the near future, Cllr Hopkins answered with a firm 'Yes!'. He also promised to provide a reasonable level funding for DEF as it changes and becomes independent of the Council. How much he thinks is reasonable was not said.

Further to that Cllr Hopkins said he is committed to supporting the work of Disabled people's, and other voluntary, organisations in Bristol – he said he knows how important the work of these groups is and plans to involve the groups in consultations in the future.

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Editorial

As you will know by now, Forum members voted to become an independent voluntary sector organisation in partnership with others.

This is a fantastic opportunity to 'grow' the organisation into very exciting one. The Disabled people's movement in Bristol has sorely missed having a Disabled people-led group campaigning outside of the Council.

With government 'backsliding' on commitments to inclusive education, benefit cuts that treat Disabled people as responsible for not having a job (rather than employers), and new laws that demand the destruction of embryos that are Disabled, the progress made in getting the Social Model of disability accepted is being cut away.

With the recession, those who have been disadvantaged in the past are likely to see that disadvantage increase, yet again. As employers have to make job cuts, it is already women who are losing full-time jobs twice as often as men - and the recession has only just started!

By working together and supporting each other, equalities groups will be very much stronger and more likely to be successful in challenging what is going on. Knowing this, the Forum is trying to set up a consortium with other equalities forums in Bristol. It has got the Race, Women's and Lesbian, Gay Bisexual Forums interested in the idea and hopes that the Older people's and Multi-Faith Forums will be interested too.

Obviously it will take more than interest to make it happen, and we will need to make sure that we have a contract with each other that stops us having the sort of problems others have had. But, we can learn from their problems and make sure we avoid them.

A system where each Forum keeps total control of its own work but joins the others on common issues will be too powerful to resist. So, let's do it now!

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Nasty Girls At Forum AGM

The Forum Annual General Meeting (AGM) saw the return of The Nasty Girls, to Bristol.



The AGM was held in the Bristol Marriott Royal on Saturday 24th January and was followed, by a performance from the Liverpool-based, award-winning Disabled comedians The Nasty Girls. They have not been seen here since the early days of WECIL and the Coalition of Disabled People and we were delighted to see a good mix of Disabled and non-disabled people.

The AGM was well attended and, as well as reporting on the Forum's activities in 2007-2008, it brought members up to date on the success of our campaign for self-determination and encouraged people to take action on some of the other issues they face. Issues such as access to shops, access to leisure and social activities, and difficulties using taxis.



The meeting was also attended by some Councillors and, in particular, the deputy leader of the Lib-Dems. He was clearly shocked at the lack of action about Disabled people's issues that we were reporting and has promised to help where he can in future. As many believe the Council will be run by the Lib-Dems after the elections in June, we will be aiming to get his full support for all our work.

People were generally delighted with the venue but there was a serious technical hitch that ended up with some people being effectively excluded.



This happened when the hired loop system did not work and, despite promises to get a replacement, a working hearing loop never arrived. We can only apologise to those who came and could not hear all of the event. We will, of course, be making it clear to the hotel that it should have working hearing loops fitted in all its function rooms.

Many thanks to the Council's Community Engagement team, who funded the venue and performers.

Huge Victory for Blind people

After a long RNIB campaign, Blind people will now be able to get the higher rate mobility part of the Disabled Living Allowance (DLA).

The RNIB successfully lobbied MPs for this change to be included in the Welfare Reform Bill going through parliament. The change will benefit 20-25,00 blind people.

The announcement was made as the Welfare Reform Bill received its third reading in Parliament, and is the result of the RNIB's 2006 'Taken for a Ride' campaign.

The campaign website explained, 'We are campaigning for the higher rate mobility component of DLA to be available to people with serious sight loss. They face some of the greatest difficulties moving around independently in the external environment. Even with the aid of a white cane or a guide dog, the streets are a hostile and potentially dangerous place.'



With more than 220 MPs from all parties having signed a Commons 'Early Day Motion' calling for the change, the Minister for Work and Pensions said that the new rules - that will be introduced from 2011 at a cost of £45-50m a year - are 'not just right but command support from all sides of the House' and are in keeping with the principle of the Welfare Reform Bill, which aims to offer 'more help for people who need it most'.

An RNIB spokesperson said, "We want to thank everyone who supported the campaign by writing to their MPs, sending letters to the local paper and lobbying Parliament. Together we won!"

What Will the Lib Dems do for Us?

(continued from Front Page)

As the Lead on Equalities Cllr Hopkins is already thinking about how best to work on Equalities issues – he is considering it might be useful to have a special assistant Executive member to focus on this area. But, to do this he thinks, realistically, the Lib-dems need to have a good length of time running the Council before it can be done.

Finally, Cllr Hopkins said that because they came into power suddenly (and unexpectedly) he is still learning how the inclusion programme is going and plans to hold meetings about this with Council managers very soon.

He promises us that the DEF will continue to be a valued part of Council policies on inclusion and disability.

Hate Crime Update

The High Court has decided that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) acted unlawfully and broke Article 3 of the Human Rights Act after deciding not to pursue the case of a man who had been attacked, on the grounds that the man was not a credible witness because of his mental health problems.



The man (we'll call him B) was the target of a serious assault in which part of his ear was bitten off. He gave what seemed to be a clear and believable account of events, when they were still fresh in his mind, and he identified the person who attacked him. But, B had a history of psychotic illness in which he

The conclusion was either “a misreading of [the doctor’s report] ... or an unfounded stereotyping ...of [B] as someone who was not to be regarded as credible on any matter because of his history of mental problems.” (High Court judges)

at times held paranoid beliefs about certain people and also suffered auditory and visual hallucinations. He understood that such beliefs and experiences were not normal although they appeared normal to him.

The court also looked at Article 3 of the UN Convention on Human Rights (the ban on torture and inhuman or degrading treatment) and held that the decision not to prosecute on the grounds that he was not a believable witness added insult to injury.

The court decided the CPS had broken Article 3 and said B was to given £8000 in compensation.

This is just one example of the problems Disabled people face in getting attacks on them taken seriously as a hate crime. Another is that the police or CPS often decide a Disabled person was attacked because they are ‘vulnerable’ not because they are Disabled.

In his farewell speech Sir Ken McDonnell (ex boss of the Crown Prosecution Service) said he thought prosecutors dealing with disability hate crimes were about ten years behind what is needed. He said they were now focussing people’s minds to say ‘what is the aggression about in this case?’

In terms of working with the police, he said they needed to shift the focus from looking at the behaviour of the person who was assaulted to looking at the behaviour of the attacker. That makes it less about a person having brought the attack upon themselves and more about what is the attackers behaviour his/her accountability for their actions and the aggression side of the crime.

Free entry for PAs

Did you know that you can get your Support Worker, PA or carer into many cinemas for free? All you need to do is buy a card (called a CEACARD) for £5.50, each year.

You can't use it in all cinemas but many (up to 90%) of the big ones will accept the CEACARD. To check if the one you are planning to go to is included you can either phone and ask or visit www.ceacard.co.uk



There are limits on how you get the free ticket, including:

- ♦ you have to be buying a full price ticket for yourself;
- ♦ They expect the Support Worker, PA or carer to be over 16 to be able to support you, so this could be a problem for those whose children help them out;
- ♦ If they don't think you look like the photo on your card they can ask you to show them some other proof that you are who you say you are.

The card gets you one free ticket only so don't expect to get the whole family in for free!

If you would like to buy one contact:
Tel 0845 123 1292 Minicom 0845 123 1297
Email info@ceacard.co.uk www.ceacard.co.uk

New Equalities Advice Website

There is now a website where you can find information and equalities advice on almost everything.

Sometimes there is quite a bit of detail, others just a list of places to get advice, depending on what your problem is. It is a useful 'one stop shop' listing who to contact for almost every problem you might have.

Why not visit www.isthatdiscrimination.org.uk

and see what you think?

Cheshire Discomforts

Leonard Cheshire Disability (LCD) has been waving the flag for disability rights in a very public way over the last couple of years, often taking attention away from less well-funded Disabled people's organisations.



Now we discover their attitudes haven't changed all that much. The information commissioner decided a complaint from one of their service users was justified and 'gives serious cause for concern'.

LCD had not followed the data protection act because they did not allow the service user to see information they had about him, when asked. The information commissioner said the service user was "being denied the opportunity of correcting what may be inaccurate or misleading personal data about him". In other words they would not let him have copies of emails written by senior managers who were shown to have called him "a git", a "pain", described his efforts to be paid back money when they overcharged him as "blackmail" and suggested that they should stop a holiday he had booked by creating admin barriers, because of the problems that they felt he had caused them.

"It is time for Leonard Cheshire to put its money and morals where its mouth is."

(DEF activist)

This breach of a Disabled person's human and civil rights is especially worrying because as a resident of theirs, he is even more exposed and vulnerable to bad treatment by them.

It is bad when any organisation behaves like this but even worse when their website says that they are the only organisation where people can go to "engage in public debate and to campaign on the social policy and civil rights issues that have an impact on Disabled people".

Thankfully this is not true - there are several, far better organisations' websites. So, how do they get away with such an untruth - because they're the only ones with enough money to advertise themselves this much?

Be a role model?

Can you help care for a disabled child?

Disabled children are mostly born to non-disabled parents, often never coming across a Disabled adult who can be a role model. By getting involved you can help raise the aspirations and ambitions of young Disabled children and young people; whether that be to live independently, know their rights, have a good social life, have a career, and/or have children of their own.

Bristol needs another 30 people who can help families with Disabled children by providing short breaks, the city council has said.

As part of a national campaign, Share the Care Week (15th - 22nd March), Bristol's Short Break Carers service (formerly Family Link) appealed for volunteers who can work with Disabled children in their spare time.



Short breaks are one of the most requested services by families with Disabled children. They help children gain independence while their families have a break from the demands of being a carer. Carers have a chance to build up a real and often long-lasting relationship with that family. There are no special qualifications except energy, time and enthusiasm.

A full training programme is available for all new carers with ongoing training and support available. Carers are paid an allowance to cover expenses and placements can vary from a few hours a week to an overnight stay once a month.

Anthony Welch, a teacher in Bedminster who has been a carer for four years, said: "I find it very fulfilling knowing that I'm not only helping a young person to be safe and have fun in my care but also that it provides a grateful moment of 'respite' for the carers or parents and siblings of the families I work with. The support and reassurance has been there if I've needed it. "

If you are interested in becoming a short break carer contact Clive Leach on 0117 3534086 or email clive.leach@bristol.gov.uk. Or if you have the time to foster Disabled children full time you can find out more by visiting the Council website and search for 'Fostering', where there is an online enquiry form, or call 0117 353 4200.

The Council are not the only people to contact. TACT (The Adolescent and Children's Trust) also provide a range of fostering and short breaks opportunities. You can contact Elaine Graham on 0117 9277725, or email: e.graham@tactfostercare.org.uk

Why not get in touch today?

Shopmobility Bigger than Ever

Bristol Shopmobility have a new purpose built Unit on the Ground Floor of the Cabot Circus Car Park. Now you can park right next door to them and pick up a scooter or chair.

They have a full range of equipment to meet all requirements, whether you have a permanent or temporary impairment. For just £1 an hour or £5 for the day you can hire equipment to assist you in getting out and about in the Broadmead and Cabot Circus areas.



To ensure you get the equipment you want it's best to ring and pre-book, but even if you just call in they should still be able to help you. Call them on 0117 9559083.

They also hire out equipment for long or short term and can deliver equipment for a small charge. Please call them for further information.



The Forum Development Worker can tell you what a life-saver this service can be. Having had her wheelchair stolen in December, she would still be shut in at home were it not for Shopmobility's long term hire!

As a new innovation we are joining up with Bristol Mobility Centre and will be stocking some of their mobility aids and equipment in our Units.

Opening times:

The Unit at the Mall, Bristol -Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between 11 am and 3 pm, and

Cabot Circus (Monday – Saturday between 10 am and 5 pm.

Bristol Shopmobility would like to thank the Bristol Alliance for their new space. The Forum thinks the Bristol Alliance should not have broken some of its promises e.g. a shop front unit rather than being hidden in the car park.

Loving with Dementia

David Wright is a Disabled person and has been the sole carer for his wife Sadie for twelve years. Sadie has dementia. David wrote this poem as a tribute to his wife and their battle to stay together at home while living with the joy and despair that dementia can bring.

SADIE

Oh no, such heartfelt negative words of disbelief to have to go
yet again

To restore order

While further havoc is wreaked elsewhere, increasingly often
'In the most pleading manner'.

Tidy as you go along – never achieving the goal

Always distractions.

Relief only when others are there to guard,

Only to create yet more to be done – during and after

When again the never-ending destruction trail continues

Nothing ends

Unceasing

Bedtime worst – sheer fatigue with the blissful joy of preparation

A travesty of all things pleasurable.

Grinding opposition to every move, increasingly aggressive

And Help?

Nowhere {who knows?}

Horizontal, but for how long? Often mere minutes.

Fight despair

Heavenly joy – finding her so lost, so helpless

In slippers one frosty 3 am.

Illness first – no reason

Gracious Sadie, complete Lady

True ease, scorn impossible.

Acknowledged totally in supremacy.

Children adore and love her with every reason

Consummate capability

Never aloof

Loyal Loving, give thanks

In fact, in deed

Perfection

My perfect Sadie.

Hospital Has a Lot to Learn

My name is Mark Williams. At the end of last year I had to stay in hospital for four nights and I wanted to share my experiences with you.

For people who have not met me before, I have cerebral palsy and only 10% communication. I require 24-hour PA assistance for all my access needs.

I arrived at Accident and Emergency, where my experience was fine; however, my problems started when I got moved on to a ward. I was put in a side room which was more like being shoved in a cupboard. It was very dirty and depressing. If you looked out of the dirty grey windows all you could see were pipes.

At first the nurses said my PA couldn't stay. Therefore, when the nurse came in and asked me something my mother didn't translate for me, so the nurse did not have a clue what I was saying. They soon realised that I did need my PA at all times.

My PA's were there 24 hours a day and not at any time were they offered a cup of tea or a sandwich. They had to sleep on a hard hospital chair, but were expected to do nearly all of my personal care. Without them I would not have been washed, or fed.

Most of the time I would have ended up with no food or drink to be fed so my PA had to remind the kitchen staff that I was in the room.

Such treatment is a breach of basic human rights as well as totally undermining what people are in hospital for - to get better!

Although I hate to say it, I can understand why Disabled people end up dying in hospital. I think we need an education campaign to train all hospital staff how to treat people with different types of impairment.

Low Cost Home improvement loans

If your home is in need of essential repairs, but you can't afford the cost and can't get a grant, you may be able to get help. Bristol City Council in partnership with Wessex Home Improvement Loans has a low cost loan scheme. You may be able to get loans of up to £15,000 at 3% fixed rate interest over 15years.

The loans must be for essential repairs and maintenance including:

- ◆ Leaking roof
- ◆ Rotten or draughty windows
- ◆ Damp treatment
- ◆ Installing central heating

For more info telephone Bristol City Council on: **9664663**
Or go to: www.wessexrt.co.uk



Swamped with Successes

Paralympic champions Eleanor Simmonds and Heather Frederiksen and Jo Jackson all claimed new world records at the British Swimming Championships in Sheffield.

Double Beijing gold medallist Simmonds, 14, smashed the S6 400m freestyle speed by 10 seconds while Frederiksen knocked two seconds off in the S8 category.



Simmonds's time of five minutes 31.44 seconds saw her win gold in the event - where results are determined on how close athletes get to the world record in their category. She became the youngest recipient of an MBE earlier this year and recently received her award at Buckingham Palace.

She added: "It's all a bit of a surprise, I felt more relaxed than I did in Beijing and that time is just so amazing."

Frederiksen lowered American Jessica Long's world record in her heat with a time of 4:45.67 but failed to improve on that time in the final, touching home in a time of 4:47.08 to take the silver medal.

"The world record was my aim coming into this event so I am happy to have broken it," Frederiksen said. "My training has been going well although it has been a bit on and off since Beijing. My grandfather died at the beginning of the year and that record was for him."

Jo Jackson beat Olympic gold medallist Rebecca Adlington to win the 400m freestyle in a new world record time of 4:00.66. "I'd been swimming well in training - to get a world record has blown me away," Jackson told BBC Radio 5 Live.

Wales' David Davies broke the British men's 400m free record to win gold. The 24-year-old set a time of 3:45.24, taking almost two seconds off David Carry's previous best mark.

"It's not quite (mainstream) world class - those guys are swimming 3:43 - but it's getting there," said the Welshman.

Meanwhile, victory for Jackson means she qualifies automatically for the 400m free at this year's World Swimming Championships in Rome.

British swimming has announced a £15m sponsorship deal with British Gas to help fund the sport through the London Olympics and to 2015. The money will be spent at all levels from learners to elite swimmers. So, let's hope plenty of it goes towards our paralympians, they are, after all, our biggest medal winners.

Team GB Ski to Success

Don't believe sports reporters that say we never win anything at the Winter Olympics; they've never been to the Special Olympics.

Why? Because over 2500 athletes with learning difficulties have! They represented 95 different countries when they competed in this year's Special Winter Olympic Games.

This year, between the 7th and 13th February, the Games were held in Idaho, in America where ten very happy members of the GB ski team won 13 medals between them.

They included Beth Wragg (1 gold and 2 silver), Craig Hannah (1 Gold), Greg Friend (2 Silver), Hannah Dempsey, Claire Jaffray and George Brunt (1 Silver each), with William Cottrell, Amy Raddon and Hannah Gleeson who each won 1 Bronze.

Beth Wragg said, "I went there to ski as well as I could - and that's what I did!"



Other Sports News, In Brief

The National Deaf Squash Championships was played alongside the National Championships, and this event saw a familiar face emerge as the winner – David Thompson taking the title in 3 straight games from Ross Lambert. David has now won this title 25 times in a row!

However David might need to put in some extra practice next season as rumour has it that there might be a young pretender to the throne waiting in the wings....

Teenage wheelchair racer Daniel Lucker from Abergavenny won the Rising Star award at the Nationwide



Disability Sports Events Sports Awards. The awards celebrate the achievements of athletes and volunteers.

winning a top prize of £6,000 Daniel said: "Winning this will hopefully help me fulfil my dream of competing in London 2012"

Paralympic champion Peter Norfolk has won his third Australian Wheelchair Tennis Open quad singles title. He beat David Wagner of the United States 7 -6, 6-1 and so replaces Wagner as the world number one.

Norfolk was playing his first tournament since winning his second Paralympic quad

Transport

Fed up with the bus service? Cabs refusing to take you? You can do something about it.

Many of us moan about these things but how many actually complain to the Council? Many don't but it is worth it. The Council licence hackney cab drivers and they subsidise First bus so they are worth calling or emailing. CCTV cameras across the city can be your 'silent witness' of a cab or bus driver refusing to take you, as one of our members recently discovered.

It might not change things immediately but the more evidence we give the Council of our experiences, the more they can take action - and the more the Forum can use this information to persuade Councillors to change the rules, where needed.

Contacting the Council

For online services go to www.bristol.gov.uk and add the bit in the middle column below. All telephone numbers are 0117 area code except the ones starting 08.

Do every Disabled person a favour and report cabs that refuse to pick you up, are rude, or overcharge. The Council has an online complaints form you can use.

Service	Add to website address:	Phone
Benefits	/benefits	9037100
Council Tax info	/counciltax	9250981
To pay Council Tax	/pay	0870 7077776
Homelessness	/homelessness	9096000
Council - Jobs	/jobs	9224499
Leisure	/leisure	9223719
Licensing e.g. taxis	/licensing	9142500
Parking	/parking	9223091
Recycling & Bins	/recycling	9031221
Roads & Pavements	/streetcare	9223838
Community Care	/caredirect	0800 444000
Traffic Management	/traffic	9036822

Having Your Say

To contact your local Councillor : Members' Services, Bristol City Council, The Council House, College Green, Bristol BS1 5TR
Telephone: **0117 922 3827** Email: **member.services@bristol.gov.uk**

To contact a Council department : telephone **0117 9222 000** and ask for the department or member of staff you want to contact, or visit:
www.bristol.gov.uk

To contact your MP : House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Telephone: **020 7219 3000** and ask for your MP by name. If you don't know who your MP is telephone the Information office on **020 7219 4272** or visit:
www.parliament.uk

To contact the Government : use the same address and telephone numbers above and ask for the department or minister you want. Otherwise you can search for the information you need, respond to consultations or make a comment at : **www.direct.gov.uk**

Jargon-Buster

Neighbourhood Partnership (NP) = small group of people who plan what gets done in your area.

Consortium = group of independent organisations sharing some of their work.

The Forum (or DEF) = the Bristol Disability Equality Forum.

Sustaining = keeping something going.

Manifesto = a document saying what a political party promises to do.

Self-determination = making your own decisions instead of others.

Lobbying = trying to get decision makers to change their mind or do something you want them to do.

RNIB = An organisation for blind and visually impaired people.

Early Day Motion = a petition of MPs.

Recession = when there is not enough money around to meet people's needs and prices are going up.

Not credible = not to be trusted or believed.

Inhuman or degrading treatment = treating people very badly, with no respect or rights.

Infrastructure organisation = a voluntary organisation whose members are other voluntary organisations.

Information Commissioner = Person who decides if an organisation has broken the rules about what organisations can do with personal information about you.

Bristol Disability Equality Forum

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Want a better deal for Disabled people?

Then why not become more involved in the Forum?

With all the exciting changes ahead the Forum has never needed you more!

We now have many more ways to be involved. Some of our work is done in meetings but plenty isn't. We have opportunities for :

- ♦ working with others;
- ♦ Working alone;
- ♦ Working with words OR with numbers;
- ♦ publicity and information - creating it, or taking it out to people;
- ♦ Working on websites;
- ♦ Organising activities;
- ♦ supporting campaigns from the comfort of your own home;
- ♦ Joining one of our campaign sub-groups;
- ♦ Helping get the Forum ready for independence; or
- ♦ Get out and about recruiting new members.

Training and support will be given (where needed) and reasonable expenses paid.

If you would like to know more, please contact us 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 newsletter in a different format or community language, please let us know.