

# Newsletter



Winter - Spring 2008

## Working As One Works!

Advisors have shown what we can achieve when we work together - by getting the Council to abandon its plans to simply give the Forum away to an organisation of their choice!

In December the Council told Advisors they were going to give the Forum to WECIL on 1st April 2008. Advisors were shocked to be told that it was **not** up to our members what happens to the Forum; it was up to the Council.

The Advisors made it clear this was not democratic or fair — not because of anything to do with WECIL but because the Forum should be given enough time to look at different options and decide for **itself** what it should be in the future e.g. an independent charity, part of a consortium, or a project within another organisation.



The Forum was also unhappy (as were WECIL) that we had been put in a position where, if we opposed the Council, it looked like we were against WECIL. The Council agreed this was unfortunate.

The Council didn't agree with our main objections but were persuaded that they had to hold a consultation on their plans.

Advisors heard this when they returned from the Christmas break. They immediately set about building support for the Forum's right to self-determination and lobbying managers and councillors to change their minds.

(Cont P3)

# Editorial

As you can see from the front page, the past four months have been a very busy time - hence the late arrival of this newsletter.

To make up for that though, this edition brings you news of a bunch of Forum successes including two major victories:

- ♦ the Forum's right to self-determination (P.1&3); and
- ♦ an increased PA rate for all Disabled people on Direct Payments (Page 4).

Equality is a farce without self-determination and the resources to enable meaningful independence - which is why these two recent victories are, in their own way, both significant and substantial. It is also a great

example of what we can achieve if we work together and form a united front.

Some of you will remember an earlier, successful DEF campaign for those assessed as in 'substantial' need to get social services support, as well as those in 'critical' need. Because we think more people need this support too, we can forget that in many parts of the country those in 'substantial' need still get none.

That we still **need** to campaign for basic human rights is, unfortunately, all too real. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill is expected to go through Parliament again soon. This Bill will, effectively, make euthanasia of Disabled embryos **compulsory** if you agree to have your embryos genetically scanned.

No, I didn't get that wrong, if you need IVF to conceive, it will be the law that you **must** get rid of the Disabled embryos in favour of the non-Disabled ones. If ever there was a time for Disabled people & BSL users to put aside differences of language - this is it. Join together and get this clause of the Bill burnt to a cinder!

(See Page 8 for contact details)

## Ever Thought of Caring for a Disabled Child?

**TACT** foster care are looking for people who are interested in fostering Disabled children and young people or offering holiday and weekend support. If you would like to know more, contact: Elaine Graham

Tel: 0117 9277725 email: [e.graham@tactfostercare.org.uk](mailto:e.graham@tactfostercare.org.uk)

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# Working As One Works! (contd)

This included producing a point-by-point reply to the Council's Consultation Paper and a formal reply explaining the many things wrong with the consultation, what led up to it and why it should be scrapped.

This led to a second concession—not what had been asked for but an extension of the consultation period until the end of April 2008.

The third concession came shortly after we held an Open Forum meeting on 10th March 2008. Nearly 40 people came and left the Council in no doubt that this is your Forum, not theirs. A little over a week later the Council decided to agree with the Advisors' proposal—that the Forum have until April 2009 to explore its options and let members decide.

In doing this the Council saved us both the time and money it would have taken to ballot all our members.

The Forum's success was rooted in a lot of extra hours put in by the Forum Executive (the Co-Chairs & Co-Vice Chairs), the advice and support of VOSCUR (a local voluntary & community sector umbrella organisation) and, most importantly, the mobilising of so many Disabled people behind a basic human right.

What we have achieved is all about Disabled people's right to choice and self-determination. But, in challenging the Council in this way, we have also benefited the whole of the community and voluntary sector—by making it clear that the Bristol Compact (an agreement on how the Council and the voluntary sector will treat each other) has to be a reality, not just a piece of paper. It was in this area that VOSCUR provided particular advice and support.

We will be contacting you over the next month about the next steps - exploring the different options, asking for your views, inviting you to engage in workshops or other events. If you have any questions or ideas, please feel free to email or call our Development Worker.

**Email:** [laura.welti@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:laura.welti@bristol.gov.uk)

**Tel:** 078 10 50 67 30 (she will call you back).

If you use a minicom you can text her your number and she will call you.

Remember : It is **your** Forum & we are **your** representatives!

# Getting You What You Need

Thanks to the work of the Forum, all Disabled people on Direct Payments will get more money from April.



Every three months the Forum Executive (the Co-Chairs and Vice Chairs) meet with the Directors of Adult Community Care (ACC). At these meetings they discuss what Disabled people need from the department, what the priorities are and how services can be improved.



For the past year the Forum Executive has been letting the department know that the Personal Assistant (PA) pay rate for those on Direct Payments is too low.

As a result of this Adult Community Care compared what they pay with what South Gloucestershire, North Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset pays. It was no surprise to Disabled people that Bristol paid the joint lowest rate.

The Executive got the department to accept that the rate needed to increase but ACC said it would cost about £400,000 and they could not promise when they would be able to afford it.

But persistence, and a good relationship with the department, paid off and the PA rates **will increase** from April this year.

The priorities for our work with the department in the coming year are to get them to adequately fund and work in partnership with us to make sure Disabled people understand the greater focus on the different ways they can have more control over what care they get, how and when they get it.

## Deaf to Equality?

The Deaf community couldn't believe their eyes when they saw the advertisement for a new Chief Executive of Bristol Deaf Club. Right at the top of the essential criteria for the post was: "High level of general communication skills both written and verbal."

It is unacceptable for ANY organisation to insist on verbal communication for this type of post, it is outrageous in a disability organisation - especially one commissioned by the Council to provide social care services.

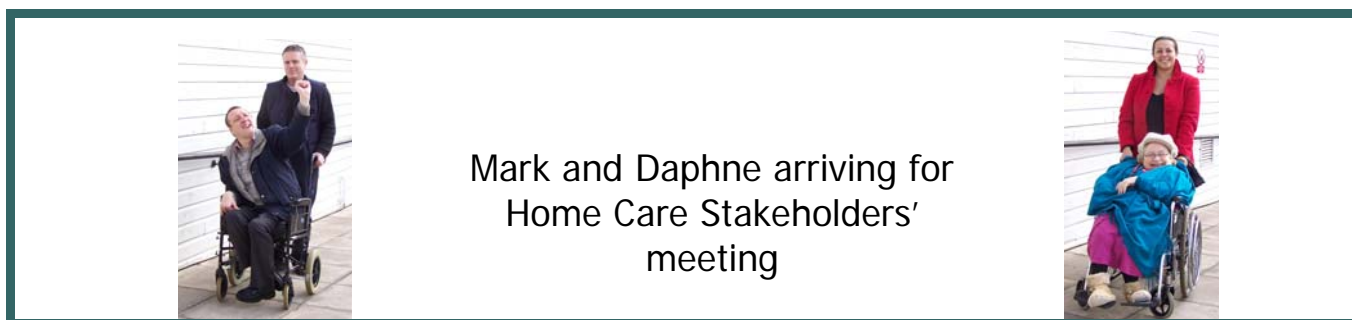
Complain direct or to your local Councillor - it's what they are there for!  
(See [www.bristol.gov.uk](http://www.bristol.gov.uk) for contact information).

# Home Care Services

The Council has spent the past year looking at how they can best provide support to people in their own homes.

You will have read some scare stories about this but it is not the same thing as the proposal to close some of the Council's Elderly People's Homes. Home Care is what people get so that they don't have to go into a residential home.

The Forum was closely involved in this work—including being represented on all 5 theme groups of the Home Care Stakeholders Working Group.



These groups have now produced their final report.

The result is that the Council will continue to provide home care for all people who need long term personal care for more than 5 hrs pw. It will also provide short term help for people coming out of hospital who may, or may not, need long term support.

People who need up to 5hrs support per week and/or need help with household tasks like shopping & cleaning ie **not** personal care, will have their care bought from 'independent' sector agencies. These may be voluntary organisations or private businesses.

People who need more than 5 hrs per week long term support and/or specialist services will have their care provided by the Council's Home Care Business Unit.

The Council will also set up a new Short Term Assessment & Reablement Service (STAR service) which will take all new service users for up to 6 weeks.

This service will provide intensive support that will be reviewed and, where needed, people will be moved on to longer term care arrangements. This could mean their care support being provided by the independent sector or the general Home Care Business Unit staff, depending on the criteria outlined above. This service will be part of the overall HCBU, but will work as a separate team.

It is hoped that, by acting quickly when people are 'in crisis', many will not need care support after this initial 6 week period.

# Free Travel Across England

In the 2006 Budget the Government announced that the current local free concessionary travel schemes would be extended to cover all of England.

So, from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 you will be able to use your Travelcard on any local bus service throughout England, for example whilst on your holidays or if you are visiting friends and family.

The all England scheme entitles Travelcard holders to free local bus travel between 09.30am and 11.30pm Monday to Friday and any time on Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays.



However, Bristol's extended scheme in place for local residents will stay the same. So, if your journey commences within Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset or South Gloucestershire you can use your Travelcard from 09.00am until 04.00am Monday – Friday and at anytime on Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays.

But remember, the Travelcard is only for buses—despite rumours they **are not valid** on trains or coaches. Trains and coaches each have their own schemes where you get up to half price fares.



## What Happens Next?

If you have a Travelcard you do not need to take any action. Your new Travelcard will be automatically sent to you during March 2008, in time for the new scheme starting on 1<sup>st</sup> April.

In the future when your Travelcard expires, you will need to undergo an assessment process as part of the Department for Transport requirements. This may involve proving residency and medical evidence to support eligibility.

If you (or friends or family) have not yet received a letter, or don't do so in the next few weeks, don't worry. There are things you can do:

- ♦ Drop in to the travel information centre on Colston Ave where Council staff are signing people up for the new travel cards;
- ♦ Continue to use your current card in the Bristol area for up to 6 months;
- ♦ Call the helpline number on 0117 922 3089 between 8.30 am and 8.00 pm.

# What Are Your Rights ?

Over 60 Disabled people came along to the Rose Green Centre on 21st November to find out what is being done to ensure the Disability Discrimination Act is implemented!



Bristol Disability Equality Forum and the Disability Rights Project in the South West held a joint public meeting for Disabled people to let them know what their rights are, and how they can make sure that is what they get.

Unfortunately, Roger Berry MP was not able to come along after all so our first speaker was Kevin Caulfield from the National Centre for Inclusive Living. Kevin discussed the issues around, and need for legal entitlement to, independent living. An excellent speaker and Disabled activist, he inspired the audience.

Sadly, the same can not be said for the speakers from the Disabled People's Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) and the person from the Council's Transport Department.

In the case of the DPTAC speakers the blame probably lay more with the civil servants than the speakers themselves. The speakers had not been given information on current issues or background information on the committee's strategy for improving transport.



The same excuse cannot be made by the Council representative however. As before, Disabled people found that everyone but the Council's transport department was blamed for transport problems. The result was that few left better informed about transport issues than when they arrived.

This was in stark contrast to speaker Angela Truell, of the Disability Rights Project (SW). She has been supporting Disabled people to actually get Disabled people the access to goods and services promised in the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). This has included helping loads of people get the access they need without having to go to court, and dealing with some cases that did go to court.

She is a great example of what can be achieved if the will is there. As a single worker she has achieved more for Disabled people in 18 months than the transport department has probably done in the last three years!

# Eugenics Returns to UK?

The government has proposed a new law that, although it includes several good things, will force people to put 'genetically faulty' embryos in the bin.

Clause 14 of the Bill, which only covers to in vitro fertilisation (IVF), says:

"(9) Persons or embryos that are known to have a gene, chromosome or mitochondrion abnormality involving a significant risk that a person with the abnormality will have or develop—

(a) a serious physical or mental disability,

(b) a serious illness, or

(c) any other serious medical condition,

must not be preferred to those that are not known to have such an abnormality."

Put another way, a person with what the medical profession label a 'genetic disorder' cannot be a sperm or egg donor and an embryo with a genetic disorder must be rejected in favour of an embryo without a 'genetic disorder'. Remember too that it is not just if the embryo **does** have the condition the gene is associated with, but even if doctors think there is a 'significant' risk that it might.

You would be forgiven for thinking that only really severe, hugely life-limiting conditions were covered by this clause. You would be wrong - which is why, if passed unamended, this Bill amounts to introducing eugenics practices into UK law.

The explanatory notes and consultation documents use genetic deafness as an example when illustrating how the Bill would work. So, we are not talking about what the people who have it consider is a 'serious disability', but what doctors think serious'.

**FREE** Smoke alarms and Fire safety advice

**Home Fire Safety Visits**



Avon fire and Rescue will fit smoke alarms for FREE and provide you with advice on all aspects of fire safety as part of its Home Fire Safety Visits service. Smoke alarms accessible for those who are Deaf or hard of hearing are also available.

To book your free Home Fire Safety Visit

**tel:** 0800 1693 999,

**text** your name and address to 07781 482627, or

**visit [www.avonfire.gov.uk](http://www.avonfire.gov.uk)** where you can book a visit online.

The Deaf community are understandably outraged - but so should everyone be.

Today it's Disabled people government want to engineer out of existence. What if the mythical 'Gay gene' is ever discovered?

Or any other 'difference' that is considered imperfect at the time?

# Extra Cash for Adaptations



The government is to increase funding for home adaptations for Disabled and older people by £25 million a year.

Communities minister, Baroness Andrews, said the 20 per cent rise would mean that fewer people would be pressured to move into sheltered housing or residential care.

The disabled facilities grant (DFG) pays for adaptations like widening doorways, ramps, stair-lifts and hoists. The extra investment will take government funding to £146 million in 2008/2009.

At present, 35,000 disabled and older people receive DFG support every year.

If you can't use all the parts of your home that you need to, safely, then contact the Council and ask for help with aids and adaptations or a Disabled Facilities Grant. This can be for something as little as a handrail to stop you falling when getting in and out of the bath to something as big as a stairlift or ramp up to your front door.

To find out more, and ask for an assessment, contact Care Direct Bristol:

**Tel: 0117 903 6684** 8.30am - 5pm Mon - Fri (answerphone outside office hours)

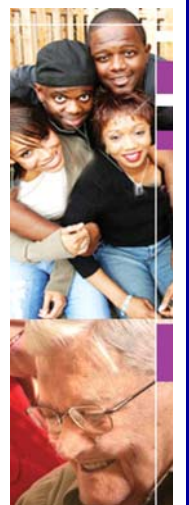
**Minicom: 0117 903 6689** E-mail: [adult.care@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:adult.care@bristol.gov.uk)

## Low Cost Home improvement loans

If your property is in need of essential repairs, but can't afford the cost and you can't get a grant, we may be able to help. Bristol City Council in partnership with Wessex Home Improvement Loans has created 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 contact Bristol City Council on **9664663** or [www.wessexrt.co.uk](http://www.wessexrt.co.uk)

# New Mental Health Report

According to a recent report from the Department of Health (December 2007), discrimination is still rife when it comes to residential mental health provision.

Report figures continue to show that some Black and minority ethnic groups are three or more times more likely than average to be admitted as inpatients in mental health and learning difficulty services.



Some of this can be explained by isolation and lack of family support among some groups but more is to do with inequalities and racism.

Professor Lord Patel of Bradford, Mental Health Act Commission (MHAC) Chairman, said:

“The census demonstrated why it had been necessary to fight so hard for the Delivering Race Equality programme. Delivering Race Equality in mental health services remains an essential corner stone of the government’s programme to eradicate racial inequality and to provide culturally relevant services”



he said, adding,

“ I am deeply concerned about the continued high levels of admission detention suffered by some Black groups especially the Black Other group – mostly Black second and third generation young men. There are some very serious questions that need answering about the way these people are being treated”.

The census also shows that 68% of mental health inpatients are in mixed-sex wards, presenting issues of privacy, dignity and safety for people experiencing mental and emotional distress. This is a 13% increase on the figures 12 months previously.

The practice of mixed-sex wards is not only an issue of privacy and dignity - which is important enough in itself. It is positively cruel to house people who have experienced violence and/or sexual abuse from people of a different sex on mixed-sex wards. It is unbelievable that it is not seen as an abuse of human rights.

# Human Rights Abuse

People with Learning Difficulties in residential care are faring no better than those in residential mental health provision.

The Healthcare Commission said in a report that more than 4,000 adults with Down's syndrome and other "disabling conditions" are living in hospitals, treatment centres and secure facilities in England. It found inadequately trained staff failed to provide stimulation or the opportunity to make simple, everyday choices.

The report said: "Even in the best services, the safety and quality of care were not up to the standard expected of modern services." There were "significant institutional failings" that deprived people of human rights and dignity. Services operated "off the radar" of senior NHS managers, "with poor leadership, poor training and no framework to measure the performance of services".

The Commission decided to undertake the first national audit of learning disability services after it discovered malpractice in places such as Cornwall and Carshalton (south London).

The government responded to the report very quickly when Ivan Lewis, the care services minister, said he would soon publish proposals to put local authorities in charge of commissioning services. He added: "It is totally unacceptable for anyone with a learning disability to be treated in a way that compromises their human rights."



The Department of Health said it was already committed to closing all "NHS campus" facilities for people with learning disabilities by 2010.

Bristol has an excellent learning difficulties organisation that is run by its users, called Bristol and South Gloucestershire People First. You can contact them at:

Bristol and South Gloucestershire People First  
19 Easton Business Centre, Felix Road, Easton Bristol BS5 0HE

Telephone: 0117 941 5842 E-mail: [admin@bsgpf.org.uk](mailto:admin@bsgpf.org.uk)

# SEN Cash Concerns

The DEF, as well as a children's charity, has raised concerns that money meant for special educational needs (SEN) provision in mainstream schools is being used to fund general improvements instead.



Until recently, each young person with SEN was assessed and the school given the amount of money it would cost to provide the support that young person needed. Then the government changed these arrangements and gave each school a pot of money for meeting SEN pupils' needs with no particular rules about how it could be used, or what for. The idea behind the plan was that, if a school had three pupils who needed some form of support, you could save money by providing one facility that all three could use. However, there are increasing concerns that the money is sometimes being spent on things of no exclusive benefit to SEN pupils.

Network 81 chair Eirwen Grenfell-Essam said: "It just goes into the pot with everything else. It could be the new car park, it could be seating, it could be anything."

The Forum's Inclusive Education Group told Heather Tomlinson (Director, Children & Young People's Services) about their concerns and asked her to look at monitoring what each school was spending its SEN budget on.

It turns out that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) also back this view. An official said, "We have issued clear guidance on the monitoring and accountability arrangements that local authorities should put in place to ensure that their needs are being met."

If you are concerned about what your local school is spending its SEN money on ask them.

If you are a parent concerned about the provision for your SEN child contact:

The Council on: **35 33303** or email: [ellequalities.team@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:ellequalities.team@bristol.gov.uk)

**Supportive Parents for Special Children (SPSC)** : 0117 9897725 (10am - 2pm, Mon, Weds and Fri, term time only, or, leave a message if outside these times; or, in S. Bristol contact :

**PIPA - Parents in Partnership advancing Inclusion on** 902 0265 9.30am – 2.30pm.

# Get Involved

Have you ever thought about helping to improve the education of Disabled young people? Well, here is your chance!



The Forum, in partnership with Children & Young People's Services, are putting on 3 'taster sessions' for Disabled people who might like to get involved in their local school.

At these sessions you will hear what's involved in becoming a school governor, or joining your local school's Inclusion Group, and about other ways you can become involved. You will also have the chance to talk to a Disabled governor about their experiences.

This initiative is for Disabled parents and Disabled adults who are not parents, alike, on:

Thurs 5th June, Council House, 1-3pm  
Thurs 9th June, Woodward Centre (Fishponds) 6-8pm  
Weds 25th June, Southville Centre, 10.30am-12.30pm

If, after attending one of these sessions, you are still interested in becoming more involved you will be able to find out what 'next steps' to take, for example, how to get on a Governor Training course - an essential step in becoming a school governor.

To book a place:

tel: Louise Bale 0117 377 3228 email: [louise.bale@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:louise.bale@bristol.gov.uk)

Tel/text: Laura Welti 078 10 50 67 30 email: [laura.welti@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:laura.welti@bristol.gov.uk)

Places are limited so please book early and let us know if you have any specific access needs.



# Contacting the Council

For online services go to the Council website [www.bristol.gov.uk](http://www.bristol.gov.uk) and add the ending as listed below. All telephone numbers are 0117 area code except the ones starting 08

Service	Online ending	Phone
Benefits	/benefits	9037100
Council Tax info	/counciltax	9250981
Council Tax - payments	/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
Adult social services	/caredirect**	0800 444000
Traffic Management	/traffic	9036822

Some of the telephone numbers are for Council 'call centres' so you may not be able to get through to a specific person but, if you leave your details, they can arrange for the person to get back to you.

\* Do every Disabled person a favour and report cabs that refuse to pick you up, are rude, overcharge or park where they shouldn't. The Council has an online complaints form you can use.

\*\* Care direct is a telephone service that will take down your details and get a relevant member of staff to contact you.

# Having Your Say

**You can contact your local Councillor via:** Members' Services, Bristol City Council, The Council House, College Green, Bristol BS1 5TR  
Telephone: **0117 922 3827** Email: [member.services@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:member.services@bristol.gov.uk)

**You can contact a Council department via :** telephone by calling **0117 9222 000** and asking for the department or member of staff you want to contact, or visit: [www.bristol.gov.uk](http://www.bristol.gov.uk)

**You can contact your MP via :** 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](http://www.parliament.uk)

**You can contact the Government via:** the same address and telephone numbers above and ask for the relevant department or minister. Otherwise you can search for the information you need, respond to consultations or make a comment at :

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

## Jargon-Buster

**Council** = Bristol City Council.

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

**WECIL** = West of England Centre for Inclusive Living

**IVF** = In Vitro Fertilisation, the name for the treatment that enables people who can't have children without help get pregnant.

**BSL** = British Sign Language, the language used by people who are totally Deaf.

**Direct Payments** = where Disabled people who need personal care support are given the money to employ their own support workers (PAs) rather than using the one's employed by the Council.

**DPTAC** = a committee that advises government on transport issues affecting Disabled people.

**CYPS** = Children & Young People's Services eg education, pre-school, afterschool activities, youth services.

**PA** = Personal Assistant or Support Worker. Someone paid to give a Disabled person the support they need, in the way they want it.

## Bristol Disability Equality Forum

Ground Floor  
6 York Court,  
Wilder St  
Bristol BS2 8QX

Tel: 9222 660

Text:  
078 10 50 67 30

Email:  
laura.welti@  
bristol.gov.uk

### Acknowledgements

With thanks to BBC News, Disability Now, Bristol City Council, various government websites, for items and pictures included in this newsletter.

# Want a better deal for Disabled people?

Then why not become more involved in the Forum?

The Forum has several different ways you can become more involved, including:

- ◆ Becoming an Advisor
- ◆ Joining our Inclusive Education group
- ◆ Joining our Action Group, exploring options for the future structure of the Forum
- ◆ Helping out with our website or in the office.

This is a great opportunity to get involved, learn more about how you can influence decision-makers, and meet new people, as well as a way of getting the issues that concern you most are tackled.

Training and support will be given and your 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.**