

CILL'S ANNUAL REPORT



2005 - 2006

WILLECKE TOWER
LEWISHAM
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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

As I introduce CILL's first annual report I am reminded not just of how much we have achieved this year but also why CILL was originally set up.

In the summer of 2005 a small group of five disabled people started to talk about the fact that there was no organisation of disabled people in Lewisham that focused entirely on issues about independent living. As disabled people living independent lives in the community we wondered whether some of the issues that concerned us, such as direct payments and the lack of advocacy specifically for disabled people, also concerned other disabled people. From that discussion CILL was formed as a company limited by guarantee and the first issue of The Phoenix, our monthly broadsheet, went out really just 'to test the water' to see if anyone else was interested. Within days the responses we got made us realise that many other disabled people in Lewisham wanted an organisation like CILL and that by bringing attention to issues disabled people faced we might be able to support each other and positively influence changes to services. That was and remains CILL's primary objective.

During this year we have listened to what disabled people have told us they want and that has determined the way that CILL has developed and the issues we have taken forward. For example, we realised very quickly that where disabled people were identifying a need for a specific service, those services could be provided through a Centre for Independent Living and be managed and controlled by disabled people themselves. As a result CILL set up its Centre for Independent Living earlier this year and through that manage all CILL services.

This year has seen a number of initiatives which may prove to be particularly beneficial to disabled people: the government White Paper on disabled people 'Improving Life Chances', the pilot schemes for Individual Budgets, Lord Ashley's Independent Living Bill and the government review on independent living. The Disability Equality Schemes being put in place by service providers later this year will, I hope, also have positive benefits. At the same time funding cuts are having significant consequences for disabled people's services and their organisations.

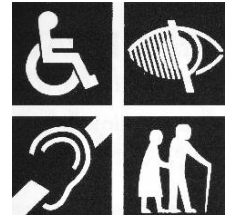
In the coming year, CILL will continue to listen to what disabled people in Lewisham have to say and will continue to advocate and campaign to get our voices heard, our experiences understood and our participation in our own lives and in decisions that affect us and our services accepted.

During the last year CILL has had some tremendous support and I would like to thank the councillors and officers of Lewisham Council; Mayor Steve Bullock and Ruth Silver O.B.E. Principal Lewisham College for their support of the International Day of Disabled Persons event; everyone at Lewisham Community Network; Claire Major at The Moving On Project; Greenvale School; Honor Windebank for her support of the trustees; all the trustees and coordinators who have worked so hard this year to get CILL up and running (not only have they given their time but until CILL obtained funding they met all CILL's costs). And finally heartfelt thanks to our donors and grant makers for their financial support so enabling CILL to develop its Centre for Independent Living.

Denise Smith
Chair



INTRODUCTION



CILL was formed in July 2005 and registered as a company limited by guarantee. It is managed by a Board of Trustees of five disabled people. They are: Denise Smith (Chair), Marcia Jones (Vice-Chair), Arthur Verney (Company Secretary), Gary Evans (Treasurer) and Steve Cheesman (Membership Secretary). Mark Smith has been appointed as our volunteer Database Manager. Jenny Spencer as our Active Life Projects (ALPs) volunteer coordinator and Leah Noel as a volunteer advocate.

CILL is an independent organisation of disabled people and membership is free to any disabled person of any impairment living in the Borough of Lewisham.

Our work is underpinned by the Social Model of Disability.

The Social Model of Disability

This was created by disabled people themselves out of their own experiences. It was initially defined as:

"Disability is caused by social organisation which takes little or no account of people who have impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities". (Fundamental Principles of Disability, UPIAS (1976)).

The Social Model is an intrinsically more positive approach to a disability. Here disability is viewed as something that is imposed on people with impairments (whether they have a physical impairment, sensory impairment, learning difficulty or mental health issue) by a society which creates barriers to equality. People with impairments are thus "disabled" by the way society imposes barriers on their full participation in the community. Viewing disability in this light means that a wheelchair user is not disabled by their wheelchair, but by the barriers society erects that work against them (such as steps). People with impairments are thus "disabled" through such things as lack of physical access, people's attitudes, structural discrimination (as encountered with the benefits system for example) and any other barriers society may erect against them.

For disabled people, this is a far more positive approach to disability, because we are all members of society and, if we can create barriers, then we can also remove them. It is a far less negative and demoralising approach to disability than traditional medical models and are increasingly being adopted by other organisations working on disability issues.

We investigate issues that disabled people identify, any issue that is causing difficulty in their life. We believe that it is through making our voices heard, our difficulties understood and views known that disabled people will bring about improvements to their lives. To do that, we need to support each other and to work co-operatively with the wider community, service providers and other agencies.



CILL Campaigns

We do not intend to list every campaign that CILL has been involved with during the year. Instead, we have described five examples of our work that fits into the theme 'ACCESS'

CILL jumps in the deep end

CILL had pressed Lewisham Council for a meeting to discuss improved facilities for disabled swimmers. CILL put forward a number of issues that included raising the water temperature at one pool in the Borough and various access issues that would allow a greater number of disabled people to use leisure facilities.

The Bridge Leisure Centre at Sydenham is accessible and CILL suggested that this become the venue at which warm water swimming and improved swimming and gym facilities for disabled people could take place.

A new leisure complex will open in 2010. At the moment it is still in the planning stage so it could include all the access facilities that disabled people need. There is a possibility that there could also be a hydrotherapy pool if that need is identified.

Overall, Lewisham Council has been trying to improve facilities so more disabled people can use them. However it is not always easy or even possible to achieve this. There are technical considerations that limit water temperature and everyone in the Borough, both disabled and non-disabled, often have different and conflicting needs. For example, many would like a very warm water hydrotherapy pool but serious disabled swimmers with their hopes and training fixed on the 2012 ParaOlympics in London (and yes Lewisham has some) have different needs..

One of Lewisham's Special Schools has kindly agreed that disabled people can use their hydrotherapy pool at certain times. The opportunity has been of real benefit to disabled people and during the year plans were developed to employ a physiotherapist when funds were obtained.

Also, CILL attended a focus group held by Lewisham Council on proposals for Forest Hill Baths. CILL suggested there needed to be far more work done on providing access features such as disabled changing rooms, non-slip floors, hoists and grab rails.

Lewisham Council has set up an advisory group of disabled people on sport, exercise and leisure. At this stage Lewisham Council should be congratulated for their commitment to consultation with disabled people to bring about improvements now and in the future

Council Budget Funding

Under the Achieving Access for All (disability equality) strategy 2004-07 Lewisham Council has provisionally set aside £3.6m from the 2005-08 budgets (£1m each year) to improve physical access to the

public access areas of the council's buildings. Lewisham have identified and prioritised a rolling programme of works and set out generally what they plan to do each year.

CILL made further enquiries as to how this will actually result in real improvements to specific buildings, whether local disabled people were consulted, whether there was going to be any evaluation of the strategy to measure how successful it had been, and the best way for disabled people to identify access difficulties to the Council.



CILL received information as follows:

- There is a three-year programme of work split into a series of smaller contracts to allow flexibility given the Council's changing property portfolio and to allow for feedback from building users. For example, although not initially scheduled for 2005/2006, the stair-lift in the Civic Suite is to be upgraded this financial year as a result of a visitor finding he could not use it.
- Frequently used buildings are being targeted 'to complement existing service solutions with further physical aids and adaptations. The programme of works to buildings aims to ensure that customers can easily access the reception area of all our buildings, where their requirements for service provision can be assessed.'
- The current contract will be completed by the end of October 2005 and includes work in over 70 buildings.

Apparently LBL consulted with local disabled people over four years and in summary that comprised:

- A mystery shopping exercise
- A review of accessible services
- A review of customer services
- A specific component of eight service reviews

Lewisham Council said that 'if any disabled person is experiencing problems accessing Council buildings and services, they should alert the service manager in the first instance. If they wish to log the issue more formally, they should use the comments, complaints and compliments system, by phone, online or by completing a form from the service or library.'

Not so independent living

One of the lifts at the Civic Suite was inaccessible to wheelchair users and when this was taken up the Council agreed that it should be replaced.

Later, CILL's Chair attended a meeting at the Civic Suite and as promised a new lift had been installed. However, staff could not operate it and the way it had been installed made it dangerous. The Chair alerted Lewisham Council who agreed to investigate the matter and two CILL representatives went to a meeting arranged to try to resolve the issues.



The representatives were informed that the existing lift was to be replaced and re-sited. They provided advice concerning various specifications. As the new lift will be enclosed, with a grab rail, audio announcement that the lift is moving and with colour contrast of floor it should be accessible and safe for all disabled people. With a manual over-ride feature, if the lift does breakdown – and at some point it is bound to – people will not be stuck as the lift can be operated manually. Lewisham Disability Coalition (LDC) also attended the meeting and CILL thanks them for adding their voice to the issues we have been raising during the year.

No GP Home Visits

A disabled person had been refused home visits by a practice in Catford. To get medical care she managed to get to the practice using a mobility scooter but sat in the waiting room crying in pain. CILL investigated.

This issue was successfully resolved after CILL wrote to the practice. Following a visit from one of the doctors it has been agreed that the need for a home visit will be assessed whenever a visit is requested.

Bus 185

We received information about route 185 and the fact that a wheelchair user was unable to board three buses that came one after another because apparently the ramps had broken. Needless to say CILL followed up this matter with East Thames Buses and Transport for London.

We were informed that bus ramps are checked every day, before the bus leaves the garage, to make sure they are working properly but many bus drivers are telling people in wheelchairs at bus stops that the ramps are not working.

INDEPENDENT LIVING BILL

CILL supports Lord Jack Ashley's Independent Living Bill and promoted it throughout 2005 and 2006.



Lord Ashley wrote, "Throughout my Parliamentary career, I have fought for all disabled people to have the same choice, dignity, freedom and control as every other citizen. These are the central principles of 'Independent Living'.

Independent Living is not simply disabled people doing everything for themselves. It means ensuring that disabled people have the same freedom to choose as every other citizen and are supported in that choice, in order that they may lead the lives they want to lead.

Independent living is having the opportunity to enjoy family life and participate (*in*) all the everyday activities which non-disabled people take for granted.

While the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and its later revisions have strengthened the civil rights of disabled people, other laws – particularly community care legislation – have put too many barriers in the way of independent living.

I want to use the power of Parliament to bring in new legislation which will sweep away these barriers and make independent living a reality for all disabled people. I am working with the Disability Rights Commission, who have helped me draft and consult on the necessary measures. I will start the campaign by introducing the 'Independent Living (Disabled Persons) Bill' to Parliament on Thursday 8th June.

You can learn more about the Bill and the barriers it sets out to tackle here on this website -www.drc.org.uk.

I hope that I can count on your support.

Yours truly,

Lord Jack Ashley

THE LEWISHAM DECLARATION

On the International Day of Disabled Persons, 3 December 2005, disabled people and supporters living in Lewisham adopted the following declaration

Whereas the UN's stated aim is "the achievement of the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and participation in society by persons with disabilities".

Whereas disabled people are entitled to equal opportunities, not charity.

Whereas disabled people are independent citizens and consumers, not patients

Whereas disabled people have their own voice and their own representative organisations, they do not need professionals taking decisions on their behalf.

Whereas outdated and paternalistic approaches mainly based on pity and helplessness are deemed unacceptable.

Whereas a truly inclusive society, will not only benefit disabled people but also society at large.

First and foremost we demand:

Nothing about us without us - up until now most of us have been excluded from debates on disability issues. We have been denied our right to equality and have therefore been denied our human rights.

We demand that we are included in all debates and policy-making regarding disability and other issues that affect our lives.

We must be the people who decide on our quality of life, based on our experiences.

We also call on our organisations to give support, encouragement and reassurance to those of us who are representing our views on disability issues.

Particular support must be given to empower the voice of mental health survivors, people with learning difficulties, people who cannot advocate for themselves and disabled children, in any debate that affects their lives.

Richness in Diversity - we are full human beings. We believe that a society without disabled people would be a lesser society. Our unique individual and collective experiences are an important contribution to a rich, human society.

We demand an end to the setting of norms and standards by non-disabled people. We believe that discrimination against disabled people is so pervasive in society that it has become 'normalised'. We call for an end to institutional disability.

We recognise that the only way to ensure universal support for and positive recognition of our particular qualities is through stating our right to diversity clearly, with good arguments, in open and democratic discussion. We must form alliances with policy-makers, human rights advocates, the media and the general public.

As disabled people we must join together in solidarity to ensure our voices are heard in all matters that impact on us as individuals and collectively.

STRENGTH IN UNITY!

International Day of Disabled Persons



For almost ten years, 3 December has been designated the International Day of Disabled Persons, celebrated by local, national and international organisations.

The aim of the day is to promote understanding about disability issues and increase awareness of the benefits made from the integration of disabled persons in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life. It is an opportunity to take stock, prepare for the future and celebrate the contribution disabled people have made to the world at large.

The European Union also adopted the day, with the first European Day of Disabled People being marked on 3 December 1993 by a "parliament" of disabled people in Brussels.

CILL supported the day with an event at Lewisham College on 2 December 2005. About 40 disabled people attended and saw the Mayor Steve Bullock launch and sign The Lewisham Declaration in support of the rights of disabled people.

Every library, primary school, senior school and special school in the Borough had already been sent a copy of The Lewisham Declaration to display and show their support. The Mayor and the Principal of Lewisham College were presented with framed copies of The Declaration.

Afterwards the Mayor started his 'Let's Talk' meeting and took questions from all those who wanted to address an issue. The Mayor was accompanied by Aileen Buckton, Executive Director for Community Services, and Malcolm Smith, Acting Executive Director for Regeneration, and between them they were able to answer everyone.

The questions were very varied and where they related to an existing Council Service we were told what service we should expect. With examples where this was not being met the Council Officers took details so they could investigate and report back directly to the person who raised the issue.

CILL raised a few important issues: the provision of an advocacy service for disabled people, the right to a fair hearing and crimes against disabled people being taken seriously, funding for organisations, provision of advice for newly disabled people and social care (including assessment and direct payments). Aileen Buckton suggested a further meeting with CILL to look at these issues.

Everyone had a chance to look at the posters and information CILL had put on display and this included photographs and information about work completed by students at Greenvale Special School.



PUBLICATIONS & WEBSITE

During the year CILL published its monthly broad sheet 'THE PHOENIX' which has given readers an opportunity to learn of CILL's campaigns and operations, together with national and international news items.

We made a successful funding application to South East London Community Foundation - SELF (now Capital Community Foundation) to develop a publications service and a website. This has enabled us to publish and distribute THE PHOENIX to a wide readership, and design and print a range of leaflets and information sheets including:

- Who We Are and What We Do
- Language of Disability
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing People in Lewisham
- ALPs posters - hydrotherapy, 30+ and Out & About
- Advocacy
- Centre for Independent Living & Basic Rights
- The Lewisham Declaration

In December, Gary Evans and Mark Smith began constructing CILL's website which can be accessed at www.cill.org.uk. Work continues on developing the site, including establishing WindowCILL, a group network allowing CILL members to meet each other online.

LIAISON WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

CILL has been an active member of Lewisham Community Empowerment Network and has received support and advice from Matthew Scott (Assistant Director – Community, Voluntary Action Lewisham).

Steve Cheesman, our membership secretary, represents CILL on the Bellingham & Downham Community Forum.

We have been represented at the Police Community Consultative Group Meetings. The Police have set up 'Safer Neighbourhoods'. Under this initiative Lewisham will be divided up into Safer Neighbourhoods each with a sergeant, two constables and three support officers (one will be funded by Lewisham Council).

Equality and Diversity Consultation 2005 – Lewisham Council carried out a consultation and review of the Council's equality and diversity policy. CILL were included in the consultation and we were impressed by Lewisham's willingness to listen to what people were saying and commitment to making the policy relevant to services.

CILL was at Lewisham's first Disability Forum (organised by Lewisham Disability Coalition - LDC) and were represented at further meetings.

Denise Smith, CILL's Chair, has become a member of the National Centre for Independent Living's management committee.

ACTIVE LIFE PROJECTS (ALPs)

The three ALPs groups that have been set up are:

- Hydrotherapy – to continue and develop CILL’s use of the hydrotherapy pool at one of Lewisham’s special schools. Plans include group sessions with non-disabled supporters to assist and a physiotherapist to provide an exercise programme.
- Out and About – to promote exercise and using the parks. Plans include regular meetings to walk, wheel or cycle and setting up disabled cycling.
- Exercise – plans include gym workouts and yoga.



CILL 30+ & DROP IN

CILL 30+

CILL 30+ met in Bellingham in early June and for a first meeting it was well attended. Lots of ideas were put forward for how the club should develop and their co-ordinator, Jenny Spencer, is now working to put those ideas into action.

CILL ‘Drop-in’

From June CILL has been holding ‘drop-in’ sessions, every four weeks, at The Marton Close Clubroom, 21 Marton Close, Bellingham SE6 3SS from 2.00 to 4.00 p.m.

This is a chance for disabled people to ‘drop-in’ and have a chat and a coffee, find out what’s going on for them in the Borough and get information and support.

PEOPLE’S DAY

In June’s edition of THE PHOENIX we wrote, “Come and meet us at People’s Day 2006 on Saturday, 8 July in Mountsfield Park, Brownhill Road, Catford. We will be there from 11.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. with lots of information about what we do and who we are.” It was a highly successful day.

Our focus on the day was ‘independent living’ (no surprise there with a name like CILL) and to support the ‘Right to Independent Living’ Bill brought by Lord Jack Ashley now going through Parliament. We organised a petition and received tremendous support from the general public.

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2006 & BEYOND

During its first year of operations, Denise Smith, CILL's Chair said:

"CILL is one year old now and I find it hard to believe how much we have achieved in just 12 months. The trustees have worked incredibly hard and so have the CILL project co-ordinators but without our members and supporters we could not have achieved all that we have. CILL is your organisation so our success is your success and if you share our commitment to independent living, equality, participation and citizenship for disabled people please get in touch to find out how you can get involved."

"CILL is now busy trying to get funding for various services for its Centre for Independent Living. The first new service that we will be trying to set up is an advocacy project for disabled people with disabled volunteer advocates." Funding has now been obtained from both the Deptford Challenge Trust and the Big Lottery - Awards for All for this initiative.

"We start our second year with plans for a new advocacy project based in Deptford to start in September."

"We already have three volunteer advocates and, supported by a training grant from Capital Community Foundation, they will be getting accredited advocacy training shortly."

"Earlier in the year, I told you about a meeting to discuss Active Life Projects (ALPs) and I am happy to report that three groups were set up, so that is the second new service that we are trying to get funding for." Funding has now been obtained from Sport Relief

"Work has started on our web site, again supported by a grant from Capital Community Foundation, and I hope that this will be up and running soon."

"CILL has had some good news – our first round application to The Big Lottery for funding for a Centre for Independent Living in Lewisham for five years has been successful and we have been asked to put in a further more detailed application. So far so good but we still have a long way to go and a lot of work to do."

And our plans for the coming year?

We will continue to try to secure funding for premises and staff for our Centre of Independent Living. At the same time we will continue to maintain and develop existing services such as the monthly publication of The Phoenix and our advocacy projects.

We know that transport is an issue for many disabled people so one of our advocacy projects is based in Deptford and we intend to run projects in two other areas of Lewisham so that disabled people will have a choice of where they can get to most easily.

The ALPs projects will be developed to provide weekly hydrotherapy sessions with a physiotherapist, exercise class with a fitness trainer and yoga class with an instructor. CILL 30+ will have a programme of events and 'Out and About' will continue to meet regularly.

*"Independent Living
is not a service,
it is freedom;
it is liberation;
it is equality for
disabled people"*

The CILL website is already available and will continue to be modified and updated to keep everyone informed about what we are doing. The website will also be launching windowCILL – an online network for disabled people to talk to each other, so that even if you cannot get out you do not need to be isolated.

We want to continue to give disabled people volunteering opportunities and new skills – so if you want to be involved contact CILL.

Many disabled people use and often rely on different services, so CILL will continue to listen to what those users say and feed that back to the relevant service provider whether it is good or not so good.

Ultimately CILL is a campaigning organisation and we believe that the best way to do that is to engage with decision makers to get disabled people's voices heard. So we will continue to involve our members in any consultation that affects their lives.

Changing negative attitudes towards disabled people, improving services, empowering disabled people and giving disabled people more opportunities and choices are at the heart of CILL. That is the goal but none of those will be achieved overnight so our future plans aim to build on those aspirations year on year.

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