



THE PHOENIX

Campaign for Independent Living in Lewisham (CILL)



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS 2006

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.

Message from Denise Smith, Chair, (CILL)

Last year CILL celebrated the day with an event at Lewisham College and Mayor Steve Bullock launched The Lewisham Declaration in support of disabled people's rights. Although it is a year old the Declaration is as relevant now as it was then.

This year we have not organised an event but instead we are issuing this edition of The Phoenix so that we can take stock of what is happening for disabled people both nationally and locally.

Nationally, 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. For the first time the Disability Discrimination Act has moved away from focusing on the individual to an organisational focus by imposing the Disability Equality Duty on service providers and the Disability Equality Schemes that must be put in place by the 4th December will, I hope, have positive benefits. At the same time funding cuts are having significant consequences for disabled people's services and their organisations.

Locally, we have yet to see the final versions of any of the Disability Equality Schemes being put in place by local organisations such as Lewisham Council or Lewisham Hospital and PCT but I hope that these really start to challenge the attitudinal barriers being faced by disabled people.

For CILL, statutory organisations must engage in full and open consultation with disabled people so that our experiences can influence the services we use and through that we can start to challenge the negative attitudinal barriers we face every day.

Finally, two updates on local campaigns:

Choices

Despite Lewisham council's assurance on 7 November that they would be contacting all disabled people using Choices support services this has not happened. Choices is in administration and is no longer providing services. Apparently Lewisham Council now have another payroll support service in place and they will be operating a service from next week. As far as we are aware they are not a user led organisation and they are based in Greenwich. If this sounds familiar that is because this is exactly how the Choices situation began. Will Lewisham Council begin to listen to the disabled people who live in this borough? We want three things: direct payments support services provided by a user led organisation of disabled people who understand, truly understand, the many issues involved, services provided locally in Lewisham by local people and the service to be provided through the voluntary and community sector on a not-for-profit basis that will create jobs for disabled people in Lewisham.

CILL is trying to get more information from Lewisham. We know that there are some disabled people who are really worried about how they will continue to pay their carers.

If you have any issue about your direct payments that you would like support with please contact CILL at campaign@fsmail.net

Blue Badge Parking at Lewisham Hospital

DAGE (Deptford Action Group for the Elderly) have had a successful outcome to their campaign to get free Blue Badge parking reinstated at Lewisham Hospital. Last week the hospital announced that 10 disabled parking bays would be free for Blue Badge holders for up to four hours parking. Apparently Lewisham hospital will review the need for more disabled bays in the future and new signs will be in the car park very shortly to confirm the new parking arrangements.

While CILL supported the campaign all the way we thank DAGE for their commitment and determination in taking up and fighting this important issue for disabled people in Lewisham.

AND FINALLY

Since October, The Albany, (in Douglas way, Deptford) with the support of Lewisham Arts Service, has been programming a range of events towards the celebration of International Day of Disabled Persons on December 3rd. From theatre and comedy to live music and film, The Albany continues to develop ground-breaking disability arts with resident organisations - Drake Music Project (www.drakemusicproject.org), Entelechy Arts (www.entelechyarts.org) and Heart n Soul (www.heartnsoul.co.uk). There are still two remaining events:

Friday 1st December - The Albany Cafe, 4.30pm

Endz Meet - The first Lewisham screening of a film created by Entelechy Arts and local young disabled people. The screening will be followed by a live Q&A session with the film's participants and creative team.

The event is FREE but call box office on 020 8692 4446 to book

Friday 8th December - Plum Room at The Albany, 2-4pm

Ambient Jam: The High Street – A specially-created 'Jam' drop-in session for regular and new Entelechy users involving live and recorded music, film projection and audience participation. Based on the sights, sounds and experiences of Deptford High Street and the market, this event will particularly interest able-bodied and disabled; young and elderly Deptfordians.

Again the event is FREE but for more details about the Jam, please contact Entelechy Arts on 020 8694 9007

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

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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 disabilism.

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!

