



THE PHOENIX

Campaign for Independent Living in Lewisham

August 2006

Message from Denise Smith, Chair, Campaign for Independent Living in Lewisham (CILL)

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.

We start our second year with plans for a new advocacy project based in Deptford to start in September and next month's PHOENIX will have full details.

Campaign Updates

A few campaigns are going on and there will be a full update next month.

If there is an issue affecting you and your independent living please contact CILL for advice and support.

The Disabled Persons (Independent Living) Bill

The Disabled Persons (Independent Living) Bill introduced by Lord Jack Ashley challenges the key problems and barriers to independent living faced by disabled people. This includes anyone of any age who has an impairment, illness, health condition, is recovering from illness or has become frail through old age.

Independent living means that disabled people of all ages have the same freedom, choice, dignity and control as other citizens at home, at work, and in the community. It does not mean living by yourself or fending for yourself. It means rights to practical assistance and support to participate in society and live an ordinary life.

The Disability Movement supports Lord Ashley's Bill and we ask for your support too by obtaining 5 signatures and returning the attached petition to CILL, 5 Silverdale House, Silverdale, London SE26 4SD. All signatures collected will be sent to Lord Ashley showing Lewisham's support for his Bill. Thank you.

Mental Health Services – Do you have a story to tell?

On 18 August at the CILL 'drop-in' at Bellingham, Richard Neville will be asking people to share their stories about using mental health services and details about the work Richard is doing are enclosed. If you want to influence the way mental health services develop please come along and have your say.

Access in case of emergency

Edited from Disability Now, July 2006

Since the London bombings, transport providers say they have been striving to make transport more safe and accessible, but progress appears slow, according to Transport for All.

Routemaster buses have gone, making way for wheelchair-accessible, 'talking' vehicles. The suburban rail network should benefit from the Railways for All programme, set to invest in station accessibility. Key railway lines, like the North London line, are to be taken over by Transport for London (TfL) and improved.

London's underground network, in particular, is the source of much frustration. As we mark the anniversary of the 7/7 terror bombings, the emergency evacuation procedures for disabled tube passengers remain a concern. Help and information facilities need to be upgraded and made accessible. Also, the disability equality training of underground staff - which is still being rolled out - must be supplemented with emergency evacuation training.

Luckily, the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games have given tube refurbishment plans a sudden jolt. According to TfL, every LU station will be refurbished by 2012. This will include accessible toilets, tactile flooring, modernised handrails and staircases and audio-visual information at all stations. TfL has also said that 25 per cent of the network will be step-free by 2012. It is a long way off, but these declared intentions are very welcome.

Recruitment of new advisory network on disability equality

The Office for Disability Issues, established last year, is currently inviting disabled people and people with long-term conditions, to join a new group which will help deliver understanding to the Government about the many different experiences they have.

The new body, called 'Equality 2025 – the UK Advisory Network on Disability Equality', will be formed of 20-25 disabled people and will make sure that government talks to disabled people who are currently without a political voice or who are most marginalised.

Anne McGuire, Minister for Disabled People, announced the creation of the new body in Parliament, setting out its aims, which are to:

- work with the Government to help it achieve the aim of equality for disabled people by 2025.
- provide advice and information from disabled people based upon the values underpinning the work of the forum and the views and experiences of disabled people.
- advise Government Departments on how they can engage effectively and meaningfully with disabled people.
- assist the Government in raising awareness of disabled people and their rights, improving attitudes towards them and challenging negative stereotypes in the media and the wider community.
- help ensure that public bodies are meeting their legal duties under the DDA in relation to the Disability Equality Duty.
- advise Government on the implementation and maintenance of international treaties and conventions within the UK.

Equality 2025 will give government a focus for dialogue with disabled people but will not replace the duty of government to talk directly with disabled people and disability organisations about issues which have an impact on disabled people's lives.

The new body will have arrangements to enable disabled children and young people to participate in the network.

Equality 2025 will be guided by 'Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People', the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit report.

Anger over threat to cannabis limits - Edited from Disability Now, July 2006

Disabled people have hit out at reports that the government plans to slash limits on the possession of drugs, including cannabis. According to reports leaked to the press last month, draft regulations from the Home Office (HO) suggest cutting the amounts people can possess for personal use to as low as 5g for cannabis

The news has angered disabled people, who use cannabis to relieve pain for a number of conditions such as multiple sclerosis (MS). Campaigners say the proposed limits will "victimise" disabled people.

Paul Flynn MP, who supports the campaign to legalise cannabis for medicinal purposes, said disabled people should "play hell with their MPs to end this nonsense".

An HO spokeswoman said no firm decisions about limits had been made.

Towards Equity and Access Report

The Department of Health has allocated £2.5 million to 303 Primary Care Trusts (PCT's) in England, to improve access to health services for deaf people. This works out to around £8,000 for each PCT.

Herbert Klein (member of Lewisham's Sign Language community) and Lloyd Wint are working as Towards Equity and Access Implementation Officers for the Department of Health, also for the British Society for Mental Health and Deafness (BSMHD), the United Kingdom Council of Deafness (UKCOD) and the National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE).

The following are examples of how the money can be used: call display boards, deaf awareness training, counselling services, improved assessment, communication tactics and new Sign Health computer software (so doctors can communicate via Sign Language video clips if it is impossible to book an interpreter) and videophones. These lists are not exhaustive. It is important that the Deaf community are consulted to find out local needs.

Leaked documents raise detention fears - Edited from Disability Now, Julie Griffiths, July 2006

A leaked government document shows that people without capacity to give consent for mental health treatment could be held in psychiatric units for up to one year after being detained.

People who are sectioned under the Mental Health Act have their cases automatically reviewed after 28 days' detention. But although someone detained under the new proposals, or their representative, could appeal to the Court of Protection, the proposals appear to offer no automatic right of appeal.

Campaigners criticised the government's draft plans. A spokesman for the Mental Health Alliance said: "If it is 28 days for everyone else then it should be the same for those who lack capacity."

A Department of Health spokesperson described the proposed plans as "a work in progress".

Disabled children and adults denied fair treatment at GCSE, and A Level

A new move by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the Department for Education and Skills sponsored public body responsible for maintaining and developing the national curriculum and regulating the public examination system, is denying disabled children and adults a fair chance to take crucial examinations.

In a change reflecting what the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) believe to be a complete misinterpretation of new disability equalities legislation, the QCA has removed the means by which candidates with a sensory loss are assessed for competencies which for most candidates involves the use of sight or hearing. Until now they were awarded a grade marked as a "certificate indication", which indicated their level of competence and grade in those areas where their abilities lie without penalising them for their disability.

The QCA has now decided that new legislation coming into force in September 2007, designed by the government to outlaw discrimination faced by disabled students when taking their exams in school, actually requires the removal of these adjustments. This is an interpretation of the DDA that is directly contradicted by the DRC. Although the new legislation takes effect in over a year's time, these adjustments are to be removed with immediate effect.

Liberty - London's Disability Rights Festival 2006

Trafalgar Square, Saturday 2 September 2006, 1pm – 6pm, Admission free

Liberty is a major one day festival that showcases the talents of disabled artists, musicians, dancers and performers. In 2006 it celebrates 20 years of the London Disability Arts Forum.

Amongst those performing at Liberty 2006 are

- CandoCo
- Johnny Crescendo
- Marlo Donato
- The Heroes
- Carousel
- Ramesh Meyyappan
- Creative Routes
- Kickin' Kangaroo Club.
- ... and other names to be announced

Liberty is organised by the Mayor of London working together with Deaf and disabled Londoners. Groups contributing to the development of the event include: Attitude is Everything, Shape, People First, Creative Routes, Greater London Deaf Association, GLAD, Regard and London Disability Arts Forum.

Liberty welcomes everyone and on the day a range of facilities and services will be available at Trafalgar Square to ensure the event is inclusive and accessible to all.

For further details email: liberty@london.gov.uk, Recorded information: 020 7983 4277, Enquiries: 020 7983 4100.

Athletes' hopes dashed – Mencap, July 2006

The hopes of athletes with a learning disability have once again been dashed as the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) voted to exclude them from the Beijing Paralympic Games in 2008.

This is because the IPC believe that the eligibility system developed by the International Sports Federation for Persons with an Intellectual Disability (INAS-FID) still doesn't reach 'the standard expected for IPC competitions' and it is considered 'not sufficiently robust to ensure fair competition for athletes with an intellectual disability'.

Athletes in England have paid significant amounts of money and endured years of hardship as the system of registration was continually changed by INAS (most recently in 2005). Despite this, some may never now have the chance to compete in a Paralympic Games.

The IPC states that the status of these athletes 'will be re-evaluated following the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games, allowing for more time for further work to be carried out'.

Carers need support too - Edited from Disability Now, July 2006

Caring for a disabled person can take up a great deal of time and emotional and physical energy. This can often lead to carers being unaware of support that is available to them. A lot of family members and friends who support disabled people do not consider themselves to be carers. However, if you support a disabled friend, relative or partner without being paid, you are a carer.

In most areas throughout the UK, there are carers' support groups and centres. Some of these groups are led by carers, former carers or a carers' worker. They provide support, someone to listen and advice for people who are caring for someone.

If you are a carer, you are entitled to a carers' assessment. The assessment is usually carried out by your local social services department. An assessment looks at your needs as a carer and the help to which you may be entitled. The purpose of the assessment is to help you - not to judge. It makes sure your caring role is manageable and that you get the support you need.

The main benefit for carers is called Carer's Allowance, which is worth £46.95 per week. Before claiming Carer's Allowance, it is important to seek advice. Sometimes the benefits of the person that you care for can be affected by a Carer's Allowance claim. To claim Carer's Allowance, you will need a copy of form DS700 from the Disability Benefit Inquiry Line (tel: 0800 882 200).

There are over three million people in the UK who juggle work and caring. If you are working and caring for someone, think about telling your employer. They may be able to assist with things such as changes to your working hours and discuss other options that may be able to make life easier for you. Under the Work and Families Bill, carers will have the right to ask their employer for a flexible working arrangement from April 2007.

Taking care of yourself is one of the most important aspects of caring. Ensuring that you have some time for yourself - whether it is an hour, a day or a week - can make a huge difference to your general well-being.

Landmark EU Regulation adopted by Transport Ministers to stop discrimination against disabled air passengers – European Disability Forum

Until 9 June 2006, no European binding legislation existed in Europe to protect disabled people from discrimination when travelling by air. A person could be refused boarding or assistance on the ground of disability and some air companies had even established a quota system defining a maximum of disabled passengers per plane, regardless of the type of disability.

A new Regulation adopted by the European Ministers of Transport will prohibit people being denied boarding an aircraft or booking on the ground of disability. Disabled passengers should receive seamless assistance at no additional charge, a responsibility that lies within the hands of the managing body of the airport. An important measure will also be disability equality training for all staff dealing with the travelling public.

Despite the lobbying efforts of the European Disability Forum, the regulation still allows a possibility to deny boarding of disabled people for "safety reasons", which are not yet clearly defined. Although these safety reasons must be properly justified, if they are defined at Member State level they could become a barrier for disabled passengers.

The right not to be denied the right to board or make a booking will be applicable by the summer of 2007. The entire regulation will be totally effective a year later and directly applicable to European airports and airlines.

Holiday Snapshots of Marcia Jones, CILL's Globe Trotting Vice Chair

Caribbean Cruise - Cruises by Ocean Village are excellent value for everyone especially for disabled people. We flew with Thomas Cook - when we landed a special lift was used to take me off the plane. We then transferred straight to the ship with our luggage without going through immigration.

We had booked a cabin that was adapted for disabled people. Some have views of the ocean and others are inside cabins. In each cabin there is a fridge, safe, TV, hairdryer and tea/coffee making facilities.

The restaurant is open 24 hrs a day and staff are very helpful.

Every day the ship stops off at one of 12 different islands and you can decide whether or not you want to disembark. If you decide to get off the ship there's a ramp that you use and again assistance is provided.

Marcia's score 10/10

New Zealand - The flight was with Royal Brunei Airlines - we had to get off at Dubai, Brunei and Brisbane. Assistance was there every time we landed to take me through each immigration control and then back onto the plane. At Auckland Airport, once again the service was great.

Most of New Zealand treats disabled people equally and 'disabled access' means just that at all the places we visited, including Wellington, Auckland, Rotorua just to name a few.

Marcia's score 10/10

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

SUPPORTED BY CAPITAL COMMUNITY FOUNDATION – NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL UNIT

CILL, 5 Silverdale House, Silverdale, London SE26 4SD

email: campaign@fsmail.net

Richard Neville/ SLaM Storytelling Project

I am a storyteller, and a collector of stories. I work with groups to listen to stories and to retell them, sometimes making books, and sometimes making performances with the people I work with.

I believe in the power of storytelling to express experiences and beliefs in a way that is not threatening or upsetting. A powerful story stays in the mind for a long time – it is a way of thinking about the important questions in life.

I am working with the SLaM (South London and Maudsely) Mental Health Trust on a storytelling project. SLaM needs to create a Disability Equality Scheme in response to a government initiative. The aim of the Scheme is to ensure that people with disabilities are treated fairly and without discrimination by SLaM. My project is to collect the stories of people with disabilities who have had experiences of accessing public services. These stories will be written down and used as the basis for discussion and more storytelling during the SLaM consultation process. No names will be attached to any of the stories.

Would you like to tell me stories of your experiences? Or help me create some stories that express your point of view? The storytelling session would be as long or as short as you wish, and I would also tell some stories of my own, and some folktales, and hopefully it would be a relaxing and enjoyable experience!

What is going on and How to contact CILL:

What and When:

What's On	When	Where
Drop-in	21 July 2 to 4 p.m.	The Clubroom 21 Marton Close Off Firhill Road Bellingham SE6 3SS
Out and About	30 July 1 to 3 p.m.	Ladywell Park Ladywell Road Ladywell SE13 (By the café)
CILL 30+	4 August 2 to 4 p.m.	The Clubroom 21 Marton Close Off Firhill Road Bellingham SE6 3SS
Out and About	13 August 1 to 3 p.m.	Ladywell Park Ladywell Road Ladywell SE13 (By the café)
Drop-in	18 August 2 to 4 p.m.	The Clubroom 21 Marton Close Off Firhill Road Bellingham SE6 3SS

If you are interested in any of these events and would like to know more, if you need advice or support or advocacy or just have an issue about your independent living that you do not know how to deal with please contact CILL at campaign@fsmail.net or call 020 8776 6967.