



THE PHOENIX

Campaign for Independent Living in Lewisham

December 2005

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

On Friday 2 December CILL will be running an event to celebrate the International Day of Disabled Persons. The event will include a launch of 'The Lewisham Declaration' and a 'Let's Talk' meeting with the Mayor. This will be a great opportunity for disabled people in Lewisham to come together and I look forward to seeing you on the day.

CILL Campaign Updates

In response to our enquiries regarding Blue Badge parking, we had a letter from Pat Hayes, Executive Director for Regeneration at LBL, and a very informative, useful and positive meeting with Darien Goodwin at Highways and Parking at LBL. He was also able to talk to us about cycle paths. He, and his team, have some really good ideas to improve access and he will continue to consult with us. CILL looks forward to working with him.

Blue Badge Parking - the Blue Badge regulations that came into force in 2001 were different to the old Orange Badge regulations but Lewisham Council did not enforce the changes until all Orange Badges had been replaced by Blue Badge. When issued each Blue Badge is accompanied by a leaflet stating where parking is not allowed so it seems fair to say that all Blue Badge Holders do know where they can park if they read the leaflet. In particular Blue Badge Holders cannot park on resident parking bays unless it is clearly marked as being available for Blue Badge Holders as well as resident parking. Parking is a major issue for everyone and there may be changes in the future so it is important that we look at the information leaflet issued with each Blue Badge. Lewisham Council set the regulations for their car parks and they use NCP to enforce the regulations. Blue Badge parking in all Lewisham Council owned car parks is free – this is not the case in some neighbouring Boroughs where their Council has decided to charge.

Cycle Paths - access to cycle paths is a problem for wheelchairs and wheelchair cyclists because of the barriers put there to restrict motorcycles. This is a nationwide problem but in Lewisham Darien Goodwin is investigating the use of different kinds of barrier, possibly with a RADAR key lock for disabled people to get access, so that both access and safety can be addressed. He wants to work with CILL to look at and identify specific problems so that access is improved.

Bus 185 - 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. Anyone who experiences this, or any other problem, should complain to Transport for London. You must give them very specific information – date, time, location, bus number and bus running number which is displayed on the nearside window or at the front – so that TFL can investigate. The contact details are: email – customerservices@tfl-buses.co.uk, letter – London Buses Customer Services, 84 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PX, Telephone – 0845 300 7000, Textphone – 020 7027 9914 or you can use the complaint form at www.tfl.gov.uk/buses/contact_home.asp

Equality and Diversity Consultation

Alister McClure, Policy and Partnerships at LBL, is carrying out a consultation and review of the Council's equality and diversity policy. He included CILL in the consultation and we were impressed by his understanding of the issues, willingness to listen to what people were saying and his commitment to making the policy relevant to services. He will be issuing a new draft policy in the New Year.

Not so independent living

CILL's Chair attended a meeting at the Civic Suite recently and as promised a new lift has been installed. However staff could not operate it and the way it has been installed makes it dangerous. The Chair has sent an email and LBL is investigating.

Disability Rights Commission (DRC) perspective on welfare reform

Incapacity benefit has once again been in the news, with the Government's publication of its "Eight Principles for Welfare Reform", in advance of its expected welfare reform green paper. The DRC's position is that disabled people should be supported to work where they can and the key to that is not just to focus on claimants or the mechanics of qualifying for benefits but for everyone to fulfil their responsibilities - Government, employers and disabled people.

This includes:

- expecting those disabled people who can work to work - not underestimating what's possible and not writing anyone off on the basis of their impairment
- understanding that more disabled people will only be able to work if employers and Government fulfil their part of the bargain - exercise their responsibilities
- employers keeping staff, making the simple and cheap changes that mean disabled people can stay in work
- Government changing the benefits system so it doesn't stop people from trying work; ensuring comprehensive support is available wherever you happen to live (not just in 'pilot areas'), so that those people needing support to get and keep work can access it easily; and taking a lead in breaking the link between fraud and incapacity benefit - the solutions lie elsewhere.

'Moving On' in the community project

Becoming independent is challenging for most young people. It can be especially challenging for physically disabled young people disadvantaged by the way others see them and the design and delivery of education, work, accommodation, leisure and public services.

The 'Moving On' in the community project is a new project in Lewisham, designed to work with physically disabled young people who want to make changes to their lives. It has a small team, who work with individuals on specific, short-term goals. There is no cost for the support. The project is part of a three-year pilot, funded and managed by the Treloar's Trust. A Disability Outreach Workers are available to work with physically disabled people aged between 16 and 40 who live, work or study in Lewisham. The project hopes to help people with all aspects of life, such as, socializing, leisure, housing issues and employment with a focus on empowering the person and moving them towards greater independence. If you feel someone you know may benefit from joining the project please contact Claire Major on 020 8692 0353 x4062 or mob:07921 971746 email: claire.major@treloar.org.uk

Nat West pays out £5,000 over access issue

A disabled customer with Nat West has received £5,000 compensation after complaining for four years that he was unable to get inside his local bank.

Kevin Caulfield, who uses an electric wheelchair, had been forced to conduct transactions on the pavement outside the bank in West London because a large step at the bank's entrance has stopped him from getting inside. On one occasion, Mr Caulfield was asked to wait in his wheelchair on the pavement outside the bank while staff dealt with customers inside the building who had arrived before him. Mr Caulfield used the DRC's conciliation service to negotiate an agreement with Nat West to pay him £5,000 compensation for the poor service he received. Nat West apologised for not answering letters on the matter and has installed temporary ramps at the bank.

Disability Rights Commission (DRC) pledges to get tough on access offenders

The DRC has found that one in two complaints about access to services concern leisure and retail high street businesses. It is the first anniversary of the new laws to make buildings more user-friendly, the DRC helpline has received over 1,500 complaints about access since October last year. The leisure and retail sectors, which include pubs, shops, restaurants, cinemas, theatres, gyms, sports facilities and hotels have accounted for over half of the 1,500 complaints.

The DRC has investigated over 40 cases where disabled people received a poor service in the past year. Eighty per cent of these were resolved positively. For example, ramps were installed, accessible toilets built, entrances widened, disabled parking bays introduced, and in some cases disabled people received financial compensation.

Disabled kids lose in childcare lottery - Disability Now - Priya Kotecha, November 2005

Inconsistent training and gaps in good practice are a major concern within childcare for disabled children, Ofsted has warned. In its report, *Removing Barriers*, the education watchdog says quality of provision varies widely across England depending on levels of training, support from local authorities and attitudes of providers.

"As a result, services for children with special needs depend on where they live, not on what they need,"

Ofsted inspectors visited 42 groups and reported that even nurseries rated as "good or outstanding" were barely able to provide adequate care for disabled children.

The report says local authorities should raise awareness of educational guidance and improve staff training.

Make an Appointment to see the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) new film

The DRC have commissioned a groundbreaking new film, 'The Appointment'. This 10 minute short drama explores attitudes to long-term health conditions and impairments; how they affect the chances of getting and keeping a job; and how the reactions of our family or work colleagues can make us fearful of revealing important aspects of our lives. The film doesn't preach a single 'official' line but allows the characters to speak from their own perspective. The aim is to provoke discussion. The film has been produced on DVD and also contains a five minute documentary about why the DRC made the film and attitudes to disability. A DVD Rom section contains an eight page booklet which can be downloaded and helps to answer some of the questions likely to arise when viewing the film. The film and accompanying materials can be used in schools and in training situations.

You can order a copy of the film on DVD from the DRC's helpline 08457 622 633 or textphone 08457 622 644.

Fight on as flyers barred - Edited from Disability Now, Priya Kotecha, November 2005

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) has written to the government demanding air travel is brought under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), following a string of cases in which airlines have failed disabled passengers.

Mr Massie of DRC said, "It is clear that the policy of working with airlines to improve their services voluntarily is not working. The DDA 2005 gives the government powers to include air travel within the provisions of the DDA and I have written to the secretary of state for transport asking him to use his powers to do so."

The British Air Transport Association rejected the DRC's call, saying it was "unnecessary, given European legislation coming in" and the Department for Transport, currently evaluating a voluntary air travel code of practice, said European laws would "pretty much involve everything the DDA would involve".

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

Campaign for Independent Living in Lewisham (CILL)

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS

To assist CILL, and the college security and catering services - please telephone CILL on 0208 776 6967 or email us at campaign@fsmail.net if you are able to join us on 2 December.

Please come along on Friday, 2 December to join Mayor Steve Bullock in launching CILL's contribution to the International Day of Disabled Persons.

At 1.30 pm the Mayor will be signing 'The Lewisham Declaration', and also launching a story/poem/song lyrics competition for young people in two age groups with the theme of 'disability rights and challenging discrimination'.

Afterwards, until 3.00 pm, the Mayor will be holding a session of 'Let's Talk'. This is a rare opportunity to discuss with the Mayor major issues facing disabled people in the Borough and to debate the Mayor's priorities

The launch and the meeting will take place on Friday, 2 December from 1.30 p.m. to 3.00 p.m. in the Professional Development Centre (PDC), Breakspear Building, Lewisham College, Lewisham Way, London SE4 1UT, 0208 692 0353

To enter the college via the accessible entrance:

- turn from Lewisham Way into Breakspear Road and continue up the road until you reach the second gate, on the left, which has a security barrier,
- the guard will open the gate and lift the barrier for you
- proceed along the entrance road and at the end is a ramp, enter the building via the automatic doors and follow the signs until you reach the PDC,
- accessible lavatories are in the corridor opposite the entrance.

Please note that you cannot park within the college grounds

Please come along if you can

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!

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