



THE PHOENIX

Campaign for Independent Living in Lewisham

July 2006

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

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. Our focus on the day will be '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 will be organising a petition. So if you want to know a bit more about us (all Trustees and Co-ordinators will be there), want to know a bit more about independent living or just want to show your support by signing the petition, get down to People's Day.

Lord Jack Ashley writes about the Independent Living Bill

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

Campaign Updates

Lift at the Civic Suite - Denise Smith and Gary Evans from CILL went to the meeting arranged by Lewisham Council to try to resolve the issues about the platform lift. The existing lift will be replaced and re-sited. The new lift has been ordered and as it is 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. It also has a manual over-ride feature, so 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. Installation should be able to take place in September. Lewisham Disability Coalition (LDC) also attended the meeting and CILL thanks them for adding their voice to the issues we have been raising since last year.

Job loss caused by Council funding cuts – CILL has just heard that the decision to cut the funding for a work placement for a Lewisham blind man has been suspended until April of next year. While this is good news, for now, the Council have made it very clear that funding will cease next year because they no longer fund this type of placement. The disabled man concerned has already been told that he will not be able to find other employment and that his needs will be met in other ways – social activities such as day centre or adult learning classes, which he does not want. CILL had asked the Council to review its decision based on the cost of providing the services that would be needed as this was likely to exceed the cost of the work placement funding but we have not had a reply. Councillor Darren Johnson has asked the Council about its general policy position.

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

DISC (Disabled Interactive Social Club)

Earlier this year DISC joined CILL as a committee for a trial period. DISC is now much more established and needs to operate more independently so DISC is no longer working as part of CILL. Everyone at CILL hopes that DISC continues to grow successfully.

Out and About

The first 'Out and About' meeting at Ladywell Fields went very well and the weather was kind. It was really friendly and most of the time was spent chatting. Jenny Spencer, the co-ordinator, has already had another informal meeting and has plans for others. If you would like to get involved please contact CILL or Jenny on 0208 697 7103 or jenfilein@gmail.com.

CILL 30+

CILL 30+ met in Bellingham in early June and for a first meeting was well attended. Lots of ideas were put forward for how the club should develop and their co-ordinator, Steve Cheesman, is now working to put those ideas into action. The next meeting is on Friday 23 June so if you want to come along please contact CILL.

CILL 'Drop-in'

From Friday 16 June CILL will be 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. If you need some information or advice please come along.

Mental Health Services – Users Experiences

Richard Neville, Lewisham's Community Storyteller, is involved in a project to record the experiences of anyone who has used or is using mental health services. Their stories will be written up and used to influence the way services develop. Richard will be coming along to a CILL 'drop-in' – possibly on 21 July – and if you have a story to tell or just want to find out about the project please come and meet Richard. The next issue of the Phoenix will give more details.

Lewisham Sign Language Community Group AGM and Social Evening - The Annual General Meeting of the Lewisham Sign Language Community Group will be held at 7.00 pm on Thursday 29 June in the Civic Suite (next to the Town Hall, opposite Laurence House) A new Management Committee will be elected. If you are deaf and you live in Lewisham you can vote.

Afterwards, at 8.00 pm a Social Evening will be held in The London and Rye, 209 Rushey Green, Catford, SE6 4AF This is a J D Wetherspoon Pub. Nearest stations: Catford Bridge/Catford BR

For more information contact: Marije Davidson, Secretary, lsicg_secretary@yahoo.co.uk, Fax 020 8659 6350, SMS 07961 980763

Brixton Wheelchair Baseball Group - Drop in Session - a chance to try out this great sport! - Come and have a go! - Open to all ages - Sports chairs available Everyone welcome, Saturdays 2 – 4 pm at Brixton recreation Centre, 27 Brixton Station Road, London SW(8QQ. Contact: Shaun 0207 737 4621, 0795 803 5394.

North Downham Training Project (NDTP) – Free Courses

CLAIT 2006 offers you the opportunity to achieve an IT qualification at level 1 or 2. The following courses are FREE for both employed and unemployed adults – all you pay is the certification.

- Make IT work for you (4 week course) – are you a complete beginner, would you like to learn how to surf the net? NDTP can help you develop IT skills.
- Photoshop (computer art) running every Tuesday from 1 – 3 pm
- Self Learning level 1 and 2 sessions (including work focussing on file management, e-document, spreadsheets, graphs, database) enable you to learn at your own pace all with onsite tutor support
- Drop-in sessions – Mondays 1-3 pm, Wednesdays 10-12 pm and Fridays 10-1 pm.

The Fast Track Course caters for up to 22 students in 2 groups of 11, for just under 16 hours per week. The course is especially for people who want to gain new skills for their future. NDTP aims to help all students gain the work and personal skills, to move onto more learning or employment. There is a free on-site crèche, computer skills training, basic literacy and numeracy. Term time only.

Interested? Then call Alan on 020 8698 5170 for details of future courses. Or visit the ICT Suite at Goldsmiths Community Centre, Castillion Road, London SE6 1QD. There is full disabled access.

The Gateway Lewisham Programme is aimed at unemployed people who are looking to work in the NHS. The programme offers:

- 6 months voluntary experience in Lewisham Hospital
- 12 hours a week on your placement
- 4 hours a week training – ECDL, literacy, numeracy, basic life support, health and safety and manual handling
- Job search workshops
- CV workshops
- Advice and support

Are you unemployed? Aged 18-60? Have a National Insurance Number? Have a UK/EU Passport or Home Office papers? Are you reliable and keen to gain employment?

If you have answered yes to these questions, think you would enjoy this programme, and can commit yourself for 16 hours a week for 6 months contact the voluntary services on 0208 8333 3030 ext 6418/6332.

Europe's access coup - Disability Now, Elizabeth Choppin, June 2006

A new agreement is set to transform access for disabled people in cities, public buildings and transport systems across Europe.

The new European Union (EU) funding regulations, agreed last month, mean EU countries must consider access for disabled people and anti-discrimination issues before receiving EU Structural Funds (SF) for new projects.

The funds make up a third of the EU budget and are used for environmental projects, employment services, urban renewal, education and cultural developments.

The European Disability Forum (EDF) welcomed the agreement by EU financial ministers, which followed more than two years of negotiations.

Liberal Democrat MEP Liz Lynne, vice-president of the disability all-party intergroup, said the agreement sent a strong message to member states about discriminating against disabled people.

The new regulations are expected to be voted through the European Parliament next month and come into force days later.

Exclusion from NHS targets will fail deaf and hard of hearing people says RNID - May 2006

In response to the Department of Health's announcement for 18-week waiting time targets for treatment, RNID Chief Executive Dr John Low says:

"It is very bad news for deaf and hard of hearing people that hearing aid services have been left out of the 18-week waiting time targets announced today (10 May 2006), by the Government. We now have a hearing aid service where patients are able to get quality digital hearing aids fitted to a high standard. However, audiology services have suffered from historical neglect and under-funding resulting in very long standing problems including intolerably long waiting times.

Open Your Eyes

A new RNIB report, *Open Your Eyes*, reveals that more than two million people in the UK are at risk of needlessly losing their sight. It also shows that more than half of all sight loss is avoidable. Unknowingly 1.9 million people with diabetes who aren't having regular eye tests and 250,000 people with early-stage glaucoma are at high risk of losing their sight.

The RNIB report clearly shows that few people understand that eye tests are important because they identify potentially blinding conditions. Most respondents gave the reason for not having an eye test as "they didn't have a problem with their eyes".

In addition a further half a million people in the UK are needlessly living with sight loss by not seeking treatment for cataracts (a routine operation that is successful in 90 per cent of cases) or by simply wearing the wrong prescription glasses.

Steve Winyard, RNIB's Head of Campaigns: "The Government needs to act now as the situation is going to get much worse with the explosion in the numbers of people with diabetes and as a result of the ageing of our population."

Charities team up to provide drug education to young deaf people

The lack of drugs knowledge and awareness among young deaf people has led two national charities to join forces on a new project. Drugs information charity DrugScope and the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) are teaming up to produce drugs education materials suitable for the specific needs of young deaf people.

DrugScope and the NDCS are organising a series of focus groups with young deaf people to identify what additional information and support is required, the best formats for communication, and to develop drug education resources to meet their needs. The findings from these groups will contribute directly to the development of tailored resources.

Human Rights Act under threat - Edited from Disability Now, June 2006

Furious disability campaigners and activists have attacked the Conservative Party's threat to rip up the Human Rights Act (HRA) if it gains power.

Tory leader David Cameron said he would "reform, replace or scrap" the act, even though it provides a raft of protections for disabled people. He was criticising a High Court ruling not to deport nine refugees who hijacked a plane, because they faced a risk of torture if returned to Afghanistan.

Caroline Ellis, head of parliamentary affairs for the Disability Rights Commission, said it was vital not to weaken the act before next year's launch of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights.

Katie Ghose, director of the British Institute of Human Rights, said, "Any weakening of the HRA will put yet another barrier in the way of disabled people; scrapping it altogether would be even worse and would be a major setback for disabled people's struggle to have their fundamental rights recognised."

Tara Flood, director of the Alliance for Inclusive Education, said the HRA has been "far more liberating" than the Disability Discrimination Act, because people do not need to prove they are disabled before securing protection.

The public sector and equality for disabled people

Research published in April by the Department for Work and Pensions examines public bodies' approach to implementing the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 and provides evidence for a baseline against which to assess the extent to which the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 prompts authorities to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.

Some of the main findings are:

- The DDA was a major factor that influenced the changes made by organisations who took part in the survey in terms of employment and service provision, accessibility of information and buildings strategy. It was also the main reason given by respondents for integrating disability issues into their mainstream plans.
- Nearly all public bodies also had an Action Plan to meet the needs of disabled employees and service users.
- Although a large number of organisations in the survey had a Disability Equality Scheme in place, a minority had involved disabled employees or service users in drafting it. Also the vast majority of organisations had acted to improve access to premises for disabled people, but few had engaged with disability organisations to review the extent to which the services met the needs of disabled people.
- Participating organisations were unlikely to provide information in specialist formats for disabled employees and service users as part of their standard procedures, although they were much more likely to provide it on request.

Review of Independent Living Funds announced

In May, Anne McGuire, Minister for Disabled People, announced a review of the Independent Living Funds (ILFs).

Minister for Disabled People, Anne McGuire, said:

"The ILFs enable thousands of severely disabled people to live independently and we need to consider the future direction of the funds in the light of our goal of equality for disabled people.

"A consultant will be engaged to conduct a strategic review of the Independent Living Funds, supplying independent expert advice and carrying out an informal public consultation, in order to make recommendations for the future direction of the Funds.

"The Independent Living Funds will allocate £263 million of public funds in 2006/07 so it is essential that we have an independent and informed review of their role."

Regular reviews of Non Departmental Public Bodies are required by Cabinet Office guidance. This one will be carried out in the context of the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit report 'Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People', and the Department of Health's White Paper 'Our health, Our care, Our say'. The Government's overarching aim is to provide more person-centred and coherent support for disabled people.

The review is expected to report to Ministers by December 2006.

"I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but my chief duty is to accomplish humble tasks as though they were great and noble. The world is moved along, not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker." HELEN KELLER

"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

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What is going on and How to contact CILL:

What and When:

What's On	When	Where
Drop-in	23 June 2 to 4 p.m.	The Clubroom 21 Marton Close Off Firhill Road Bellingham SE6 3SS
Hydrotherapy	26 June 3.30 to 5 p.m	Waterside School Lushington Road Bellingham SE6
Hydrotherapy	3 July 3.30 to 5 p.m.	Waterside School Lushington Road Bellingham SE6
CILL 30+	7 July 2 to 4 p.m.	The Clubroom 21 Marton Close Off Firhill Road Bellingham SE6 3SS
People's Day	8 July 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.	Mountsfield Park, Brownhill Road, Catford SE6
Hydrotherapy	10 July 3.30 to 5 p.m.	Waterside School Lushington Road Bellingham SE6
Out and About	16 July 1 to 3 p.m.	Ladywell Park Ladywell Road Ladywell SE13 (By the café)
Drop-in	21 July 2 to 4 p.m.	The Clubroom 21 Marton Close Off Firhill Road Bellingham SE6 3SS
Hydrotherapy	17 July 3.30 to 5 p.m	Waterside School Lushington Road Bellingham SE6
Out and About	30 July 1 to 3 p.m.	Ladywell Park Ladywell Road Ladywell SE13 (By the café)

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.