



THE PHOENIX

Campaign for Independent Living in Lewisham

November 2005

Declaration of Rights

Campaign for Independent Living in Lewisham (CILL) will be issuing 'The Lewisham Declaration' a declaration of rights in support of the International Day of Disabled Persons (3 December 2005). The Mayor has agreed to launch the declaration at a 'Let's Talk' meeting on 2 December. Further details will be sent to you in early November.

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

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. We investigate issues that you identify, any issue that is causing you difficulty in your life. We believe that it is through making their voices heard, their 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. Sadly, there seems to be few organisations of disabled people in Lewisham where there is real peer support and CILL will look at that issue so if you have views on that, have something you want investigated or want to get involved at CILL please get in touch.

CILL continues to be represented at various meetings and we will keep you informed of any news or information that we get that is of interest to disabled people in Lewisham.

We have made a second funding application for a project about access to shops, businesses and services. This includes setting up a web site. If we are successful I'll let you have all the details.

CILL Campaign updates

CILL jumps in the deep end - Colin King (LBL Leisure) is in the process of setting up an advisory group of disabled people to look at all aspects of sport, physical exercise and leisure. The first meeting should be in the next few weeks. This week CILL went to a focus group held by Lewisham on the proposals for Forest Hill Baths. Basically there are two options either renovate (expensive, it will only last for about ten years and it will not be fully accessible) or demolish and rebuild a modern six lane pool (not much more expensive, it will last for about 60 years and it will be accessible). Although the rebuild option looks good on paper, closer scrutiny of the proposed plans indicate difficulties with the size and location of changing rooms and toilets. It has also only one pool for everyone. The renovation option is also poor but it has the advantage of two pools. In our opinion, little account is being taken of the different needs of people with different impairments. Instead access seems to be measured against the needs of active wheelchair users. A better option for disabled people (and young children, older people and a lot of others) would be to demolish the existing pool and rebuild with two pools, with the second pool having warmer water. If this second pool was designated as a health pool it might be possible to get the Primary Care Trust involved with funding. There also needs more work on access features such as disabled changing rooms, non-slip floors, hoists and grab rails. If you want to know more and have your say go to www.lewisham.gov.uk

Direct Payments - As well as the information previously requested by CILL we also asked Adi Cooper, Head of Adult Services, at Lewisham Council to look into the other specific concerns we highlighted in last month's PHOENIX. As she has not responded we have now written to Aileen Buckton, Executive Director – Community Services and Councillor Chris Best, and if that fails then we will have to go down the official complaints procedure route. If you are experiencing problems with Choices or are having difficulty getting direct payments please get in touch with CILL and we will try to help. CILL is also aware of a disabled person who was advised by a social worker that they did not want a care assessment but just needed to see an OT! If you are disabled it is your right to have a full care assessment of your needs. Carers are also entitled to a separate assessment of their needs. If you are experiencing difficulty and delay in getting your assessment get in touch with CILL.

Inaccessible New Shop Front in Catford - CILL is waiting for a reply from John Miller, Planning at Lewisham Council, about two inaccessible shop fronts. DDA Part 3 is being ignored, this may not be the fault of the Council but until we get a reply they look like they have something to hide. We just want some information – why is that so difficult to get?

Cycle Paths But Not for All - CILL will meet Darian Goodwin at Highways and Parking on 9 November. We will also be asking about Blue Badge parking

Bus 185 - CILL has written to both East Thames Buses and Transport for London about the local wheelchair user who was unable to access three consecutive buses because the ramps were not working.

Council Budget Funding - CILL has written back to Rachael Turner at Policy and Partnerships at LBL asking for details of all scheduled works to improve access so that we can publish details in THE PHOENIX.

Lewisham Police Community Consultative Group

CILL attended this group back in September. The Police are now setting 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). Questions can be put to the Police either in writing before the meeting or verbally at the meeting. If you would like CILL to take up a question for you please get in touch with us.

Sickle Cell and Thalassemia

Lewisham Carers have organised an information session about this on 3 November. More information is available from Cathy at Carers Lewisham (Tel: 020 8699 8686).

Direct Access: A disability guide to London's main post offices

Postwatch, the postal service watchdog, has produced a document, Direct Access: A disability guide to London's main post offices. For Internet users, the online version of the booklet is available at <http://www.postwatch.co.uk/pdf/policydocs/16557leaflet.pdf> (just in case this link doesn't work, you can click through from [www.postwatch.co.uk / regional postwatch / London / reports and publications](http://www.postwatch.co.uk/regional/postwatch/London/reports_and_publications)).

Europe's first talking cash dispenser - RNIB

Getting cash from bank machines has always been difficult for blind and partially sighted people because the information is displayed visually. Now a cash dispenser has been unveiled with revolutionary speaking software, designed specifically for people with sight problems.

Northern Bank, together with its former sister bank Clydesdale, are the first banks in Europe to use the new software which will help transform thousands of peoples' lives. This pilot project, running in Belfast and Glasgow, was launched in May.

The Accessible Office - a new publication

Whether you are a manager looking to improve your workplace or an architect after a reference guide, The Accessible Office offers clear, practical advice and guidance on all aspects of inclusive design. The Accessible Office includes:

- clear explanations of what is expected under the Disability Discrimination Act
- the most up-to-date standards, research and regulations, from Part M to Health and Safety at work.
- over 50 diagrams and illustrations
- comprehensive contacts and reference lists.

There are 8.6 million disabled people of working age in Britain today in addition to people recovering from injuries, accidents or short illnesses. From reading signs to using the stairs or hearing the telephone, the design of the office can make all the difference between staying at home or getting back to work. Practical, clear and comprehensive the book is available from RNIB Customer Services on 0845 702 3153 - Price: £25

Telecoms industry continues to fail 50,000 British Sign Language users

Over 50,000 deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL) are being failed by the telecoms industry as they are not able to fully benefit from the opportunities of video telephony.

The RNID BSL relay telephone service allows an estimated 50,000 BSL users to communicate with hearing people by telephone, by signing to an interpreter via a webcam or videophone, who then relays the conversation in speech on an ordinary phone to a hearing recipient and vice versa.

The service can be used to communicate with banks, businesses, doctor surgeries or simply to catch up with friends; something most people consider a basic necessity. However, the current service is only available Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm and does not provide access to emergency services. The situation in the UK is in sharp contrast with that in the United States where video relay is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, same price as a normal phone call.

Huge cuts for disabled Londoners - Disability Now October 2005

Services for disabled people in London will face huge cuts in government funding if changes to a grant formula go ahead, according to council leaders.

The government is consulting on changes to the formula it uses to calculate grants for local government. But its proposals could see London's share for adult social services, including disabled adults, fall by £150 million a year in 2006/07, almost one fifth.

The Association of London Government (ALG), which represents London's 33 councils, says in a new report, Don't Let London Lose Out, that the proposed changes are coming at a time that the city faces "an unprecedented increase in need", with disabled people making up about one fifth of London's population. (see www.alg.gov.uk)

Even if the "least damaging" range of options is introduced next year, London could still lose £250 million in its social services funding share, it says.

People First – edited from the Chair's Report - Richard Blake

People First (Self-Advocacy) is a registered charity run by and for people with learning difficulties. They have been working on resolutions adopted at their AGM, for example:

- that People First look into why there aren't many people from the Black and Ethnic Minority community in self-advocacy and also to look at the issue of double discrimination,
- that the Government helps people with learning difficulties get more money and decent services and that Members of Parliament understand what self-advocacy groups are about,
- that the People First Articles and Memorandums (Company Rules) are made into easy read with symbols and pictures and put onto tape so that everyone can understand the rules. (They have started work on this and talked to their solicitor and this is more legally complicated than first realised).

People First (Self-Advocacy) focuses on influencing policy and practice, supporting self-advocacy groups, providing accessible information and training, and campaigning around issues that are important to people with learning difficulties.

Mind says new research reveals incompetence of Government's plans for compulsory treatment

Richard Brook, Mind's Chief Executive said: "One of Mind's grave concerns over the draft Mental Health Bill has been the probability of far too many people being swept up into compulsory treatment in the community. The King's Fund report shows that this is likely to be the reality: numbers are predicted to be 13,000 or more, ten times the Government estimate of 1,450.

The system is unlikely to achieve any real benefits, as shown by the Cochrane Institute report - the major provider of evidence-based information in healthcare. It finds no evidence of any advantages of compulsion in the community, either in the reduction of hospital admissions or in the improvement of quality of life or satisfaction with care.

Mind believes that the Bill could induce fear of compulsory treatment into the many ordinary people with mental health problems, driving them away from seeking the help they may desperately need. The Cochrane report supports this, recognising that CTOs may damage the relationship between patients and mental health services. The research also shows that the decision for compulsory treatment orders is driven unduly by inpatient resources and not by the individual patient's needs. Furthermore, there is a disastrous lack of provision of aftercare, which again this draft Bill has failed to include any attempt to address. Recent research shows that failures of aftercare account for high levels of re-admissions.

Both lead to people inappropriately receiving compulsory treatment in the community, to which Mind is implacably opposed."

Anger over suspended ILF payments – Edited from Disability Now, October 2005

Campaigners are furious at rule changes that are stopping disabled people receiving Independent Living Fund (ILF) payments while they appeal against their Disability Living Allowance (DLA) being scrapped or reduced. They said the change, which came into effect in April, would have a "negative effect" on the independent living movement.

Disabled people can only receive ILF payments, which help pay for care packages, if they are also eligible for the higher rate care component of DLA and meet other criteria. Previously, ILF payments continued until the DLA appeals process was exhausted. The average waiting time to have an appeal heard is almost seven weeks. Last year, an MPs' committee found that nearly half of DLA decisions contained mistakes.

The Department for Work and Pensions said the move followed "legal advice" and added that ILF trustees "have a duty of care to taxpayers". They said DLA and care expenses would be backdated if higher rate DLA and ILF payments were reinstated after an appeal.

Scope reaction to police's hate crime awareness campaign

Disability organisation Scope strongly supports the Nottinghamshire police force's campaign to stamp out hate crime towards vulnerable members of society. Having two free phone lines will be of real comfort to disabled people in the region as the Disability Rights Commission report 2003 showed that 22% of disabled respondents experienced harassment in public because of their impairment. Since 1990, 682 disabled people have been killed just because they were disabled. (Sources: Disability Awareness in Action, Disability Rights Commission 2003).

Free post for visually impaired people – Edited from Disability Now, September 2005

Royal Mail has scrapped all charges for visually impaired people who want to send large print material by post. The company has included all written materials in 16-point font or larger in its Articles for the Blind scheme.

The scheme was first launched in 1906, and allows free deliveries of certain items for visually impaired people such as talking books, optical magnifiers or guide dog harnesses. The extension to the scheme, developed with the RNIB, will be funded by Royal Mail at a cost of £5million a year.

Any packages or envelopes sent under the scheme must be left unsealed and clearly marked on the outside with "Articles for the Blind" and the sender's name and address.

Urgent Action Needed To End Safety Fears Over Arthritis Drugs

New research published by Arthritis Care reveals that fewer than four in ten people with osteoarthritis (OA) say they are happy with their current medication. Arthritis Care is calling on GPs to set new targets for completing reviews for people with osteoarthritis within six months. Under current government guidance people might have to wait over one year for a review of their arthritis and medications. Living with Arthritis – a spotlight on the continuing impact of chronic osteoarthritis pain, is the first report to assess the impact of a series of high profile warnings about the potential dangers of drug treatments for OA, including a higher risk of heart attack.

Only three in ten people taking medicines for OA have had a recent opportunity to discuss their medications with their GP, and most of those had to arrange the appointment themselves. 40 per cent of those who have seen their GP are now on different medication. Further information is available from Arthritis Care's Helplines: Freephone 0808 800 4050 from 12pm to 4pm (Weekdays)

Abusers let off lightly – Edited from Disability Now, October 2005

New government figures have revealed the huge gap between sentences handed to people who abuse children and those who commit similar crimes against vulnerable adults.

The figures showed the average sentence in 2000 for cruelty or neglect of a child was 15.6 months in prison, compared with just four months for ill-treating an adult with a learning difficulty or mental health problem. In 2002, it was 19 months, nearly five times as high as the four months for such crimes against vulnerable adults in England and Wales.

A campaign is calling for the maximum sentence for neglect or ill-treatment of vulnerable adults to be increased to ten years, the same as it is for similar offences against children. The government has so far agreed to raise it to five years. A spokeswoman for Voice UK, the Ann Craft Trust and Respond, said: "There is no justifiable reason why the sentences are so different."

New booklet on sex and relationships for people with MS

Many people with multiple sclerosis (MS) experience physical sexual difficulties brought about by the damage the condition has caused to their central nervous system. Symptoms like fatigue and spasms, and psychological factors like low self-esteem and mood, can also impact on how people with MS express their sexuality.

A new 24-page booklet from the MS Society describes different types of male and female sexual dysfunction and the treatments and techniques which can be used. The booklet provides practical tips on how people can adjust to the effects MS has on their sexuality, either as a single person or a partner. Sections are also devoted to relationships where a partner is also the main carer, and on starting a new relationship. Available from MS Society, 372 Edgware Road, Staples Corner, London NW2 6ND.

The facts about smoking

AMD Alliance UK

13 million smokers in the UK are doubling their chances of sight loss later life according to definitive new research. Around 500,000 people in the UK have age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and an estimated 54,000 people have the condition as a result of smoking.

Diabetes UK

Results of a major study in the US found that twenty-five per cent of people who smoked and did not have diabetes when the research began had developed diabetes after five years. Smoking could be a further factor increasing the risk of Type 2 diabetes, along with being overweight and a lack of physical activity.

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

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

email: campaign@fsmail.net