



# THE PHOENIX

Campaign for Independent Living in Lewisham

October 2006

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

Under the Disability Discrimination Act all public bodies must have a 'Disability Equality Strategy' (DES) in place by the end of this year. Each DES must actively show that discrimination against disabled people is unacceptable and that the organisation has measures in place to combat discrimination. This applies to both service users and employees of the organisation.

For the first time organisations such as the Police, Local Authorities, schools and any other service must have a DES and they must include disabled people in how the DES is developed. This means that they must listen to and take on board what we think about the discrimination we face. CILL believes that this is of vital importance for disabled people because we feel that this is the first step towards the end of institutional disability.

Many organisations share our view and have been consulting with organisations of disabled people over the summer. For example the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) have been consulting for three months about their DES and Generic Equality Scheme (GES) which is a comprehensive scheme covering age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief and sexual orientation. The MPA say 'this is a remarkable opportunity for public organisations to shape the development of our Equality Schemes' and CILL agrees entirely.

I am personally angry and saddened and CILL is very concerned that Lewisham Council does not seem to share this view. Consultation around both the DES and 'Equality for All' which looks set to become Lewisham's GES has been so restricted that CILL believes the Council is actively discriminating against disabled people and their organisations by refusing them access to the planning and consultation process. CILL is now taking forward the whole issue of consultation as a campaign.

## Campaign Updates

'Equality for All' and the Disability Equality Scheme – CILL has called for wider consultation on these and will be meeting with Rachael Turner (Head of Policy and Partnerships, LBL) in the next few days.

Inaccessible New Shop Front in Catford – Marianne Aberly (LBL Policy and Partnerships) has now told us that the Shopfronts Planning Guidance Consultation has been completed without consulting CILL, despite the fact that we were told we would be and also that John Lloyd Stephenson would be replying to the letter we sent him in March. That was three weeks ago.

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

## Parking at Lewisham Hospital

Lewisham Hospital has increased their parking charges and the number of blue badge parking bays **BUT badge holders have to pay.** This decision was apparently made to help with the hospital's cash deficit. The Deptford Action Group for the Elderly is spearheading a campaign seeking free parking for blue badge holders and CILL supports them. Disabled people are a financially deprived group and many disabled people will not be able to afford the charges. CILL also considers that by charging disabled people to park when they have no other way of getting to the Hospital the reality is that disabled people are being charged to use the NHS. Many local and national groups are supporting the campaign as is the Mercury Newspaper. If you want to know more or to give your support contact Tim Hamilton, Project Development Officer, Deptford Action Group for the Elderly on 020 8691 2849 or at [tim@dage.ndo.co.uk](mailto:tim@dage.ndo.co.uk)

## Neighbourhood Renewal Small Grants

The Single Community Programme came to an end in April 2006 in Lewisham and with it, ended two large small grants programmes – the Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chest and its twin fund, the Learning Chest. Both were administered by Capital Community Foundation. This amounted to a loss of over £250,000 per annum to Lewisham and its small groups. The Lewisham Local Area Agreement Stronger Safer Communities has earmarked £37,500 over 2006-8 for small grants which continues some of this support though clearly there has been a 90% net reduction in support for groups.

CILL has received funding from both these programmes and this broadsheet is produced with some of that funding. Without these funds small, independent community groups will go under. Lewisham Council wants to administer the £37.500 through its Community Sector Unit. Other neighbouring boroughs have

supported their small grants more generously from Local Strategic Partnership and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund sources – Lambeth allocating around £200,000 and Southwark around £500,000 to small grants. Lewisham Community Network are taking forward the need for a much larger fund and how it is administered and as soon as we know the outcome we will let you know.

### **Councils still discriminate despite DDA** -Edited from Disability Now, September 2006

Widespread discrimination against disabled people still exists within local authorities (LA) despite the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), says an independent report.

The report, commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), reviewed how local authorities were meeting their obligations under the DDA.

Academics at the University of Birmingham found that, while steps had been taken to improve areas such as access and employment support, discrimination existed in all of the six councils included.

Disabled employees of LAs were said to be up against "some very negative attitudes of staff" and line managers who lacked the training and experience to manage them.

Disabled service users were frustrated by the lack of accessible information and having to explain their requirements "at every point of contact".

The report said: "Authorities relied on individual officers' commitment to the agenda in order to achieve the necessary changes. This is a risky strategy: When individuals move on, commitment can leave with them."

A DCLG spokesman said the government would be making an official response within the next four months. He added: "The fact that we commissioned independent research means that we know something is going on."

### **Compensation for delays**

At the 'Let's Talk' session as part of the International Day of Disabled Persons 2005, CILL members informed the Mayor, Steve Bullock about delays in processing applications for adaptations and the poor quality of work carried out on people's homes.

Now, a neighbouring borough, the London Borough of Croydon will have to pay £1,250 compensation to a disabled man because of an "unreasonable" delay in carrying out adaptations to his home. The council took eight months to assess his needs and another six months to complete the work. The Local Government Ombudsman also recommended that the council reviews its procedures and resources.

### **Access law means fewer barriers in new buildings** - Edited from Disability Now, September 2006

A new requirement for developers to include access statements with their planning applications is a "milestone" that should cut the number of inaccessible new buildings, say campaigners.

From 10 August, most major applications for planning permission and listed building consent have to be accompanied by design and access statements.

Developers will have to show they have "thought carefully" about how disabled people will be able to travel to and use the places they want to build.

Andrew Shipley, of the Disability Rights Commission, said: "This is a key development because it means access has to be considered and planned right at the beginning of the process."

The National Register of Access Consultants said: "This is a milestone in the consideration of access in the design and building process."

*(Editor's note: CILL is prepared to ensure these regulations are being applied in Lewisham.)*

### **PALS in Lewisham**

The Patient, Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) provides advice, support, information and help for patients, their families and carers, Using your feedback PALS works to improve local health services.

PALS will:

- Help you get the right treatment
- Help to resolve health problems quickly or act on your behalf
- Help you to find a local doctor, dentist, optician or chemist
- Offer information and advice on making a complaint
- Use your feedback to improve local health services.

If you require an interpreter please identify which language you use and this will be arranged.

You can contact PALS free of charge between 9.30 am and 4.30 pm every weekday on 0800 587 7027.

You can also write to Lewisham PALS, Freepost NAT19590, London SE14 5ER. Tel: 0845 226 8547.

Please note that PALS is not a medical service. For 24 hour health information and advice contact NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 or visit their website- [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk).

## **Funding cuts hit disabled children**

Eight adventure playgrounds for disabled children are facing a funding crisis. Some staff at the playgrounds in London, run by the national charity KIDS and partly funded by local authorities, have been made redundant.

## **Call for government to redefine disability**

Edited from Disability Now, Elizabeth Choppin, September 2006

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) has called on the government to change the legal definition of disability so more disabled people can make discrimination claims.

In a recommendation to the Office for Disability Issues, the DRC said the definition within the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) should include everyone who has, or is perceived to have, an impairment.

It also said disabled people should not have to prove a substantial or long-term effect to be covered by the DDA. The DRC hopes the recommendation will convince the government to alter future single equality legislation.

The recommendation came after a consultation in which almost 80 per cent of respondents called for change.

Simone Aspis, parliamentary affairs officer for the British Council of Disabled People, agreed that the definition needed to be based on the social model of disability rather than a medical approach.

She said: "I hope the proposed single equality legislation will incorporate a definition that reflects the discrimination that disabled people feel when living in a world designed with non-disabled people in mind."

A Department for Work and Pensions spokesman said: "The government is studying the DRC's report and will respond in due course."

## **Prostate gland video in British Sign Language (BSL)**

A British sign language (BSL) video provides information about prostate cancer to BSL users.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer to affect men in the UK yet there is a lack of awareness about the disease.

"Your BSL guide to the prostate gland" is introduced by television presenter and lecturer Clark Denmark. Clark was successfully treated for prostate cancer in 2001.

Clark said: "this video...is a vital start to giving [BSL users] the information they need in their own language."

The video, which is available on the web, DVD, and VHS, includes information on:

- common prostate problems
- possible symptoms
- risk factors to be aware
- stages in a diagnosis.

The RNID report, 'A Simple Cure' found that nearly a third of BSL users avoided visiting their GP because of communication problems.

How to get your copy

You can get your free copy of the video by:

- emailing [literature@prostate-cancer.org.uk](mailto:literature@prostate-cancer.org.uk), stating if you would prefer DVD or VHS.
- faxing the charity on 0208 222 7639, stating whether if you would prefer DVD or VHS.

## **Social exclusion: no quick fixes, warns Mind**

Mind has welcomed the Government's action plan on social exclusion, but warned that there were many challenges ahead in its implementation. Turning theory into practice will be difficult.

People with mental health problems are among the most excluded members of society. Mind research shows that 84 per cent of people with mental health problems feel isolated, experiencing problems getting jobs, mortgages, healthcare, and in forming friendships or relationships.

While Mind welcomes the Government's commitment to tackling discrimination from employers, it says that stigma exists across the board. No progress can be made on social exclusion without a meaningful commitment to tackling the prejudice that people with mental health problems face in every aspect of their lives. England needs a fully-funded, long-term anti-stigma campaign to change hearts and minds of the kind as seen in Scotland.

## **Disabled travellers 'ok' during air scare**

In last month's edition of 'The Phoenix' we highlighted guidance issued by Diabetes UK to those travelling by air. Disability Now has said that disabled people appear to have coped well with last month's security scare at UK airports. There were few reports of disabled people encountering major problems taking equipment or medication through security.

Diabetes UK received about 100 phone calls to its helpline, requesting guidance about medication, food and fluid. And many visitors to web forums, including those run by DN and the Spinal Injuries Association, also discussed the issue. But Asthma UK only received two calls from people with asthma concerned about having their inhalers with them during flights.

A spokeswoman for Heathrow Airport, the world's busiest international airport, said disabled passengers "do not seem to have had any major problems". Initial restrictions on taking passengers' own wheelchairs through airport security were soon relaxed, although wheelchairs still needed to be "thoroughly searched". And some passengers who needed to have medication with them and arrived without a GP's letter had to be taken to an airport pharmacist to check their drugs were genuine.

**She advised disabled passengers to check with airline and airport websites before travelling.**

### **Voluntary air code not working, says report**

Edited from Disability Now, Priya Kotecha, September 2006

Actress Julie Fernandez has backed calls for air travel to be brought under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), after her wheelchair was badly damaged by an airline; her wheelchair was unsafe to use on arrival.

The airline has apologised and paid £3,150 compensation. It came as new research - commissioned by the Department for Transport - showed "little overall change" since a voluntary code of practice on improving access to air travel for disabled people was launched in 2003.

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) said the report clearly showed the "voluntary approach was not working" and that the EU air travel laws on the rights of disabled passengers and those with restricted mobility, which comes into force in April 2008, would be "more restrictive" than the DDA.

A Department for Transport spokesman said: "Ministers will now discuss the findings of the report with stakeholders and assess whether further action is required in light of the new European regulation."

### **Concerns over education targets**

Edited from Disability Now, September 2006

Education programmes for people with learning difficulties should not solely focus on "targets and outcomes", a report has warned. The consultation report was responding to 16 recommendations from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in its review of provision for people with learning difficulties.

Respondents voiced concern about the development of "performance indicators" and putting too much focus on achieving the equivalent of five GCSEs.

An LSC spokeswoman said the analysis would influence the final plan, which will be put into place over the next five years.

### **Obese people twice as likely to go blind**

New research has revealed a link between obesity and sight loss. The ten million adults and two million children in the UK who are obese are at double the risk of losing their sight, according to a new report published by the Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) supported by Boots Opticians.

The "Feeling great, looking good" report reveals a direct link between obesity and some of the common eye conditions that cause blindness.

The report states that oxidative damage associated with being obese doubles the risk of developing age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the leading cause of sight loss in the UK, and accelerates the speed of sight loss. In addition, people who are obese are at up to ten times more likely to develop diabetes, which leads to retinopathy in at least 60 per cent of cases causing irreversible sight loss unless treated early. Finally, for people who are obese the risk of developing cataracts can be as high as double that of people who are not overweight.

The risk of obese children losing their sight later in life is very real given that more than 70 per cent of obese children and more than 85 per cent of obese adolescents become obese adults. The risk of sight loss through diabetes is also particularly high in people from ethnic minority backgrounds (Asian, African and African/Caribbean) who are four to five times more likely to develop diabetes.

"Feeling great, looking good" is published as part of RNIB's Open Your Eyes campaign to end preventable sight loss by 2020. RNIB is currently touring the UK with its "virtual-ageing booth" to promote the role a healthy lifestyle plays in looking after your eyesight.

*"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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email: [campaign@fsmail.net](mailto:campaign@fsmail.net)

## Is Dial-A-Ride doing you in?

### Enough is Enough!

Transport for All (TfA) is protesting at the continuing failure of London Dial-A-Ride to provide a decent and reliable service. Across the capital thousands of disabled and older people rely on D-A-R to get out and about, and they are constantly being let down. From Ealing to Bromley, Edgware to Tooting, too many people are not getting the trips they want, having trips cancelled at the last minute or having to wait for unreasonable times. Many more people have given up on Dial-A-Ride altogether. TfA wants to send a clear message to Transport for London that disabled people will not tolerate this dreadful service anymore. We want change and we want it now!

### TfA's 5 demands On Dial-A-Ride :

1. Guaranteed trips within a 5 mile radius of home.
2. Guaranteed return journeys.
3. Bring back wait-and-return journeys.
4. Bring back facilities for group bookings.
5. Compensation when D-A-R lets you down.

### TfA needs your support

TfA is an organisation of disabled people, campaigning and lobbying for the right to travel with the same freedom and choice as non-disabled people. We also act as advocates, providing advice and Information.

Contact: 0207 737 2339

Email: [contactus@transportforall.com](mailto:contactus@transportforall.com)

Fax: 0207 737 2231 Registered Charity No. 1063733

## What is going on and How to contact CILL:

### What and When:

What's On	When	Where
CILL 30+	29 September 2 to 4 p.m.	The Clubroom 21 Marton Close Off Firhill Road Bellingham SE6 3SS
Out and About	1 October 1 to 3 p.m.	Ladywell Park Ladywell Road Ladywell SE13 (By the café)
Drop-in	13 October 2 to 4 p.m.	The Clubroom 21 Marton Close Off Firhill Road Bellingham SE6 3SS
Out and About	15 October 1 to 3 p.m.	Ladywell Park Ladywell Road Ladywell SE13 (By the café)
CILL 30+	27 October 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](mailto:campaign@fsmail.net) or call 020 8776 6967.

# CILL

**Campaign for Independent Living in Lewisham**

## **NEW ADVOCACY SERVICE**

**CILL has been awarded two grants to provide advocacy services for disabled people in Lewisham**

Advocacy is about:

- SPEAKING OUT FOR YOURSELF
- MAKING SURE PEOPLE LISTEN TO WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY
- HAVING SOMEONE ON YOUR SIDE TO SPEAK OUT FOR YOU
- MAKING SURE YOUR RIGHTS ARE RESPECTED

One of our volunteer advocates will work with you and support you. All our advocates are disabled people so we have first hand experience of many of the issues affecting disabled people.

Our advocates will never tell you what to do or decide what is best for you. Our advocates always work to give you information so that you can make your own decisions.

This means that our advocates will do what you ask them to do – so if you want us to write a letter, or make a telephone call or come with you to a meeting we do it.

Some of the issues our advocates have been involved in are:

- Availability of GP home visits
- Tenancy issues
- Access to shops
- Cuts to services
- Assessments

The CILL Advocacy service is for disabled people and if you need some support or advice on any issue please contact CILL on 0208 8776 6967 or email [campaign@fsmail.net](mailto:campaign@fsmail.net)

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