



# THE PHOENIX

Campaign for Independent Living in Lewisham

March 2007

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

CILL was originally set up as a campaigning organisation with the intention of campaigning and advocating for independent living for disabled people. Both locally and nationally there is much work to be done here to get disabled people's voices heard so that independent living becomes the 'norm' and stops being seen as services for disabled people. Last week The Disability Rights Commission launched The Disability Agenda (details below) and together with the proposed Independent Living Bill, now working its way through Parliament, this may be the year that we start to change things. However I expect that there will be a lot of consulting, advocating, negotiating and campaigning before we see those changes. Independent living is a national issue and CILL, as you would expect, supports The Disability Agenda and The Independent Living Bill.

## Activities and Campaigns

This year CILL will be concentrating its limited resources on consultation, advocacy and campaigning as we focus on supporting The Disability Agenda. This means that we will no longer be running Active Life Projects although 'Out and About' will continue to be run by Jenny Spencer. We will also be introducing Independent Living Support Groups and our online network WindowCILL. Next month's Phoenix will have full details.

## The Disability Agenda

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) has launched the Disability Agenda, which sets out the major challenges for public policy in respect of disabled people and their families and recommendations for how to meet them.

Speaking at the launch of the Agenda, Sir Bert Massie, DRC's Chair said:

"Reader in seeking a memorial, look around you."  
"Inscription dedicated to Sir Christopher Wren, St Paul's Cathedral"

"Shortly after the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) opened for business in 2000 we discussed the sort of future we wished to build. We decided that society should expect disabled people, including those with long-term health conditions, to be participating fully as equal citizens.

Over the last seven years we have pursued our vision with energy and commitment, working with a vast array of partners to implement change at every level of society.

Disabled people have acquired powerful rights to non-discrimination and equality. There are many more disabled people in work than 10 years ago. Across Britain, housing, the built environment and transport are becoming more inclusive. More young disabled people are achieving at school and staying on in education.

Where recently disability equality was a peripheral issue for policy-makers, it is now viewed as critical to ending child poverty and achieving full employment.

Public and media representations of disabled people are more positive: a statue of a naked disabled woman, 'Alison Lapper, pregnant', on the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square in London; reality TV shows recruiting a wheelchair-user and a young man with Tourette's; the BBC's defence correspondent Frank Gardner's wheelchair visible on screen; politicians talking publicly about the experience of disability within their families.

With all this progress, some might ask why we need a fresh agenda. The answer is simple: whilst much has been achieved, far too many disabled people still face persistent social and economic exclusion. And in the next 10-15 years, demographic and technological changes, migration and changing family structures will create new challenges requiring fresh responses.

This Agenda's central proposition is that a sustainable future for Britain demands levels of prosperity and productivity that can only be achieved if everyone is empowered to play an active part.

This is an agenda for all those who live in poverty, who have little control or choice in their lives, who are victims of abuse or live in fear, who needlessly suffer poor health and die prematurely, whose life chances are constrained by poor educational opportunities, who live in poor housing, and who never get the chance to show what they can do.

It is also an agenda for all who believe that Britain can do better than maintain millions of its citizens in such conditions, recognising that otherwise we all pay.

When disabled people contribute to families, communities and wider society, everyone benefits.

We hope this Agenda will guide policy-makers across governments in the three countries of Great Britain. They cannot meet core policy goals – to improve skills, employment or health – if disabled people are left out of the equation.

The Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) will in future work to tackle discrimination and promote human rights, equality of opportunity and good relations between individuals and communities across differences of age, disability, gender, race, religion and sexual orientation. The Commission must establish an influential role at the centre of British life and, with partners, forge a new way forward that embraces future challenges. We hope this Agenda will help the Commission to deliver its vision.

The Disability Agenda has been developed with the active involvement of disabled people, our colleagues in other areas of equality and human rights, business, public and voluntary sector leaders, academics, think tanks, government officials and many others.

Thank you to all who have provided your experience, expertise and ideas. The priorities in this Agenda already have widespread support. The recommendations are achievable. By putting them into action, together we can create an alternative future.

It is crucial that people are able to determine whether this Agenda has succeeded. Throughout, we have sought to provide clear objectives and recommendations against which progress can be measured. But our main proposal for measuring progress is as follows: look around you.”

### **Disability Agenda's Ten Priorities**

You can also read the priorities for reform on the Disability Agenda website - [www.disabilityagenda.org](http://www.disabilityagenda.org)

- Promoting a culture of equality and human rights
- Bringing an end to child poverty
- Increasing life chances through learning and skills
- Ending poverty and widening employment opportunity
- Increasing democratic participation and active citizenship
- Developing a social care system fit for the future
- Tackling health inequalities
- Meeting the future housing challenge in England and Wales
- Meeting the future housing challenge in Scotland
- Building stronger, safer communities

### **Care Services Minister Ivan Lewis MP to answer your questions on the Disability Agenda live discussion on 1st March 2007**

Care Services Minister Ivan Lewis MP will be available to answer your questions about social care and independent living on the Disability Agenda live discussion between 10am and 11am on 1st March 2007. You will be able to register questions before the day so keep checking the Disability Agenda website for updates - [www.disabilityagenda.org](http://www.disabilityagenda.org)

### **Proposed Cuts and Changes to Eligibility Criteria**

Lewisham Council are proposing major cuts and changes to adult services as they attempt to save over one and a half million pounds. Lewisham Disability Coalition, Lewisham Speaking Up and Mencap are some of the organisations who are protesting against cuts to services.

CILL's position is that while we have concerns about Lewisham's proposed cuts and changes to eligibility criteria we also recognize that this is about wider issues – what is independent living, what services should be mandatory, how will costs be met. All local authorities, like Lewisham, have been and are reviewing budgets, services and criteria as they try to manage inadequate resources. Until there is a proper debate between national government, local government and disabled people about who gets what and how it is paid for, cutting services is likely to continue year on year. CILL believes that securing rights to services and quality of life for disabled people is a national issue and that is why we are committed to both The Disability Agenda and campaigning for The Independent Living Bill. We do support the right of disabled people to get their voices heard and we do hope that by joining together disabled people and their organisations are able to influence the changes proposed by Lewisham Council.

### **WANT TO TRAIN AS AN ADVOCATE?**

If you are disabled or a mental health services user or survivor and think that you might like to work as a volunteer advocate in one of CILL's advocacy projects we would like to hear from you. CILL provides advocacy, information and support on a one to one basis and through group advocacy and peer support in our independent living groups. We will provide training, support and travel expenses. If you are interested please contact [campaign@fsmail.net](mailto:campaign@fsmail.net) or telephone Denise Smith on 020 8851 1043 for more details about joining our advocacy team.

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