

Minutes of Forum Meeting 23 July 2009

Present: 25 people

Apologies: 6

Service First Centre

Mike Sofianos gave an update to the group about the developments of the Service First Centre. This is a new 'one stop shop' building that is in the construction phase. The building will house the majority of Council Services making it easier for people to access services from one place.

Disability Backup has formed a focus group who has met once to discuss the development of this building. This group will meet again in October and will be consulted with regarding the signage and access of the new building.

One outcome of the last focus group, it has now been confirmed that Hillman street will have a number of parking bays for Blue Badge/Companion Badge holders. This will be on a time limit to make sure that people do not abuse these spaces.

Disability Backup has asked to be involved in the training of the staff that uses the new building to ensure that they receive disability equality training and communication training, such as basic British Sign Language.

Question: Will I be able to access more services by email in the future?

Answer: Yes, we will make lots more of our services available via email and the Council website. You can access the Council website for free at all local libraries.

Question: Changing your language is one thing but will you change staff attitudes?

Answer: Yes, we will be making a culture change throughout the whole building and improving our quality of service.

Mike thanked the forum for the work that we are doing and will give us a date for the next focus group. Anyone interested in being on this group should contact Catherine.

Disability Law Service

Nick Clarke from the Disability Law Service (DLS) came to advertise their services.

The Disability Law Service offers a range of services for disabled people and disability organisations.

They have an advice line where people can call for advice and support, if the subject is a case that Disability Law Service feel they can assist with, and if the caller is eligible for legal aid, then the caller will meet with trained lawyers and the case could be taken to court.

They also offer information and advice in the forms of factsheets, downloadable from their website www.dls.org.uk. They have training days throughout the year and these are usually £50 for half a day.

DLS are able to send representatives to local groups to talk to the group about issues such as DLA, DDA and other relevant topics. Forum members would like the DLS to come and offer some training and information at a forum meeting later in the year.

Question: If you are not eligible for Legal Aid and have to pay for yourself, would you have details of solicitors who are experienced in Disability?

Answer: Yes, we have a list of associated disability organisations

Question: As a volunteer am I covered under the DDA?

Answer: I don't think you have as many rights as if you were a member of staff. You should call our advice line to check if that is true.

Question: I have a concern about being re housed

Answer: DLS do not deal with housing issues apart from adaptation grants which are directly linked to disability.

Hackney Museum

Cheryl gave the group an update of what has happened at Hackney Museum since we had a meeting there.

Disability Backup found that the museum was not very accessible for people with sensory impairments. Cheryl has since been on an audio visual training course to learn about how the museum can identify/describe objects.

The museum will also be adjusting its reception desk to make sure that it is accessible.

Cheryl talked about the museums current exhibition on play and the Olympic site.

Hackney Museum are planning 2 exhibits, one in the summer 2010 regarding senses and one in 2012 regarding disability and perception.

The Museum would like Disability Backup members to help with these exhibits and want people to take part in focus groups.

These exhibits have been a direct result of Disability Backup's involvement and Hackney Museum is very excited about developing this relationship.

Any member of Disability Backup is invited to take part on either of these focus groups. The dates and more information will be given in the next Newsletter.

Question: Some disabled people are against the idea of 'faking impairments', can the museum ensure that the sensory exhibit looks at the senses without trying to replicate disability?

Answer: Yes, that is a very good plan and we will make sure that we design an appropriate exhibit.

Any other business

The group talked about future plans for the Forum. It was agreed that the next meeting should be regarding language and the social model of disability.

The group would also like to cover Hackney Link and the Olympics.

The next meeting is Wed 19th August.