

Minutes of Forum Meeting 25 January 2011

Present: 32

Deborah Introduced the Agenda and the LBH Managers.

1. Feedback from LBH Managers/Commissioners on future of the Forum

Tim Miller explained that the managers hold the funding for the work of the forum and thanked the members of the forum who help to make up the success of Disability Backup. He stated that members don't need to battle to explain why the forum is needed, the managers present believe it and this became very clear during Tim's own experience of working with service user reps, coming through Disability Backup, on the transformation in adult social care boards. The challenge is to keep the Forum work and Tim said that the forum had been through ups and downs and was stronger for the experience.

Susan Gooding, who manages the grants programme stated that she has worked closely with Sheila Ramdular (HFBU's Director), who has been a great advocate in the disability field and noted how hard it has been to keep HFBU/DBU going, and HFBU has now decided to close. Susan congratulated HFBU/DBU for its work over the years. Though HFBU/DBU won't be able to take the work forward there is a grant set aside for the work of the Forum for 2011-12 to continue the work and DBU's evaluation within the next few weeks will help to inform the outcome. There are LBH internal processes to go through and managers are aware that there is a deadline of 1st April. They may house the Forum somewhere temporarily in order to continue the work.

Q: A member asked how much funding is available for the forum
A: £35,000

Sally Wadsworth, joint commissioner for LBH and City & Hackney PCT, stated that she also funds some of the work of DBU and Sally emphasised that there will be joint working/funding and stated that managers are interested to get members views on what works best.

Questions/Comments from members and answers from LBH Managers:

Q: Regarding the personalisation work, (where Hackney LINK and DBU user reps sit on Transformation to Adult Social Care (TRASC) boards) can that be transferred over to Hackney LINK (which is already set up for this) for the time being?

A: We don't want to see the work DBU do fragmenting by taking bits out and risking it falling apart. We are looking at a range of organisations who can best take all this work on.

Q: We currently still have Deborah until 31st March, can we tender the work out?

A: It takes 6 months for the tendering process.

Q: As a fallback can we ask an existing group to have a holding co-ordinator, to be the central contact and organise meetings etc?

Q: There are concerns that the facilities for engagement for 1 or 2 existing organisations may be disempowering for forum members.

A: In looking for a provisional arrangement, which could be for a year, we will invite group members to be a part of the decision making process.

Comment: We are very diverse, non bureaucratic, 100% user led, we don't have to worry about project funding because we've had a grant. We want to ensure DBU stays like that.

Comment: There needs to be consistency and continuity. If we dismantle it today we'll have to reconstruct it. This support is very necessary the support I have received from a forum member has been crucial. I don't know what (Hackney) officers are doing about this.

Comment: Since the birth of DBU, with Catherine and Deborah, forum members have been involved. We haven't asked for payment as volunteers, we need someone on the end of the phone.

Comment: If you phone DBU you know that things will get done.

Comment: it seems obvious that it would be good to have the same person, Deborah, carrying on this work in a different organisation.

Q: Before my disability I had work experience of moving a paid worker from one organisation over to another organisation. Can we do this?

A: We can't say whether any individual people or specific staff can remain but we are going to aim for a smooth transition.

Q: If this work is 'for us, by us, with us', why not make your discussions an open forum and get it all over at once.

A: It's good for us to gather all these different points of view and Hackney Council and City and Hackney NHS will look at how they can involve members in the decision making process.

Q: Lots of organisations are being picked off one by one. We need to get together with carers organisations. All disabled people should have a nominated carer, organise things through the carers as they are invaluable.

A: Agreed, we want a powerful organisation of people, we need you to form how it's going to be. We want to make sure the service is available to support you. The key question is which organisation is going to help co-ordinate the work and take it forward. We are bureaucrats who can't do that as we have processes we have to go through and can't get away from that. We will do what we have to do so that before the end of March you should know who the new provider is.

Comment: DBU works with the LINK on the Adult Social Care Working group. DBU supports people to know what's available, it's interdependent. There needs to be continuity. That also applies for the Centre for Independent Living (CIL).

Comment: Thank you for admitting you are bureaucrats. If you want our help in that process you could hold a combined meeting with us first then go to your internal meeting with our information.

Comment: The new organisation has to be relevant and acceptable to all of us here because certain organisations' structures and functions may not be the ideal host for DBU.

Comment: I want to say well done to DBU, you have done a great job. Choice in Hackney did some with Disability Backup on benefits training and we hope this continues. Any arrangement made must be agreed and endorsed by the membership and have a say in how the organisation is run. It shouldn't be rushed. It needs to be reviewed and evaluated to see if anything needs changing before tendering. A temporary organisation could host it for a year. We also need to give time to see what comes of the feasibility study taking place for the CIL.

Q: Why cut funding from £50,000 to £35,000 p.a. Can you run the same thing for less?

A: LBH has reduced the grant programme and we are confident it can run for £35,000. There is other funding mentioned earlier too.

Comment: There are lots of people who are not here today and there's no way they'd like to see it going to another organisation or restructure into an independent group.

Q: Why do we have to evaluate? If it's not broken don't mend it, this is what we want.

A: As part of DBU's annual work programme they will, within the next 6 weeks, do an evaluation of what you want to achieve. Deborah will also shortly send you minutes of this meeting. A host organisation should be agreed in March to go forward from April.

Comment: A year is too long. The logical pattern is 6 months for a temporary contract then a yearly tender.

Q: If it isn't going to committee, who makes the decision on this?

A: It is an officer decision because of the amount of money involved.

Comment: We want to be involved from start to finish. DBU has a high profile, councillors are supporting our work, they have a keen interest in how it develops. We can make recommendations to councillors for when it goes to tender, to a host organisation, or independently - we could keep Deborah on (not in an organisation but neutral).

A: If it's not in an organisation there'd be no management or support, some infrastructure is needed.

Q: Where are the councillors today? They should be here.

A: Councillors have been informed of HFBU/DBU's closure and this forum meeting. We will provide a further briefing for them following this event.

Comment: We don't need to reinvent the wheel. Disability Equality Duty is laid out, follow it and we'll have confidence.

Deborah thanked the LBH managers for coming and members for their valuable feedback and commitment for the future of the forum's work.

2. Topic for next Forum.

Deborah stated that there will be opportunities at future forums to take some of the outstanding issues forward. Suggestions for last Forum from DBU as you know it were:

- Parks and cycling in parks is an outstanding issue
- Taxi card cuts - DBU recently sent a letter to Hackney's Mayor and some councillors regarding this and will circulate this today.
- Hackney Living Street has a yahoo group which keeps all its members in touch and in the loop. We could use that as an example of how we might organise ourselves in the interim of the changes to the DBU Forum.
- Transport for London (TFL) various issues.
- General Leisure
- A celebration of achievements

It was decided that in the current circumstances it would be wise to organise the membership and use the next Forum meeting to focus on how the membership will organise themselves -

- Communication
- Management
- Identify forking groups
- Formalise who will take on existing working groups, eg. Leisure
- Transport

3. Formal election of Disability Backup Representative on the CIL Steering Group.

It was proposed and seconded to elect John Thornton as main rep and Ron Newman as backup rep when John cannot attend. If a second substitute was needed and was acceptable to the CIL Steering Group, Susan Wengrower put herself forward.

4. Free Disability Equality Training course

Deborah advertised the above Lottery funded training course and booked in 14 members.