

### DBU member Gill Jackson gives an example of successful complaining

I have been trying to enjoy swimming and exercising in the Training Pool at Clissold Pool for the past six months, but I gave up because of the ongoing battle with staff about meeting my needs and started swimming in Enfield instead. Then I thought: No, this is not right, I need to do something!

So I decided to complain directly to Clissold Manager, Darly Emes, who I met at a DBU Leisure sub-group meeting in January, when he agreed to make some changes.

I reminded him of promises : to move the pool steps to nearer the changing rooms; to have the steps in the pool for all public swimming sessions, not just when people ask for them; to have one lane available in the Training Pool in all public sessions to allow lane swimming by people who want it and put up a "swim clockwise" sign to inform swimmers; to get staff to adhere to the timetable by having the pool open at the advertised time and ensure full 25-metre lengths are available and not sectioned off for lessons.

None of these things were happening unless I argued the point with staff. Daryl called me quickly - he was empathetic and did not try to make excuses. He told me what the policies are and reassured me that the steps will be moved, as soon as technical issue are dealt with.

He has also changed the staff rota to 1/4 past or 1/4 to the hour, so that when the pool is due to open on the hour or on the half hour, the staff have 15 minutes to prepare the pool for opening.

This means that the gate will open on time; the steps will be in position; a full-25 metre length will be available for open swimming; one lane with appropriate signage ie "swim clockwise" will be available for lane swimming (this may increase with demand); and, the floor height will be appropriate.

It is nice to report a positive outcome. I swam at Clissold just the other day and everything was in place. It pays to report poor experiences and Darly is willing to listen and act!

### Pharmacy accessibility survey

Why not help with this survey of accessibility of Hackney pharmacies, conducted jointly with Hackney LINK? Forms are available on request from us, but please return them quickly so we don't double up on visits.



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### Hardest Hit

The campaign against cutbacks in benefits for disabled people is holding an event in London on 22nd October 2011. Rally outside City Hall, Queens Walk SE1 2AA Assemble from 11am with speeches from 11.30am. Contact: [London@hardesthit.org.uk](mailto:London@hardesthit.org.uk)



# Disability Backup

October 2011

## Welcome to Disability Backup's Newsletter

Empowering, Consulting and Informing Disabled People

### DBU delegation entertained by Speaker



DBU Members with the Speaker of Hackney, Cllr Susan Fajana-Thomas at the Town Hall

A delegation of nineteen members attended a special reception for the DBU held by Cllr Susan Fajana-Thomas on 7th October.

It was heartening to have the work of the Forum recognised in this way by Hackney's civic head.

The picture below shows the Speaker with John Thornton, signing the Code. We will be looking for other key figures to endorse it.

One important area of pioneering work DBU has been doing since it began is getting key people and organisations in Hackney to adopt the Social Model of Disability and, with it, the DBU Language Code (a guide away from negative language on disability and towards positive language).



### Next forum meeting:

Reports and discussion on issues feature here and more ! Speaker invited (but not confirmed) from Equality & Human Rights Commission on Harassment of Disabled People Report.

Friday  
21st October 2011  
10.30am-12.30pm  
St Luke's Church  
Homerton Terrace  
E9 6RT

**Buses:** 30,236,276, W15  
**Limited parking available**  
Help with transport on request for people with mobility difficulties.

## Making the streets friendlier for disabled people

DBU members met Cllr Feryal Demirci in August. She is the Hackney Cabinet member responsible for Street-scene and therefore street furniture and, design and layout.

The Council is applying to Transport for London for funding for transport/ access improvements and is therefore concerned to learn the views of disabled people.

We asked for DBU to be consulted at an early stage. We stressed that DBU members have relevant skills and knowledge. DBU volunteers can work with designers and engineers and problems can be easily avoided. Many of our proposals need little or no financial investment by the Council.

We said that cycle racks are often thoughtlessly placed, obstructing footways and textured paving at crossings.

There is also a need for clear

evacuation routes.

Cllr Demirci undertook to ask for a review of the positioning and placing of cycle racks.

Hackney's Local Improvement Plan should give priority for the most vulnerable pedestrians.

Cycling through parks has been introduced and promoted and as a result Hackney parks have become no-go areas for deaf and disabled people in places like Hackney Downs. This also encourages cycling on other park paths and on park exits and points joining the carriageway.

This affects even the footway in front of the Town Hall, which has obstacles such as flower beds, bollards and cycle racks, placed perpendicular to the kerb.

We also said that local consultations on Streetscene changes are needlessly restricted and that changes to Streetscene are disjointed, with no

apparent overall co-ordination; e.g. bike stands ripped out and re-installed further from the kerb, causing greater obstruction.

Dalston Junction, a major transport interchange, is now less accessible: we've lost our accessible bus stops on Dalston Lane, along with the our shelters, seats and Countdown indicators. Cllr Demirci said ten more arrival boards are coming for Hackney bus stops.

Cllr Demirci pointed out that better enforcement to prevent unacceptable behaviour on the footway/pavements is needed and that Council wardens, as well as the police, can do this. Hot spots are prioritised. A fine can be waived in return for attendance at a 3 hour training session.

The design and cost implications of the installation of drop kerbs all over the Borough were

also discussed.

Drains, edges and small steps should follow sensible pedestrian 'desire' lines and not require a detour. Cllr Demirci said that new powers to remove obstacles became available in May 2011. Businesses have been warned on obstructions – they can be fined £50 under the 2003 Highways Obstruction Act, but now there are also powers to impose small summary fines. A permit must be displayed for chairs and tables on the footway.

The frequent use of 'A' signs causing a hazard on the footway was queried.

Cllr Demirci invited DBU to identify three priorities for action. We said that cycling on footways and positioning of cycle racks; clear design lines and joined up changes in Street-scene arrangements are priorities.

We have been invited to meet Andy Cunningham, the Head of Streetscene to pursue some of these issues further.

## Walkabout

DBU member Ron Newman, Cllr Demirci and Cllr Stops met on 2<sup>nd</sup> September for a walk from the Hackney Town Hall to Victoria Park to look at street access issues.

These included looking at the low level access in crossing roads such as Weatherall Road on the south side walk down Victoria Park (north side), Lauriston Road, Well Street, Frampton Park and Paragon Road.

Many of the roads that were visited did not have any accessible paving or even had badly laid tactile paving. Many mobility impaired persons find tactile paving difficult to walk on and it would help to have a plain paving slab within the tactile area. A wheelchair user, or other mobility impaired person would have difficulty in crossing the roads, which have been badly laid by contractors without any

thought to those who will use them.

For example we looked at work on Gascoigne Road with extended paving, completed by two different contractors. This road has lampposts in the middle of the extended paving from Cassland Road junction to the Victoria Park Road junction, careless of the effect on people with visual impairments Both Councillors were appalled

The councillors agreed that access is unacceptable and must improve on Lauriston Road. Ron stressed that DBU should be involved and the councillors agreed that joint work would be useful in designing improvements such as the placement of yellow lines on crossings where cars are parked obstructing routes.

We need to continue pressure on these areas and follow up promised changes!