



Disability Backup

February 2012

Welcome to Disability Backup's Newsletter

Empowering, consulting and informing disabled people

Transport For All - accessible transport in London

Transport for All is a charity which works across London to inform disabled and older people about the transport services available and how to access them.

Transport for All are recognised for their efforts to campaign to make transport services – including buses, tube, Dial-A-Ride and Taxicard – more accessible for disabled and older people living in London.

Transport for All recognises that disabled and older people are being hit hard by many cuts and changes to benefits and services. The changes are also affecting accessible transport schemes like Taxicard – which recently saw an increase in fares, following a reduction in subsidies. Across London, eligibility processes are being made more stringent for those applying for the Blue Badge and Freedom Pass and 'mobility assessors' are replacing GPs in carrying out assessments.

Transport for All have therefore been travelling across London speaking to groups and forums of disabled and older people – updating people on the latest developments in transport, on a local and city wide level and discussing them with the people affected.

Transport for All campaigns tirelessly for change and want to bring to our attention the fact that the only pedestrian crossing on Curtain Road, in Hackney is about to be removed. This organisation that lobbies for change is hoping to challenge this decision in the near future. In just a few months' time, London will be going to the polls to elect the Mayor of London. *Transport for All* want to make sure that every one

has the opportunity to participate in the formation of its Manifesto for Accessible Transport.

Transport for All will be lobbying all the Mayoral candidates, asking them to prioritise a truly accessible transport system and plans to send all candidates a Transport Manifesto, setting out disabled and older people's priorities for an accessible transport system, and the action they would like to see from the next Mayor.

Transport for All will be launching the manifesto with a special event on the morning of Tuesday 23rd February 2012. For more details call 020 7737 2339, or email: contactus@transportforall.org.uk

Next Disability Backup forum meeting

February 27th 2012 1.30pm - 3.30pm

Speaker: Lianna Etkind

Transport for All

Representative from Graeae Theatre Company

Queensbridge Sports & Community Centre

30 Holly St,

London

E8 3XW

Buses: 236, 149, 67, 243,

Help with transport on request for people with mobility difficulties.

Hidden In Plain Sight

Forum members Andrea Rawlings and Henrietta Onipede travelled to Manchester in January to attend a follow-up meeting to the recent report by the Equality & Human Rights Commission on disability-related harassment and hate crime. A member of the EHRC report team, Kathleen Jameson, spoke on the report to the November Forum.

Disability activists questioned a panel of senior figures on what action their organisations were taking to put an end to the abuse of disabled people.

Panellists included senior managers from the Crown Prosecution Service, the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, the Care Quality Commission, the Dept. of Health, education regulator Ofsted, transport police and the Dept of Communities and Local Government.

Andrea and Henrietta also made contact with groups like Voice UK, which provides training in disability hate crime and runs a helpline for vulnerable victims of crime or abuse. The helpline can be contacted on 0808 802 8686 or helpline@voiceuk.org.uk.



Training DVD produced by Voice UK

Andrea Rawlings said:
“This was a useful opportunity to push forward the struggle to stop abuse of disabled people meet groups like our own from all over the country.”

Henrietta Onipede, reporting to the January Forum, said she was pleased she had been able to put into practice training on human rights she and other Hackney people had undergone, organised by Age UK and the British Institute of Human Rights

Update from January Forum

At the January Forum, Mandy Peers spoke about improving access for disabled people to music events, both for spectators and artists.

Her organisation, *Attitude is Everything*, is funded by the Arts Council and organises ‘mystery shoppers’ to check on the accessibility of venues.

The *Attitude is Everything* Charter of Best Practice gives bronze, silver and gold awards and works with venues to improve standards.

Attitude is Everything can be contacted on 020 7383 7979

mandi@attitudeiseverything.org.uk

Odette Messiah detailed the availability of Advice & Information from Age UK Hackney and explained arrangements for the coming digital switch over of broadcasting and how to cope with it.

Services commissioner Eve Oldham spoke on plans for changes in health and well being provision in Hackney. Her paper, which was circulated at the meeting, is available on request.

Helen Goodsell from Hackney’s 2012 Unit spoke on volunteering opportunities around the Olympics. She can be contacted on 0208 356 3975 or helen.goodsell@hackney.gov.uk

Disabled people get a say in Hackney's street designs

The safety and accessibility of Hackney's streets for disabled people was the main concern when DBU representatives met senior managers at Streetscene in December. This followed a meeting with Cllr Feryal Demirci, the Hackney Cabinet lead on this area. (see October Newsletter).

Issues raised included the Council's introduction of cycling in parks and its impact on disabled pedestrians; the need for tactile paving to be in contrasting colours and properly placed; the positioning of bike stands (not on the pavement); the obstructed access to Ridley Road market for all pedestrians; priority areas for the introduction of dropped kerbs; accessibility of bus stops, the impact of speed bumps on some disabled drivers; obstructions such as tables & chairs and advertising boards on our pavements and the inadequate enforcement of regulations on such obstructions.

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We particularly asked to be consulted at the early design stage of new developments, so that the interests of disabled people can be taken into account. Streetscene managers agreed to this and to regular meetings with representatives of the Forum.

DBU transport lead John Thornton said:

"As disabled people, we have a valuable contribution to make to the design and layout of our streets and public spaces. We are happy that, at long last, Hackney Streetscene has acknowledged this and DBU has been given stakeholder status. Please let us know about the obstacles you face on pavements – or any other issues about Hackney's streets - and DBU will take them up with the Council."

Leisure Access

Swim buddies and signage were among items discussed when DBU representatives met with Hackney Council's Disability Sports Officer and a representative of GLL recently. Items discussed included inaccessibility at Kings Hall Leisure Centre (there is a lack of signage saying that the only step-free entrance is via the back door) and the attitude of staff at Clissold Leisure Centre (along with slippery floors and lack of handrails). We offered to visit the centre and talk to staff about good practice, like a consistent set up of the training pool and moving steps nearer to dressing rooms and handrails.

The group also discussed "Inclusive and Active", a project to

promote accessible, inclusive leisure for almost everyone. We hope to encourage more of us to be physically active. So we've proposed a buddy swim scheme so that, if you are shy, timid or nervous, you won't have to make the first few ventures into the pool all by yourself (see back page).

A similar scheme could be set up in local parks, but since Hackney Council imposed cycling on the footpaths in our parks, they have become no-go areas for many vulnerable pedestrians. We feel that they should be avoided, until this issue is resolved.

If you would like to join a sub group exploring issues on access to culture and leisure in Hackney for disabled people, to contribute to a report to the Council, please let us know !

Changes to Blue Badge scheme

The Blue Badge scheme has changed. New badges were introduced on 1 January, aimed at reducing fraud and making it easier for disabled people who rely on the Blue Badge scheme to find a parking space.

Badges have been redesigned to make them harder to alter, copy or forge. The new badges will be made of a combination of PVC and other materials, instead of cardboard and they will be more robust.

Unlike some local authorities, which are imposing a charge of up to £10, Hackney will not be charging for the new Blue Badges.

Free Swimming

Following vigorous campaigning, DBU is happy to report that free swimming for disabled people in Hackney has been reinstated and now both disabled people and their PA/Carer can swim for free at pools across the borough year round. There are also opportunities for disabled people and their personal assistants to learn to swim or gain more confidence in the water for free.

Local pools participating in all free swimming schemes are [Kings Hall Leisure Centre](#), [Britannia Leisure Centre](#), and [Clissold Leisure Centre](#). Disabled people and their personal assistants can also swim for free at [London Fields Lido](#). If you feel nervous about going swimming alone and would like to 'buddy up' with someone else, let us know. If there is enough demand we'll see if we can set up a scheme.



Graeae Theatre Company, a representative from which will be speaking at the February Forum, champions the inclusion of Deaf and disabled people in the arts, as performers, authors and audiences. Graeae aims to be a force for change in world class theatre, breaking down barriers, challenging preconceptions and boldly placing disabled artists centre stage.

At our next Forum Graeae will promote their latest production **REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL**, and raffling two tickets. The production which is part gig, part play, about the life of disabled people's champion Ian Dury, will be playing at the Hackney Empire, as part of a national tour, from 28th March to 1st April 2012. Tickets are available from the Hackney Empire

Hits such as "Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll", "Sweet Gene Vincent", "Spasticus Autisticus" and "Hit Me with your Rhythm Stick" are part of the show.



Disability Backup
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caroldavis@ageukhackney.org.uk

DBU needs you!

Do you have a few hours to spare each month to team up with other volunteers and help mail out the DBU newsletter?

Lashings of tea and cake on offer!

Please call Carol on 020 7241 5908 for details.

