

Happy 2015!

Lord Colin Low gives us his view on 2015 for disabled people in Hackney

Much has improved in Hackney in the last few years. By and large, services are more efficiently administered, and that benefits disabled people. But there are still some things which could be done better, and some areas where things are going backwards.



My principal area of concern is the state of our streets. Far and wide throughout Hackney the pavement is being levelled with the road at road junctions. This is obviously meant to make life easier for those who use wheelchairs, but is very disorientating for blind people. In the absence of the cue provided by a step at the kerb's edge, I have on several occasions found myself wandering in the road without any idea that I had left the safety of the pavement. This could be very dangerous and may indeed be an accident waiting to happen. It's not even as if it is necessary in the interests of wheelchair users. More than 30 years ago an agreement was brokered by the Department of Transport between those representing blind and disabled people for ramped kerbs at road junctions which met the needs of those using wheelchairs while still alerting blind people to the fact that they were at a road junction. Why can't we have that system back?

Next DBU Forum meeting

The next Forum Meeting will be on Monday 2 March at 1pm.

Christina Smith, Support Planning and Brokerage Commissioner at Hackney Council will be speaking about improving adult social care and a new project called Making It Real.

Susan Bennett, Service Manager for Occupational Therapy will speak about getting housing aids and adaptations.

**Next DBU Forum meeting:
Monday 2 March
1pm (ending at 3pm)
Large Hall, Our Lady & St
Joseph's Church Hall,
100A Balls Pond Road, N1 4AG**

Before the Forum, we will be holding a meeting about Direct Payments. This will start at 10:30am in the same venue. You are welcome to join us for both meetings. We will provide a light lunch in between the meetings but please bring along some food.

Dalston Junction station is 5 minutes walk away. Dalston Kingsland station is 10 minutes walk away. Buses 30,38, 56 and 277 stop nearby. Blue Badge parking available.

If you have a Freedom pass, Taxicard, use Dial-a-Ride, or you can make your own travel arrangements, that will be greatly appreciated. Otherwise, help with transport is available on request. Contact David on 0207 241 5906.

Re:present

Hackney Museum's Wellbeing Coordinator, Anna Sexton, updates us on their Re:present programme

In collaboration with DBU, the Museum was for the first time able to mark International Day of Disabled People and link the event to UK Disability History Month (UKDHM). Richard Rieser, coordinator of UKDHM, gave an impressive talk on the history of disablement in the UK. Garden School also spoke about using the Museum to inspire their mainly non-verbal students to strike their own poses for a photography project and exhibition. The school is now aware of the DBU language code.

We ran a 'Pop Up Photo Booth' and made a



temporary exhibition to run alongside the Strike A Pose show. We have been able to move the Re:present programme forward with significant support from DBU and Hackney Council, including changing the signage at the front of the Museum and Central Library.

You can get involved by attending free workshops on Friday mornings in February to say what you like and don't like about the Museum and co-design new resources to encourage more disabled people to get involved. For more information, contact Anna on 020 8356 2838.

Person centred care?

DBU Planning Team member, Maureen Ford, reports on service user-led training

Since December I have helped facilitate 'Reablement Skills Training' for the council's First Response Provider Team (FRPT), reablement care workers and occupational therapists providing care at home to people recently discharged from hospital. The training uses a "person centred toolkit to engage the service user and enable them to build their skills and confidence to live their daily life based on choice, control and dignity". The course sought a cultural shift where the service user is seen as the commissioner, with the reablement care worker helping them to determine the outcomes and services they want.

However, we have learned that the FRPT team is being disbanded, soon to be replaced by a new team. In the present climate it seems unlikely that a truly person centred service will come into being and reablement care workers will continue to be time controlled. But not many people know about NHS funded 'continuing care'. This is a free service providing care to people with long term health conditions, according to strict eligibility criteria. It is worth applying for, and if turned down at first, organisations like Care To Be Different can help with you with an appeal, for a small fee.

Access group

John Thornton, DBU Planning Team member, reports on DBU's plans for an access group

DBU is making some progress in its aim to make Hackney a more accessible place. Last year a group of DBU members received some training and supervision from Brenda Puech (at that time Director of Consultancy at Centre for Accessible Environments).

The aim of the project is to build capacity within DBU to eventually be able to conduct access audits of public buildings, with particular reference to health and social care facilities used by disabled people and accessible toilets (which, even when new and purpose built, frequently fall well short of minimum access standards).

Brenda provided access auditing tools for a practical audit session which we carried out in two venues; the entrance and public toilet facilities of Hackney Learning Centre (ground floor) and the entrance and public toilet facilities of the Hackney Service Centre.

This led to a pilot audit, on the ground floor of St Leonards Hospital. It was agreed that, once completed, an audit report would be made available to the management of the building in the hope that this will lead to necessary adjustments wherever possible and better practice in future.



The audit report has also been sent to Healthwatch Hackney, who funded the project. Once approved the report will be circulated to DBU members and posted on our website. Further funding is being sought to train the group, to further increase our capacity to carry out audits.

Recommendations have been made and sent to the Health & Wellbeing Committee, to establish an access group in Hackney. The proposed aim of the group would be to examine services and facilities in Hackney, audit their accessibility and usability, identify physical and other barriers and consider means of eliminating or mitigating them.

It is anticipated that the access group will be “pan impairment” and it will greatly benefit from recruiting disabled people with as wide a range of experience of disabling environments as possible. For more information, or if you'd like to get involved, please contact David at DBU on 020 7241 5906 or david.holland@ageukeastlondon.org.uk

Upcoming events

Play: "Kill Me Now"

Park Theatre, Finsbury Park, Feb-March

A new play exploring issues about disability, chronic illness and carers.

"Don't ask for an easy life. Ask to be given the strength to survive a difficult one. If you



don't laugh and cry your way through Kill Me Now, ask for your money back!"

Tickets from £15 direct from the theatre at www.parktheatre.co.uk or 0207 870 6876.

Comedy: Stand Up For Legal Aid

23 February, 7:30pm, Union Chapel



Top class comedians supporting the Justice Alliance's campaign against cuts to legal aid, including Stewart Lee, Kevin Eldon and Angela Barnes. Tickets from £10 from unionchapel.org.uk. The venue can accommodate wheelchair users and other access requirements and if you

need a companion to attend with you, they may not need to buy a ticket. For more info contact the venue on 020 7226 1686.

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And finally...

Making It Real?

A bold new project to involve service users and carers in checking the quality of adult social care, leading to a jointly produced action plan which will be published publicly, was launched at a meeting on 21 January, attended by several DBU members. The aim is to make adult social care more personalised and to promote choice and control for people who use care and support services.

The project manager, Christina Smith, will be speaking at the next Forum, but if you are interested in taking part in the Making It Real project group and contributing your own experiences or that of friends or family, please let us know and we will pass on your details.

NHS Community Voice

Do you care about your local health services? Would you like to have your say in an open community forum? There is a new way of having your voice heard: NHS Community Voice. Healthwatch Hackney in partnership with Age UK East London is launching the NHS Community Voice forums.

The first meeting will be on 'Are Your Medical Records Still Confidential?' on **25th February 6.30-8.30pm** at Well Street Surgery, 28 Shore Road, E9 7TA with Robin Burgess from NHS England & Phil Booth from Med Confidential. Light refreshments will be provided.

Any inquiries to: NHS Community Voice project co-ordinator Sulekha Hassan on 0207 923 1962 or sulekha@healthwatchhackney.org.uk

