

First meeting of the H&F Disabled People's Commission

**Held on 13th September 2016 in the Courtyard Room,
Hammersmith Town Hall**

Present:

Tara Flood (Chair)
Jane Wilmot
Patricia Quigley
Mike Gannon
David Isaac
Kate Betteridge
Martin Doyle
Victoria Brignall
Ramona Williams

Apologies:

Rosemary Edwards
Grace Wise

Also present:

Cllr Stephen Cowan, Leader of the Council
Cllr Vivienne Lukey, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult
Social Care
Cllr Sue Fennimore, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion

Kevin Caulfield, H&F Coalition Against Cuts (observer)

Tracey Lazard, Inclusion London

Hana Smeeth (pa)
Georgina Martin (pa)

H&F Officer Support:

Peter Smith, Head of Policy & Strategy
Fawad Bhatti, Policy & Strategy Officer

1. Welcome from Cllr Cowan, Leader of H&F Council

- 1.1 Cllr Cowan thanked Tara for agreeing to chair the new Commission and informed commissioners that the Disabled Peoples Commission (DPC) is not an extension of government but truly independent. He explained that the council wants to be positively challenged by friends and that he wants H&F to be the best place for disabled people anywhere. The DPC is free to write its own terms of reference.
- 1.2 Cllr Cowan went on to say that the administration's motto is to "do things with people rather than to them", which reflects the disabled people's phrase "nothing about us without us". He said that when he was in opposition, he worked closely with Tara, Kevin and Debbie Domb to influence the Labour Group's election manifesto. As a result, when they were elected they abolished home care charges which was clearly a "tax on disability".
- 1.3 Cllr Cowan described the DPC's role as to tell the council what to do, but bearing in mind the 66% cuts in government grant that the council has seen since 2010 and the fact that it has made a political decision to cut and freeze council tax. He did, however, refer to the £200m that has been negotiated from developers and the £40m in savings from internal re-organisation and the cutting of senior management posts.
- 1.4 Cllr Cowan stressed that he wants the borough to become the "independent disabled people's republic of H&F" and

that he is really grateful that the commissioners are doing all this as volunteers.

- 1.5 Cllr Fennimore stated that the council has started a number of resident led commissions but that she has really wanted to see this commission come together and she is delighted that it is now in place.
- 1.6 Mike Gannon asked if the Commission's recommendations would be binding on the council. Cllr Cowan explained that this would not be the case as it would probably not be constitutionally acceptable for the council to delegate executive powers to a commission. He stressed, however, that he wants the Commission to tell the council what marginalises disabled people locally so they can work hard to tackle it.
- 1.7 Mike also asked if the Commission would also look beyond council services such as businesses and pubs. Cllr Cowan stressed that it is entirely up to the Commission to decide on what it wants to examine.
- 1.8 Cllr Fennimore suggested that this is also a great opportunity to look at what is working for disabled people in other areas. It is not always about money but often about changing the way we do things. She stressed that disabled people must be at the heart of decision-making that affects them.
- 1.9 Tara noted that the phrase "nothing about us without us" came from disabled campaigners in the 1980's. Patricia Quigley agreed with Cllr Fennimore that it's not always about money but people's time.

2. **Disability Equality Training**

- 2.1 Tara introduced Tracey Lazard from Inclusion London who would be delivering the “disability equality training” taster session which should assist Commissioners to keep our discussions focused on the Social Model of Disability – identifying the barriers to disabled people’s participation and equality rather than seeing disabled people as the problem. Tara is keen for the Commission to work with Inclusion London and they may support the Commission’s thinking and proposals for policy development.
- 2.2 Tracey stated that this Commission is unique in London and that she was excited about what H&F is doing for disabled people and by the potential of the Commission.
- 2.3 Inclusion London is a pan-London organisation run by deaf and disabled people providing capacity building support to disabled organisations, along with campaigning and policy work.
- 2.4 Disabled people means all groups of people with impairments, which includes physical or hidden impairments as well as mental health. Everybody that experiences exclusion or discrimination as a result of their impairment can be assisted by the Social Model of Disability. There are 1.2million disabled people in London.
- 2.5 Kevin Caulfield described the time he first came across the social model of disability, as a “light bulb” moment. Kate Betteridge first encountered the term around 1995–96 and it seemed so obvious at the time but there was still a long way to go back then. Patricia Quigley hadn’t heard of the term but access for all means, e.g. that everyone should be able to cross the road. Dropped kerbs should be the norm. Society has to change to make this happen.
- 2.6 Tracey agreed with Patricia that we should change the kerb not the person. The Social Model cannot be

separated from disabled people's rights which came about historically from the civil rights movements in the 1960's and 1970's when disabled people were "institutionalised". They were "locked away", something had to change. She referred to the work of UPIAS (Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation) and its founding members, including Paul Hunt in the early 1970's.

- 2.7 Historically, disabled people did not run or control disabled organisations. Tracey referred to the "Spastics Society" and other organisations which perpetuated certain images of disabled people, that they needed "special" treatment and had their own vested interests. So disabled people set up their own organisations that looked at independent living.
- 2.8 Tracey circulated two diagrams contrasting the traditional/medical and social model of disability. Traditionally, the disabled person is seen as the "problem" and is referred to as wheelchair "bound" rather than being a wheelchair "user". E.g. you have a building and someone can't walk up the steps to the entrance. The traditional/medical model says the problem is with the individual so they need "special" services. Some local government services are still run based on this model. Disabled people are "passive" recipients of services. Tracey asked commissioners for their experiences of services developed by this approach.
- 2.9 Martin said that he wants things to change so all disabled people can get out and about.
- 2.10 Mike said that 20 years ago, when H&F had a Labour council, he had asked about disabled access to Fulham library and was told that this was not possible owing to a "fire risk" and that disabled people could "book a taxi" to another library.

- 2.11 Kate Betteridge noted that it seems that the same “experts” are engaged by different services. She is aware that retired doctors have been consulted on issues related to disabled people.
- 2.12 Tracey stated that this thinking is found all the way up to government. She reminded commissioners of government minister Lord Freud’s controversial comments in 2014 of disabled people being “not worth the full wage”. Implying they were “worth less”.
- 2.13 The medical model of disability told us we should be grateful for what we get. The social model came about as a direct response to this ideology. Tracey referred to the “route to liberation” on the social model diagram. The problem now is not the disabled person but the way society is run and organised, badly designed buildings and “special” schools. We want inclusion not segregation. Children should learn together not separately.
- 2.14 Ramona Williams recalled that when she was young her parents wanted to send her to a boarding school for the visually impaired but she said no and went to her brother’s school where teachers encouraged her to be part of wider society.
- 2.15 Tracey noted that the social model is a “light bulb” moment for us all. Tara stressed the need to use the social model to change ours and other people’s lives. Ramona Williams noted that there are still some cultures who don’t want disabled people to be seen.
- 2.16 Patricia went to a special school and didn’t have any bad memories but agrees that things need to change. She stated that if children can mix together then we can all be seen as “normal”.

- 2.17 David Isaac lost his sight 5 years ago and just sees shadows and shapes. He had grown up expecting things and they were there, but now feels there is no infrastructure available to help him progress and do things.
- 2.18 Tracey stated that we can identify barriers and that this Commission can help remove them. She noted that most people in power are not disabled people and that this Commission can look at council policies or inclusion in education if it feels it should. The social model allows us to look at what disempowers or excludes us from decision-making and we should use it as a “route map” to inclusion.
- 2.19 Jane Wilmot noted that some policies that affect us are council controlled but some are controlled higher up, e.g. planning rules.

3. Draft Terms of Reference

- 3.1 Tara explained that the terms of reference is a guiding document for the Commission and she also referred commissioners to the easy summary that Safety Net People First had created and asked commissioners their thoughts on the document.
- 3.2 Victoria Brignall asked as to what specific information or research work might be identified as important for the Commission to look at as part of its work. Tara explained that she is looking to recruit a disabled person with policy experience to support the Commission. She recognises that, as a group of diverse disabled people, the commissioners will have different areas of interest and differing priorities but can look at influencing decision-making structures in the borough. This is called co-

production and is about designing and commissioning services with disabled people.

- 3.3 Mike asked whether small groups of commissioners go off to investigate certain things such as transport, access to pubs, disabled toilets etc? Tara suggested that the whole Commission should get involved in exploring access issues.
- 3.4 Patricia suggested that the Commission look at council communications, especially how different services ask for the same information many times over which can be really “hard work” for disabled people sometimes. She has even been asked questions such as “is the cleaning fluid in your house carcinogenic?”.
- 3.5 Tara stated that we can look at this at the next meeting as well as other areas we can immediately start to investigate.
- 3.6 Martin stated that people in authority need disabled awareness training from disabled people. He explained that he is involved with training Police officers on how to treat people with learning difficulties. All service providers should be trained. Mike stressed the need to interrogate the policy makers and Tara said that we could start to look at what training service providers receive. David stressed the importance of ensuring that all Social Services staff are trained appropriately.
- 3.7 Kate asked what “speak to local people” means in the term of reference. Tara explained that the Commission is just 12 residents (soon to be 13 or 14, including a young person) and not fully representative of the borough so we need to reach out much more widely. She mentioned the series of focus groups undertaken to inform the work of

the H&F Poverty & Worklessness Commission as an example.

- 3.8 Mike suggested that, as a unique project, we should promote what we're doing to the media. As a retired journalist he offered to help with this. Victoria said that we should definitely contact BBC London.
- 3.9 David asked if the Commission should be approachable to the public, e.g. by having a web address. Tara stressed the need to be careful that people don't see the Commission's role as one of resolving specific matters but stressed that it does need to work with local organisations, such as Action on Disability and Safety Net People First. She said that we also need to map what skills and experience we have at the table and that she will email everyone to find out who is connected to what.
- 3.10 Jane felt that the terms of reference should clearly state how we will know we have done well as a Commission. Tara agreed this was a good idea and should be explored further at the next meeting. Peter Smith suggested that measures of success might be best established once a set of recommendations and targets have been agreed that can be monitored.
- 3.11 Tara asked that commissioners agree the draft terms of reference, subject to the discussion around "success measures" at the next meeting. The draft terms were **agreed** by commissioners present.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 Tara agreed that we do need to consider how do we know we've made a difference so this will be an agenda item at the next meeting.

- 4.2 Kate asked if the policy job would be advertised externally. Peter explained that the council is to advertise it as a consultancy contract at 18 hours per week for ten months. Victoria asked that the consultancy brief be circulated to commissioners.
- 4.3 Tara stressed the need to see when key up and coming decision-making meetings are happening in the borough. Peter informed commissioners that there isn't yet an agreed corporate plan in place – it is under review - but there is a “key decisions” list, which identifies up and coming key decisions to be considered by the council Cabinet.

5. Any other business

- 5.1 Martin circulated a flyer for the Safety Net People First AGM, which is going to be held on 30th September at 4:30pm.

6. Dates of Future Meetings

- 6.1 Tara stated that, for future meetings, papers will be circulated 10 days in advance. Everyone is happy with a 5pm start. Kate asked that meetings not be held on Fridays and asked if we can use “doodle” to agree future meeting dates. Jane can't do Tuesdays.
- 6.2 A provisional date for the next meeting was agreed as **20th October 2016**, 5pm – 7pm at Hammersmith town hall (subject to room availability). The venue was later changed due to lack of room availability at Hammersmith Town Hall.

DPC
September 2016