

NEWS UPDATE

8TH NOVEMBER 2008

APOLIGIES:

Ann Nicholls Fairford Volunteer Centre
Councillor Jacky Fletcher
Martin Horwood MP Cheltenham
Mark Harper MP from Forest of Dean

Guest Speaker Kathrine Rudd from the National Star College was unable to attend as she was delayed on her return from holiday

Guest Speaker Bren McInerney - Lead of the Communications Board of LINKs gave the forum an update on the progress of LINKs in the county. He explained that from 1st April 2008 the Government set up LINKs forums to cover Health & Social Care - the old PPI's only covered Health - to encourage more people to speak out on issues. The LINKs board will have similar powers and be able to undertake unannounced visits to "Enter & View" and there is a legal responsibility for Health to respond within 20days to any enquire LINKs make of Health & Social Care. The overall responsibility rests with Health & Overview Scrutiny Committee. The Host organisation (GRCC) has recruited for and appointed a dedicated LINK Manager (Meena Patel) and LINK Assistant (Pamela Dewick) who will work to support, enable and facilitate the LINK in its work and ensure engagement and involvement across Gloucestershire.

Many people have been engaged and encouraged to get involved with the LINK through Voluntary & Community Sector forums, PCT strategic events, attendance at key events and much more. A Community mapping exercise has been undertaken to ensure seldom heard groups and individuals and people from other networks are informed of the ongoing development of the LINK and given the opportunity to register. This mapping is ongoing and will continue as more groups and individuals engage. The host organisation has met with other LINKs in the South West region to share issues and good practice For more information or register your interest in Gloucestershire LINK, contact Pamela Dewick or Meena Patel, LINK Manager at GRCC on 01452 528491 or visit the website at www.grcc.org.uk/our_work/link

REPORT BACK:

Bowel Cancer Screening Following the talk last meeting about Bowel Cancer screening and the issues which face people with a disability participating I wrote to Jan Stubbings, Gloucestershire PCT Chief Executive for her to investigate. My letter has been acknowledged & it is being investigated. I also raised the issue at the PCT PHD LIT.

EQUALITIES GROUP I have put my name forward to be part of the Equalities Group of the County Assembly. They have some funding for the next year. I will report back to the GDF if I am accepted.

"Gloucestershire Lifestyles (GLS) prepares and issues notes of the Gloucestershire Disability Forum (GDF) with due care, but cannot accept responsibilities for any reporting errors. Views reported are those of the presenters and do not necessarily reflect those of either GLS or GDF."

GDF is kindly funded by Gloucestershire Association Disability

Gloucestershire Local Access Forum meeting was held on 2nd October in Gloucester. A visit was made to the new Public Rights of Way store in Standish where a number of kissing gates, mobility access gates etc were stored for future projects. This was followed by a visit to a public footpath along the Severn at Sandhurst that has been eroded by the floods of last year and a tree which has fallen into the river and pulled a section of path into the river. It is a flat walk that would be ideal for people with mobility issues and being close to the city centre would be accessible to many people. The Environment Agency will not deal with the issue - their approach is "planned retreat" (as in coastal regions in the south east where homes are being washed into the sea) At the afternoon meeting I asked a question about the Sustrans cycle path (ideal for wheelchair users) along the river towards Maismore. In the floods last year a large section was washed away and it now needs £10k of repair work done on it before it can re-open. Sustrans receive a very large grant to set up cycle paths in the South West but they only develop the paths they have no funding to maintain them thus the local authority have to pick up the bill. The workmanship on the section at Maismore was poor.

The whole of the Public Rights of way in the county, some 3400 miles, have been surveyed over an 18mth period. 475 miles were found to be well used principal routes and in good order, 2067 were used regularly and a further 724 were little used minor routes. The decision now is where the maintenance funds should be spent.

SWDEN: I attended a meeting in Taunton on 9th Oct with representatives of RNIB to look at a plan to put in a bid for EU regional funding to provide a package of support to people with a range of disabilities to tackle the barriers that they face in accessing training, volunteering & work. RNIB plan to hold a day conference in conjunction with SWDEN to consult with a wide range of people with a disability to put together an application for EU funding. Attended a further meeting on 6th Nov following on from the June Conference which was held in Taunton. We discuss how to move the Network forward based on the outcomes of that June conference. Results of the on line survey were also available and yet again Access was top of the list with Employment a close second.

Gloucestershire Service Users Forum

It has been a busy few months for the Service Users Forum. Our members have been involved with the Gloucestershire University on many occasions. A group of 10 Service Users joined the 2nd year Social Work students during their induction week. The students were due to go on their first placement and had not yet had the opportunity of working with Service Users. The students interviewed the Service Users on what makes a good Social Worker. On another occasion our members were involved in a role-play for 1st year students. They gave an example of difficulty they have getting accessible transport in the evening. They then met students in groups to answer any questions. Other members have been involved in teaching support at the University.

Service Users have been involved in the County Council budget consultations in Cheltenham and Gloucester. Some of our members attended the South West Service Users meeting at Taunton to discuss how different area's work.

Anyone wishing to be involved please contact John Print 01452 541556

ITEMS OF INTEREST:

ACTIVE GLOUCESTERSHIRE

See the latest News about disability sports in the county on

<http://www.activegloucestershire.org/disabilitysport/>

Anne-Dorte Andersen

Sport and Physical activity Development officer for disabled people

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What is Choice Based Lettings? The project, called Choice Based Lettings, is based on a model that sees vacant council and housing association homes advertised for rent in a style similar to an estate agent, where customers have more choice and control over where they live. There are also plans to include shared ownership properties and to offer the service to private landlords in the future. People on the waiting list have to check on a website and register an interest - my concerns are that for many people with a disability it may prove difficult to access the website & thus discriminate against them.

A Gloucester Access Group - is anyone interested in setting one up? George Ridgeon is interested in finding other people to join him in this effort. For more information contact George on george.ridgeon.bowls@blueyonder.co.uk