

**BRACKNELL FOREST ACCESS GROUP
4 MARCH 2020
7.30 - 8.55 PM**



Present:

Councillor Mrs Isabel Mattick, Bracknell Forest Council (Chairman)
Councillor Michael Brossard (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Lizzy Gibson
Councillor Mrs Sandra Ingham
Doug Southwick, Keep Mobile

Apologies for absence were received from:

Ray Edwards MBE, Limbicare
Jane Figg, Macular Support Group
Andrea McCombie-Parker, The Ark
Mark Sanders, Healthwatch
Mary Waight, Community Learning Disability Services, BFC

Also Present:

Tina Stevenson, Citizen's Advice Bureau
Kate Hughes, Citizen's Advice Bureau
Philip Bell, Involve
Marcos Basurto-Castillon
Samantha Wood, Community Engagement and Equalities Officer, Bracknell Forest Council
Harjit Hunjan, Policy and Engagement Manager, Bracknell Forest Council

6. Minutes of Previous Meeting

To receive and note the minutes of the meeting of the group held on 9 October 2019.

It was noted that Involve no longer did a befriending service for residents which was noted on page 5. The scheme would continue until the end of March 2020 and will be continued by Age UK. Many of the existing volunteers and people would continue to be supported by the new Age UK scheme.

It was agreed the minutes were a correct record.

7. Citizen's Advice Bureau - what we do

Tina Stevenson and Kate Hughes from Citizen's Advice Bureau Bracknell (CAB) presented to the group about what services Citizen's Advice provided to local residents. It was noted that the aim of CAB was to empower people and provide guidance to allow people to resolve issues themselves. Many people who could self-help tend to through the newsletter and online via the CAB website however most people who got in contact would have complex needs. As part of the discussion, the following points were noted:

- The current waiting time was around 4 weeks and only 40% of calls were answered as the service was a limited resource.
- There was an initial triage stage and if people need specialist advice then they could have an appointment.

- CAB provided ongoing support without a finish date.
- The service was as accessible and inclusive as possible and included wheelchair access as well as sign language options for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- CAB recently had hearing loops installed and asked for help from the Access group to get them set up.
- There were also equal opportunities for volunteering and the Bracknell branch had volunteers who are partially sighted and blind.
- The website was also being updated so it was more accessible and the organisation had signed up to be 'disability confident'

Kate presented a case study to the access group about a local lady who had complex health problems and was working part time. She had approached CAB as she was concerned about money and as a result of the help provided by CAB, she was able to get help and retire.

Following questions, the below points were noted:

- Home visits were quite expensive to resource . CAB had a partnership with 'Silva Homes' for some home visits and although CAB would like to do more, there was not much funding towards it.
- It was confirmed that it was on the business plan to utilise technology to reach more people however, the users would also need the technology in place.
- There were capacity restraints as the building was small and they struggled to maintain their volunteer rota schedule.
- The training to become a volunteer was intensive and took a long time to complete.
- It was confirmed that CAB would be keen to have the local community advertise for volunteers. Town and Country, Bracknell Matters could be available for advertisements in future.
- CAB Offered advice from 9 locations in Bracknell Forest including Sandhurst, Crowthorne, Ascot outreach projects and Bracknell Town Centre. They were keen to work in GP surgeries to reach the more vulnerable residents who would need CABs services.
- Solicitors were available on Wednesday to give people advice and there was also access to financial advice.

8. **Proposal to change the name of the Access Group**

At the last meeting it was suggested that the name of the group could be changed to more accurately reflect the purpose of the group. Several suggestions were discussed and members of the group agreed that that name should be changed to:

Disability Advisory and Access Forum

9. **Partner updates**

Citizen's Advice Bureau

Currently looking at working with health as they are keen to develop the relationship especially around mental health.

Coronavirus

It was discussed how Coronavirus would impact vulnerable people in the borough and it was noted that currently the council was signposting information from public

health and the NHS. It was confirmed that a group had been set up by the council to co-ordinate the activity and would consider vulnerable people.

It was noted that although the council had contact details of people who have blue badges, this information could not be used to make contact over the Corona Virus.

Involve

- It was confirmed that there was a new 'Befriending' project at Age UK which would transition from the Involve befriending service. The transition has been planned for a few months and users of the service were being updated.
- Involve were currently working hard to support the voluntary sector through their E-bulletin with the latest news especially advertising health opportunities for partnership working.
- Involve were also currently offering training courses which had a good uptake.
- It was confirmed that they were happy for any organisations to be on the involve mailing list if they would find it beneficial
- It was noted that they could not be part of every access group meeting but would be happy to come along if there's anything they could be of added value to.

Cllr Ingham (Bracknell in Bloom)

It was suggested that Diane Benford from Involve could support this venture as there was some synergy between volunteers and businesses who would like to do corporate volunteering.

Bracknell Forest Council – It was noted that the equalities strategy would come to an end in March 2020. Work was currently being undertaken to refresh the strategy for next year and the views of the group would be sought, including consultation on vulnerable groups.

It was confirmed that 'AccessAble', had been updated following additional surveys being carried out in January 2020. This had added an extra 23 venues including 'Whoosh' play centre, The Range, Bill Hill and Lily Hill Park.

Keep Mobile

Keep mobile confirmed they would be having a trustee's meeting regarding their response to the Coronavirus. They currently transported vulnerable elderly people, a group which was considered high risk, and were considering the impact on users if they're unable to go out and whether the service would need to adapt.

The threat of vulnerable people becoming isolated and unable to get food supplies was a concern as well as how the council was disseminating information to those most in need.

The group were advised to keep looking at national government websites for advice on Coronavirus and that the council would look to prioritise vulnerable residents.

10. Any Other Business

Involve reported that they would be doing an event to raise awareness about hidden forms of exploitations including County lines on 24 March 2020 – This would be a free event at Newbold College and all would be welcome to attend. Involve could be contacted for more information.

11. Items for Future Meetings

The below were suggested as items for discussion and should be read alongside items suggested in the previous meeting:

- Visit from Everyone Active regarding leisure facilities for people with additional needs.
- A presentation from the Blue badge manager at BFC to highlight the ways the badge scheme has changed to include hidden disabilities and include how to apply.
- Autism Awareness
- Presentation from charity DEBRA who are moving to the Bracknell Forest area. They will be collecting furniture and electrical goods to sell.
- Dementia focus
- Accessibility at 'The Deck' – (it was noted that currently plans were not available but may be in future)
- The group could also meet at the Jealott's Hill Community Landshare

Next meeting will be held on 17 June 2020

CHAIRMAN