

**DISABILITY ADVISORY & ACCESS FORUM  
22 MARCH 2023  
6.15 - 7.15 PM**



**Present:**

Councillor Michael Brossard (Chair)  
Philip Bell, Involve  
Councillor Mrs Lizzy Gibson  
Councillor Mrs Sandra Ingham  
Mark Sanders, Healthwatch

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillor Mrs Isabel Mattick  
Mary Waight

**Also Present:**

Councillor Michael Gibson

**23. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received for part of the meeting from Councillor Mrs Mattick.

**COUNCILLOR BROSSARD IN THE CHAIR**

**24. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2022 were approved as a correct record.

**25. Reasonable Adjustments Update**

Harjit Hunjan presented an update on reasonable adjustments for residents accessing BFC services. The LA had a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that persons with a disability were not discriminated when compared to persons without a disability. This was an anticipatory duty meaning that the onus was on the public body to think in advance (and on an ongoing basis) to remove barriers and not wait for service users to ask for a reasonable adjustment.

The council had gathered feedback from residents accessing its services. Some residents who accessed a variety of services were having to explain to each department what their needs were in terms of reasonable adjustments. There was a need for a way for departments to communicate with each other so that the individual did not need to explain the same thing each time.

In March 2022, a CMT report made recommendations for training to be provided and for a staff guide to be produced as to how to handle requests for reasonable adjustments. This guide has now been co-produced with a specialist charity and was included within the agenda reports pack.

The council has been looking at how to promote reasonable adjustments to everyone in all communications, such as having a strapline on all external emails offering reasonable adjustments. Time Square has been designed to be more accessible including the IT set-up in public areas, quiet rooms, and the Community Hub with its own dedicated manager.

In response to questions raised, the following points were noted:

- If a person had an issue with a reasonable adjustment not being offered or provided, they could initially go to the manager of the service they were accessing or go through customer services to be put through to the right person. They could also liaise with the Community Hub manager or Harjit's team. If that did not resolve the issue, they could follow the complaints procedure.
- There was a need for any conversations around reasonable adjustments to be held confidentially.
- Home visits were possible if the service could offer it safely. There was also the technology available to offer online meetings.
- When having a conversation about reasonable adjustments, all the options would be explored to try to find a way to make a reasonable adjustment, but if it was not possible, a clear explanation would have to be provided. If the individual did not agree with the decision, they would be free to make a complaint and then go down the legal route if they were still not happy.
- Schools, as public bodies, had the same duty to consider reasonable adjustments. However, there was some ambiguity as to whether the duty extended to disabled parents. Furthermore, the experience of some families had been that hidden disabilities and neurodiversity were not considered in the same way as physical disabilities. Harjit agreed to follow this up with the schools' team.
- Philip Bell was not aware of Involve being approached by residents to discuss reasonable adjustments for BFC services, but if that happened, they would offer to liaise with the LA on behalf of the resident.
- It was felt that the proposal on page 9 of the report to the introduction of KPI's should be explored further as this would allow an assessment of trends on a timely basis. This would provide for feedback on any actions deemed beneficial to measuring Reasonable Home Adjustments.

## 26. **Access Guides - Review**

Harjit Hunjan shared that Cath Price had replaced Sam Wood as Community Engagement Manager. Cath was keen to continue the work that Sam used to do.

It was noted that the annual review of access guides had been completed. As a result of the review, the guides had been amended and published on the BFC website. Harjit agreed to circulate the access report to the Forum.

## 27. **User Acceptance Testing Group for Blue Badges**

Councillor Gibson shared that the LA was trying to get more user interface for blue badges. The officer involved was due to present an update and it was agreed to carry this forward to the next meeting.

## 28. **Any Other Business**

It was noted that Councillors Mrs Mattick and Brossard would not be standing as Chair and Vice Chair respectively. Councillor Brossard thanked all who had participated in and supported the work of the Forum over the years.

29. **Items for Future Meetings**

The following were proposed as items for future meetings:

- User acceptance testing group for Blue Badges (carried forward).
- Evaluation of recommendations from the Blue Badge review which had been reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.
- Building regulations – to understand the current accessibility requirements for new houses being built.
- Accessibility of community events such as the Platinum Jubilee last year and the upcoming Coronation.

**CHAIRMAN**