

Newsletter of Disability in Camden ★ winter 2011

DISCOVERY



*Season's
Greetings*



Comment

Welcome to the winter edition of *Discovery*. In this issue we have dedicated four pages to the development of a Centre for Independent Living (CIL). DISC has long been a champion of the notion of a Camden CIL. We have seen many false dawns, but hopefully there is now light at the end of the tunnel.

Sadly however the possibility of a CIL has become entangled with a wider issue around the proposed use of the building in Greenwood Place where the CIL would likely be placed. It appears that Camden Council is keen to also house a number of day services in the building in place of existing services. Many of these services are popular with service users and their families.

We look at the importance of a centre dedicated to the independence of disabled people, and give a voice to those who fear for their services. We must stress that our vision of a CIL has nothing to do with removing current services.

Also in this edition Lucky, our regular columnist, is an angry man as he looks at the use and misuse of statistics being employed to attack disabled people on benefits.

He is right to be angry, there really is a culture developing in the media suggesting anyone on DLA or what used to be Incapacity Benefits is a fraudster. This is a vicious lie that can only lead to more stress and hardship for people the vast majority of whom are only getting what they are entitled to—indeed many disabled people are not even getting that.

On a brighter note, we hope you find plenty of fun things to do during the season break. All the *Discovery* team would like to wish season's greetings to all our readers. We hope you all have a wonderful time. By the next time we come out we will be in a new year, here's hoping for a great 2012 for everyone.

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Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics

We have been using the Get Lucky page to keep our readers informed of the changes in the benefits system. The changes keep on coming as the Welfare Reform Bill has just passed through parliament. This includes the end of Disability Living Allowance and its replacement by Personal Independence Payments

We will write about the new benefit in the next issue when we hope to know more details. Readers may also have noticed that there has been an increase in the number of newspaper stories about disability benefits. A typical example from a paper recently is “Disability Benefits. Fill in a form”. The article then went on to state how most claimants for DLA only have to fill in a claim form to receive benefits of £70 per week! Other headlines that have recently appeared are “94% of incapacity claimants can work”, “A SHOCKING 1.8 million people claiming incapacity benefit are FIT for work figures reveal today”. The sources for these headlines are Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) statistics interpreted by the papers to portray benefit claimants as undeserving.

It can be no coincidence that these stories are appearing when the government is introducing new stringent tests for Employment and Support Allowance and replacing Disability Living Allowance with Personal Independence Payments. What we are seeing in this wave of propaganda is a demonisation of benefit claimants and disabled people. This will make the removal of benefits under the current and new laws much easier. Public opinion already believes that benefits are too easy to get. Disgracefully none of the major political parties are against these

changes. Indeed it was the last government that started the changes that paved the way for the overhaul of the benefits system that the coalition has undertaken.

The past few months has also seen an increase in the number of hate crimes against disabled people. It has been reported that there has been a twenty per cent increase in the last year. There is no way to establish a causal link between the negative propaganda and the increase in attacks but it must be more than a coincidence. The constant negative stories also cause great distress to our clients. Clients are worried that their incomes will be reduced or that they will have to look for work when they are too ill to work. The stress often contributes to deterioration in their condition.

One organisation that has tried to counter the propaganda and lies that newspapers are peddling is fullfact.org. They aim to check that headlines are factually correct. This is extremely useful when there seems to be a new set of headlines almost daily that paint benefit claimants in a poor light. However it is not enough to expect one charity to counter all the headlines and DWP statistics. The government should be leading by example, however in order to push through their benefit changes they feed the anti disabled propaganda that is having such a negative affect on our clients.

The story so far

DISC has long had an ambition to see the development of a Centre for Independent Living (CIL) in Camden. Initially that centre was to have been located at the former Odeon site on Tottenham Court Road as part of the Planning agreement with UCLH. However amongst much frustration and disappointment various locations have been proposed and fallen through.

At last it seems a home has been found in Greenwood Place near the Forum in Kentish Town Road. However the proposal is now tied up with proposals to close existing services and house alongside the CIL a number of day services.

This proposal has not been greatly welcomed by many of the users of existing services. Given that CILs are meant to reflect the wishes and desires for independence by disabled people, it would be a great shame if a Camden CIL were to be seen as a cover for cutting services.

In the following pages we explain where the idea for CILs came from and the philosophy behind them, and then in the spirit of giving voice to the wishes of disabled people we hear the views of service users about the proposed changes to their service. Whilst we are delighted to give space to the views expressed and are in general sympathetic to the concerns raised *Discovery* does not necessarily agree with all views expressed or all language used by these contributors.

We invited Camden Council to outline their views on Greenwood Place, but had not received any response prior to going to print.

In the

‘Independent Living does not mean that we want to do everything by ourselves, do not need anybody or like to live in isolation. Independent Living means that we demand the same choices and control in our every-day lives that our non-disabled brothers and sisters, neighbours and friends take for granted... We are profoundly ordinary people sharing the same need to feel included, recognized and loved.’

Dr. Adolf Ratzka

Disability rights activist and founder of Stockholm CIL



beginning...

The philosophy and development of independent living started in America. Inspired by Disability activist Ed Roberts the first student with severe disabilities to attend the University of California, – a number of activists formed the Berkley Centre for Independent Living (CIL) in 1972.

This was the first independent living service and advocacy program run by and for disabled people. The CIL provided a model for a new kind of community organisation designed to address the needs and concerns of people with a wide range of impairments. The centre also offered peer support, role modeling and were run and controlled by disabled people.

Inspired by the American example the Independent Living Movement in the UK emerged in the late 1970s.

At that time disability services tended to be paternalistic, institutional, second class, too medically influenced and out of touch with people's real needs.

The principles and philosophy of independent living was first notably applied by a number of groups of disabled people, including Project 81

Project 81 was formed by a group of disabled people living in a Cheshire Home in Hampshire. The group adopted the name Project 81 because 1981 was the United Nations International Year for Disabled People. The first success the group achieved was negotiating a financial package which enabled them to move out of the institutions and into the community.

This experience along with others would lay the ground for Britain's CIL's.

The first Centres for Independent Living

in the UK were Hampshire Centre for Independent Living (HCIL) (founded by Project 81 members) and Derbyshire Centre for Integrated Living (DCIL). The founders wanted to share their experiences and change of lifestyle with other disabled people seeking similar solutions to their lives. The services provided would be available for all disabled people regardless of their impairment, gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity and background. The organisation would be run and controlled by disabled people.

Over the years the independent living movement and CILs have developed certain basic services which have enabled many disabled people to have choice and control over their lives. The concept of independent living which DISC and numerous other organisations across the UK promote is simple, give the power to disabled people and enable them to lead active lives at work, rest and play.

Although a lot have been achieved over the years the independent living movement has suffered setbacks. Many organisations led by disabled people are being closed because of lack of funding.

From our experience at DISC we know independent living works, our members and people we support around direct payments have told us it works.

There is therefore no doubt that the way forward is to ensure that information and choice is accessible to disabled people and those who support them, the right to choose must be sacrosanct in the development of the Independent Living movement and the development of CILs!

I O Olafimihan

Voices of Dissent

 **Nalan Bedding**
Nalan is a carer and her sister uses the service at Shoot – Up – Hill

Shoot-Up-Hill is a beautiful purpose built day centre for adults with a range of learning disabilities based in Kilburn. Some of these vulnerable adults have been attending this centre for over 20 years. Shoot-Up-Hill offers them a safe, creative hub where they can meet their friends and be at ease so for a few hours a day they can be socially independent of their carers.

Earlier this year Camden told the vulnerable adults and their parents and carers that the building would have to shut in September 2012 and would have to be vacated by then. They proposed to sell this building and 4 other centre's which vulnerable adults attend to help pay for a new centre at Greenwood Place which Camden are proposing to build to 'warehouse' adults with

a range of disabilities such as dementia, Alzheimer's, mental health and physical and learning disabilities.

Mental health professionals have dismissed out of hand the notion that grouping people with such complex needs together would be workable or beneficial to any group

Vulnerable adults are not vulnerable in their own centre's, but when they are put in to huge centre's like the proposed Greenwood centre with other groups this could very easily result in confrontation and challenging behaviour.

At no point has Camden convinced us the carers that the service it is proposing at Greenwood will be in any way comparable to the service that is offered at Shoot-Up-Hill or the other centre's threatened with closure.

Carers have put together an alternative proposal for a social enterprise to be based at Shoot-Up-Hill. They are still waiting to meet with Camden to take this forward.

 **Jane Clinton**
Jane is related to someone who uses the Netherwood day centre

Netherwood Day Centre for people with Alzheimer's and other dementia and their carers is, quite simply, a lifeline.

And that is why the carers and users of the centre are totally opposed to the Greenwood Place proposal.

For a start Netherwood, built just 20 years ago, is a centre of excellence: a purpose-built site specifically designed for people with Alzheimer's and other dementia.

For the 25-30 people who attend Netherwood in West Hampstead it is a home from home.

Netherwood Day Centre offers so much that no accountant or council officer could measure. There is a vibrancy and joy about the place that only those who visit can really understand.

Most of all there is a feeling of safety and equality here. No one has to explain their behaviour or apologise for it. It is just understood and accepted.

Credit: Sally Platt



Barbara Law in the garden at Netherwood

To destroy such a place would be municipal vandalism.

Nothing so far has assured carers at the Netherwood Day Centre that the new Greenwood Place site will be able to offer the level of freedom, dignity and, most of all, safety that is currently enjoyed.

Closing these centres and selling off the land is no more than a short-term approach to a long-term issue; a quick-fix solution to balance the books.

Unfortunately with Alzheimer's, dementia, learning difficulties, autism and mental health difficulties there are no quick-fix solutions.

We urge Camden Council to think, think and think again.

 **Tony Flynn**
Tony is the elected service user chairperson of the Highgate Centre Business meeting

The Highgate centre was literally a lifeline for me. I came here in the aftermath of a nervous breakdown, a divorce and the death of two close friends. I was literally on the edge of suicide. The support given to me by the staff at the Highgate centre was invaluable and provided me with the help I needed to get through these troubled times. I am now working in the centre towards building a better more sustainable happier long term future for myself.

The Highgate centre is a lively, diverse yet intimate community in which we try to ensure that everyone has a part to play. An important aspect is the socialising with other community members along with the opportunity to learn new skills.

The proposed demolition and relocation of the centre to the Greenwood site, in my opinion, would be very damaging to this service given the nature of the proposed integration of multiple services within the same building which I believe would lead to a dilution and erosion of the very nature of the service itself.

These proposals have nothing to do with improving our situation and in my mind are more to do with financial cuts and savings.

We see the proposals as a cut in the provision of treatment and care and we would ask that all like minded people join us in our opposition.

Access This

VOICES FROM THE SHADOWS

Film

The organisation Invest In ME are holding a special screening of 'Voices from the Shadows' at the London British Library on 7 December at 6pm. "Voices from the Shadows is the most important and significant film on ME that has ever been produced".

There will be an introduction, a screening of the film followed by discussions with invited guest speakers and refreshments.

To buy tickets go to the Invest In ME website - www.investinme.org. Tickets cost £14 and wheelchair places need to be reserved in advance.

Afternoons at the Museum

The British Museum will be running the popular and enjoyable monthly Over 55s Afternoons at the Museum throughout 2012. These informal sessions are held from 2pm - 4pm in the afternoon with the aim of supporting groups working with elderly visitors in using the museum.

The sessions start off with warm refreshments and a unique opportunity to handle objects from the Museum's teaching collection. Volunteer staff support visitors in exploring the galleries of their choice at a pace that suits them. These sessions can cater for up to 15 people and are booked on a first come first served basis. If you and your group are interested, please contact me with the date you are interested in attending and whether you have any particular requirements or requests.

Available sessions for the next half of the year are as follows: (booking in advance is essential, one session per group, available on a first come basis):

**Fri 6 January ; Fri 2 March; Thurs 5 April;
Fri 4 May; Fri 1 June; Fri 6 July**

We have access to wheelchairs which can be used inside the museum and also offer disabled parking on the museum grounds if requested in advance.

Contact: Harvinder Bahra
Community Partnerships Coordinator
The British Museum, London WC1B 3DG
Tel: 0207 323 8398 / 8266

Free NHS eye tests in the home

Lloyds Pharmacy is now offering free eye tests in the home for those that qualify. To find out if you meet the criteria for the free test in the home visit the website

www.outsideclinic.com.

The Camden Sensory Needs Forum

Thursday 8 Dec; 6-8pm

Charlie Ratchford Centre,
Belmont Street, NW1 8HF

To take part please contact Serina Dawkins

phone: 020 7974 2972

textphone: 020 7974 6866

email: serina.dawkins@camden.gov.uk

Help Improve Camden Council's websites

The Camden webteam are looking for residents to help improve the council's websites.

We want to make sure that our websites are available and usable for all residents regardless of ability. We particularly want to hear from residents who use software such as screen readers, magnifiers and other 'assistive technologies'.

For more information please contact martin.black@camden.gov.uk

The chocolate festival at the South bank

**9-11 Dec: 11am-8pm on Fri & Sat
11am-6pm on Sun**

The chocolate festival returns to Southbank for its annual Christmas celebration. The festival is a celebration of all things chocolate by chocolate lovers for chocolate lovers.

Where: Southbank Centre Square
Waterloo SE1 8XX



Time out...

Nancy Majid of the Self Directed Support Service has gone on maternity leave. We await her big day and wish her and her husband Sherif the very best of luck. DISC News will keep our readers posted.



....Breaching the gap

Hi I am Najmin Begum and I have joined the Self Directed Support Service to provide cover for Nancy whilst she is on maternity leave. My role involves supporting and advising clients who either receive Direct Payments or are looking to set up Direct Payments for their care needs.



Prior to joining DISC I was working as a Personal Advisor at Jobcentre Plus and I also work part time as an Appropriate Adult. In my spare time I enjoy reading and I also like attending exercise classes such as dance aerobics and pilates.

I also like baking and have so far attempted cupcakes and a Victoria sponge cake...next attempt will be a carrot cake. I have already been out to some home visits and am looking forward to working at DISC and in Camden.

DISC welcomes Disc Jockey

My name is Iyiola Olafimihan and I am originally from Nigeria, where I participated in the movement that campaigned for anti discrimination laws against disabled people. I came to the UK in 2006 to study and gain experience around disability equality. My role at DISC is developing a Centre for Independent Living. This involves identifying projects based on what our members want and need, setting up partnership work in the context of the personalisation agenda, and representing DISC in different meetings and forums. My hobbies are drawing comic strips, pencil artwork and poetry. I also used to be a disc jockey and still keep a huge library of diverse music.



Brief encounter

Discovery is sorry to say farewell to Mike Steel. Mike joined our Self Directed Support Service in May, but due to family relocation out of London he had to give up his job here. In the short time he was with us he became well known to a number of services users. We wish Mike and his wife Roe the very best of luck in their new venture.



Christmas Opening Hours

The DISC Offices will be closing for the holidays on Friday 23 December at 5pm. We will resume normal opening hours on Tuesday 3 January 2012.



Discovery transcription

Important news for those of you who receive an audio version of *Discovery*: over the next few issues, we will be phasing out the use of cassettes and will instead provide you with CDs.

If this will be a problem for you please contact Marcia on 020 7387 0700 or email marcia@discnwl.org.uk

Keep in the loop

Just a reminder to all our readers that DISC is now both on Facebook and Twitter. So if you can't wait for the next *Discovery* do check us out. Just search for Disability in Camden and you'll find us there.

Deaf News

DISC has been working with Empowering Deaf Society to offer NVQ Level 3 BSL classes to Deaf Camden residents. This is proving to be a great opportunity for Deaf people to improve their skills and qualifications.

Deaf services

DISC have been successful in winning a grant to set up new services for Deaf people in Camden. This is a very exciting opportunity. In 2012 we aim to recruit a Deaf Development Officer, establish our own community interpreting service



Stuart Rayner

and run a training project for Deaf volunteers.

In November and December Stuart Rayner will be

doing some work for DISC, setting up Deaf focus meetings and working parties.

The aim of this is to make sure the way in which these new projects are set up is led by the views of Deaf people.

Deaf groups

We are aware that some Deaf Camden residents are very keen to set up a parent-child support group, and a leisure/sport group for Deaf people. DISC would like to support these ideas as much as we can. The meetings with Stuart will be an opportunity to discuss how to set up these other groups.

To get involved in any of the above contact Stuart Rayner.

SMS text 07984 577535
Email stuart.rayner2@virginmedia.com

Top marks for Arsenal

Arsenal has become the first football club to receive the Advanced Level of the Equality Standards.

The Equality Standard is a framework being pursued by around three quarters of all professional football clubs

The club has worked hard to try to remove barriers for disabled people and to provide equal access for them to attend and participate in the club.

It has done this by providing half price season tickets for disabled fans attending matches with a carer as well as match day commentary for people with a visual impairment.

In addition the club offers a disabled supporters lounge, an audio version of the match programme and Britain's only guide dog toilet.

Are you an Arsenal fan? We would be interested to hear about your experience of watching a match at the Emirates Stadium.

Source: <http://www.efd.org.uk/media-centre/news/9287/arsenal-praised-for-disabled-access-provisions>

Letter

Your help required

Camden Council has set up a panel to look at a range of issues that affect disabled people who live in or who access services in the Borough.

So far the panel has looked at 'access' for disabled people to services provided or commissioned by the Council and at transport services and how we cater for the needs of local people with various levels of disability.

The panel will continue to meet until the New Year when it will produce a report to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee, setting out its recommendations on how services in Camden can be improved.

I am writing in my capacity as chair of the panel to ask deaf and disabled people and residents who have experience of disability and local services for disabled people, or from carer's or family relatives and friends of disabled people to tell the us about their experiences, and share their views.

We want to gather as much evidence as possible before writing a report and we depend on your input

to help us form a view on where things are going well, and where they're not, so we can make recommendations for improvements.

Evidence can be submitted in a number of ways and we have produced a form that can be filled in and returned by e-mail, by post or by hand. The forms can be obtained by e-mail from Gianni Franchi at gianni.franchi@camden.gov.uk

We plan to review the evidence at an open meeting we will be holding on December 19th and if you would like to come and present your evidence we would welcome your input. We will need to know in advance if you plan to come to the meeting in person so that we can ensure that everybody that wishes to present evidence gets the opportunity to do so. Details of how to do this are included on our 'evidence form'

So if you have an issue about how services for disabled people are provided in Camden, or you wish to share your views please use this opportunity to do so.

**Councillor
Roger Robinson**



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