

12/Aug/2004

Improving the Life Chance of Disabled People

Dear Maria Eagle, Teresa Norman and colleagues at the Strategy Unit,

May I in the first instance thank you for what appears to have been an honestly thought out document and what appears also to have included the voices of many Disabled People.

In relation to our feedback as a small company of Disabled People carrying out Disability Equality Training for Inclusion DETI© and Access Consultancy, we would wish to bring to your attention some points.

The main point in relation to Language and its usage is 'Consistency'. Too often the document uses Disabilities (now considered by the majority of Disabled People as old hat even discriminatory) and Impairment which recognises that a person will have certain limitations, whether they be Physical, Sensory or Mental Health issues, but does NOT see these and or the person as the 'PROBLEM'. Language is one of the keys to making a more inclusive society – it is not about being precious or demonstrating pedantry. Attitudinal barriers are the biggest block facing Disabled People and when people are challenged about their use of language when dealing with Disabled People, sadly a defensive approach is often adopted and accusations of the above assertion are made.

In direct relation to the document, we are commenting on the shortened document of 35 pages (summary of main messages pdf 460 kbs).

Specifics

[Page 3 point 3](#) 'To assess the extent..... Disabled People are 'SUFFERING'

Whilst we accept that this is meant in a way that is unintentionally derogatory, it still implies that all Disabled People are Down Trodden and invokes the image of the Person in the street shaking the Charity Cup at passers by – better to suggest - dealing with, living with, working under, managing, etc.

[Page 7. 1st bullet point](#) Learning difficulties which is an excellent point and quite apt. Then the document goes on to [bullet - point 3](#) ...learning disabilities... Overall for page 7 we believe that this is where training comes in which includes Disabled People, which will inform, educate and in some instances remove some of the stigma that persists around being disabled. The current figure for example is 10 millions. Access-Auditors.Com would suggest that this figure is considerably higher as many, many people do not wish to associate with the label Disabled Person. Many people, for example with an hearing impairment do not see themselves as Disabled. In April 2003 we ran a Young Disabled persons' Forum in Essex and when contacting a mainstream school which has an hearing impairment section, to invite the young people to come along, we were informed,

'Oh no our young people wouldn't be interested in that as they are not disabled'

[Page 8](#) again consistency of language. What does it mean to be Severely Disabled? Is the Strategy Unit suggesting that there are statistics which clearly demonstrate that 1.m million are less discriminated against when compared with Moderately to etc...?

Throughout the document we see Medical and Social model intertwining. However, whilst the medical model in our opinion still has a role to play, it is the Social Model which Empowers and does not see the Disabled Person or their respective Impairment as the Problem.

Severely Impaired - Whether that be Physical, Mental or Sensory.

Moderately ditto

Mildly ditto

[Page 8 Socio Demographics-](#) please explain ...'mutual casualtiy'

Physical enviro ...healthy adults ...' To a person, in this office noone has had a days sickness leave in three years. We believe you mean ambulant or non Disabled People.

We agree with the final point on page 9 that things will take time and recognise the valued work some councils are doing in re: inclusive transport.

[Page 10 Socio Economic...](#) The first point necessitates Support for the Disabled Person whilst the second appears to be all about criteria.

The point on Attitudes is relevant as, notwithstanding the advances they have made in recent times, even the DRC do not like constructive criticism. Awareness for us is NOT the key, moreover, we advocate training along the lines of Inclusion, and we recognise further, that attitudes are amongst the most difficult items on the agenda of change.

Page 12 'Ensuring that disabling environments,

This we believe is very long term and would be best placed within the education system, for example that Segregation and indeed Integration are not acceptable 'norms'. Inclusion is the key, inclusion is the future.

Page 17 the document mentions the postcode lottery – a recent and much used new phrase. Our question is, 'Is this acceptable?' What are the reasons for not having Speech and Language therapists?

KEY Barriers Would not SENDA apply in all occasions relating to the access needs of a child within its school environment? Some parents are stuck in the Medical model mode of cure and all the baggage that goes with it. In re: co-ordination of services and information sharing, agencies we have consulted quote the Human Rights act and the Data Protection act. Should not anyone who works in this sphere of society be bound by a code of ethics and disclosure?

Potential solutions Clear English/or indeed, which ever language the person requires will benefit service users. Key worker should NOT be necessary. ... NEGOTIATE, services,,, what happened to the basis of NEED as apposed to want? This in our opinion could add to the bureaucracy.

Page 18 In if we get it right and if we get it wrong. The focus should be on the Disabled person. Yes the family should receive support and it is not about semantics, the focus needs to stay with the Child/person who has a need. If one re-reads this line under if we get it right...

... all their life chances, (INLCUDING)... Access-Auditors again would point what should be the obvious, and that is that the child/disabled person first then the support network be they Parent, Guardian or whom ever, following.

Same page18 – key issues to address.... Workforce issues.

Demonstrate the value of these roles.

We need a collective approach and responsibility.

Pigeon holing is unhelpful even with the best intentions. A move away from cure, may lead to a move away from dependency to supported independence

Page 19 - Key barriers point 2

We agree that PCP person Centred Planning is key but respecting that the Disabled Person should remain the focal point.

Page 20 - What are the key issues...

Continue to address and work with young people, involving them in the strategy of access needs, planning and decision making at ALL levels. Consider having a young person with or without a mentor at Connexions involved in all areas of development and tell everyone how well this is working and seek the opinions of other like minded individuals.

In re: peer support. We suggest and they possibly have already been, - consult the young people/service users direct.

Page 21 – The current situation –

We would have liked clarification on this as we do not understand the correlation between sickness and impairment.

Also Key Barriers –

Point 2 this is back to the Medical model and seeing the person as a problem to be solved, cured, fixed.

Page 22

Self inflicted ASIDE from Mental Health issues, is an wholly different topic and we are unclear as to how they have been categorised under impairment. We agree with the later point on the [Whole Self](#) which imbues a responsibility as opposed to a blame culture. Self Awareness would be part of the key for this.

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The current situation

[Point 6](#) ... strategy to INTEGRATE Disabled People.

Again this is part of the OVAL peg syndrome we have used in training. The peg is oval so if we shave a little more off, we will be able to MAKE it fit.

We sit on the State of the Sector Panel for the Home Office and have challenged on many occasions their wish to build a Just and TOLERANT Society.

Does that suggest that we now Tolerate Black People, Disabled People Irish People, People with a different Sexual Preference to us etc etc? We again suggest that we promote an INCLUSIVE Society which has a collective approach and responsibility to all its citizens regardless of Race, Colour, Religion, Orientation, Gender and so on – this includes, obviously anyone from any of the groups mentioned. We as Disabled People have responsibility too.

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If we get it wrong ...

Further segregation and marginalisation

... **Challenges to address?** Make agencies such as Access 2 Work less of a secret to both Employers and potential employees and in this instance Disabled People. The result of which will include Empowerment of Disabled People and giving Choice and Control where it counts.

Re: assessment procedures, this requires a rethink of the Data Protection act and Human Rights act as previously mentioned in this response.

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Potential Solutions

As lead trainers on Disability Equality Training for Inclusion this company believes that DETI© adds to the empowerment of staff, managers and directors alike and especially when the include Disabled People who perhaps have not heard of the Social Model. A must for all bodies, including all government departments and members themselves.

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Key issues

Point 1 - This is a multi network and several decade issue.

Point 2 - A Disabled Person should not be forced to employ a stranger to tend to their personal needs. They should be given Choice and Control over whom they have to meet their individual needs. Obviously the same right would apply to a loved one as to whether or not they would wish to become a Personal Assistant or not.

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Key barriers - Health Problems and Disabilities – Hopefully by this stage the message has been received in relation to consistency of language and how this is both empowering and is disempowering.

Reform of the Benefits System – In our view – A must – LOOK at what works where, how and why?

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... **key issues** - point 3 look at opt out/stay in the labour force – notwithstanding Europe's influence on this issue.

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Point 4 needs, views, aspirations ... effectively integrated ...

YES all of these INTEGRATED, but not people, People should be INLCUDED.

Point 7 is quite superb – thank you.

We at Access-Auditors would like to say, 'Thank you' to all at the Strategy Unit as well as Maria Eagle for the work thus far and for affording us an opportunity to appraise Government of our thoughts.

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