

# Subgroup on Access to Services for Disabled People

## Summary of Recommendations

### **Recommendations on Housing**

- H1 The TMO should take urgent steps to commission the DDA audit of access to its premises which has been pending for many months, and give a date for the completion of this exercise.
- H2 An up to date record should be kept of all adapted stock, within TMO as well as RSL managed properties, to make it easier to match supply to demand as speedily as possible. There appears to be little sense of the importance of such a register at present.
- H3 It would be desirable for the current medical points system, that is used to assess applicants for rehousing, to be replaced by a system that gave greater weight to factors that enabled the applicant to live independently.
- H4 It is disappointing that the revised housing allocations policy is not likely to increase the chances of disabled people being rehoused unless they meet other criteria. The Council should consider the possibility of setting an annual target for the release of adapted as well as suitable under-occupied premises in order to increase the availability of suitable housing for disabled people in housing need.
- H5 Housing and Adult Care should consider what options might be available for helping young disabled adults live more independently without breaking up families.
- H6 The need for specialist supported housing provision for physically disabled people should be further investigated and steps taken to meet it.
- H7 All housing organisations in the Royal Borough should seek to work to a common definition of disability adaptation in order to make it easier to set up the common register of adapted stock covering the whole borough referred to in the previous recommendation (H2 above).
- H8 There should a clear policy that all ground floor accommodation that has become vacant is assessed for accessibility and adaptability and allocated to people who have been assessed to need this type of accommodation.

- H9 The Borough should investigate whether it would be cost effective to employ an additional OT to speed up the process of assessing whether a property is suitable for adaptation.
- H10 The current application and decision making process for DFGs is cumbersome and inefficient, and does not take into account the capacity of many applicants to be able to undertake some of the work, instead of subcontracting it to a managing agent. The process should be reviewed and streamlined accordingly.
- H11 Following the lead of the Housing Corporation, consideration should be given to making Lifetime Homes Standard compulsory for all new homes in the Royal Borough.

### **Recommendations on Adult Social Care**

- AC1 The clients' own assessment of their needs should be recorded alongside that of the professional care worker.
- AC2 The provision of services should not be held up while a disputed assessment is being reviewed.
- AC3 The assessment process for people with physical impairments should focus on enabling them to live independently, regardless of age, as it does for people with learning disabilities.
- AC4 The current practice of assessing home care in 15 minutes blocks should be reviewed and a more realistic timeframe introduced.
- AC5 Support should be provided for people who are waiting for services to be commissioned.
- AC6 The work underway on individualised budgets is welcome and should be extended.
- AC7 Evidence of any adverse impact of PCT cuts on learning disability projects and preventive services (see section 9.13 of this report) should be collected and brought to the attention of the Health OSC.
- AC8 There should be more joined up work between Adult Care and Family and Children' services on providing support to disabled parents.
- AC9 Whatever happens to the Maxilla Centre in the future, a disabled parents support group should be retained.

## **Recommendations on Employment**

- E1 The Council as the largest employer in the borough should take a lead in the employment of disabled people and set an example to others. Average performance should not be taken as acceptable.
- E2 The Council should seek actively to seek out people with a disability to promote employment opportunities in the Council– for instance by placing advertisements in specialist publications written for a disabled readership.
- E3 The Council should do more to “fit the job to the person” – as Sutton Council appears to have done, recruiting disabled people and then slotting them into positions commensurate with their abilities
- E4 The Council should continue to subscribe to the Employment Service’s “Two Ticks” scheme but should not limit itself to this. It should be more imaginative and proactive in demonstrating its commitment to good practice – perhaps by organising open days in conjunction with partner organisations such as the Police and the local NHS.
- E5 There should be greater and more consistent use of Assistive Technologies to support the recruitment and retention of disabled people in RBKC.
- E6 There should there be a central budget to support the recruitment and retention of disabled people so as to remove any possible budgetary disincentive for managers to employ disabled people
- E7 The Council should review the work of Kensington Recruitment to assess whether it is achieving value for money.
- E8 More effort should be put into using the information that the Council has about the “facts of employing disabled people” in order to dispel myths and inform, encourage and incentivise managers to employ disabled people.
- E9 The Council should consider allocating more funds to establish work based projects that would provide support to those disabled people that want to work, but are not ready for open paid employment.
- E10 The Council should develop a clear strategy in relation to the employment of disabled people and include this in the Borough's Disability Equality Scheme.
- E11 The Council should consider ring fencing positions and only recruiting disabled people into them.
- E12 The Council should investigate the feasibility of job carving (carving a job out of existing jobs to match the skills of a disabled person) in order to create opportunities for disabled people. This should be

done in such a way that it does not increase the overall staffing budget within the Council.

- E13 Kensington Recruitment should be proactive in working with RBKC managers to raise their awareness of disability issues and the Council's ambitions in this area, provide information on what advice and help is available, promote the benefits of employing people with disability, and advise on developing employment and placement opportunities for disabled people with the Council.
- E14 Connexions should put more effort into developing work experience and work placement opportunities for disabled young people and get more people into employment rather than training.

### **Recommendations for the Leisure and Library services**

- L1 The Subgroup welcomed the efforts to make the leisure services contractor Cannons, focus on issues of equalities and the inclusion of disabled people. Raising awareness of disability issues should be part of staff induction and individual development plans, and disabled users should be encouraged to contribute towards the development of services at the Centres.
- L2 The borough's Sports Strategy should be developed in close consultation with disabled people, taking their needs into account, and set out clear pathways and targets for increasing their participation in sports. This should include a strategy for increasing the range of accessible sports in the borough. This is particularly important and opportune as we approach the 2012 Olympics.
- L3 Consultation should take place with parents of disabled children on how facilities at parks and open spaces could be improved for disabled children.
- L4 Consideration should be given to introducing audio descriptions for leisure facilities that do not already have them.
- L5 The libraries service should offer work placements to disabled people to help see the library service from their perspective and to promote in them a sense of ownership of the service.
- L6 The library service should act on DDA access audits which have prioritised actions.
- L7 The library service should continue with staff training and ensure refresher courses are part of core training.
- L8 The Library service should raise awareness of what is available – part of the problem is that disabled people are not aware of the resources we have available.

- L9 The Library service should work in partnership with local disabled organisations where Libraries might offer space for activities in return for advice and involvement in service development.
- L10 The Subgroup welcomed the partnership between the Council and “Disabled Go” to develop an on-line access guide for disabled people to local facilities in the borough.
- L11 The Subgroup was of the view that local disabled people should be closely involved in taking decisions on the content and design of the guide. Every practical effort should be made to recruit and train local disabled people as surveyors for the guide.
- L12 The project has an important role in increasing the awareness of local businesses regarding the potential benefits of attracting more disabled customers. Consideration should be given to the setting up of “Good Access Awards” for local business that could be used as a vehicle to publicise and promote good practice.

### **Recommendations on Equalities**

- Eq1 The Subgroup welcomed the Council’s announcement in October 2006 to offer free British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting service on demand at Kensington Town Hall. However, the Council should consider providing BSL training to its staff to make its services more accessible to the deaf community.
- Eq2 The Council should consider setting up a central database of the individual needs of disabled staff in order to develop an “organisational memory” on such matters.
- Eq3 The Council should consider employing a disability officer to arrange individual assessment for equipment and other support for its staff.
- Eq4 The Council should consider offering alternative benefits to staff who do not use the travelcard scheme.

### **Recommendations on access to Council buildings**

- Pa1 It is disappointing that less than half of the Council’s buildings to which public has access meet basic access needs (i.e.: score good or excellent) in relation to the Council’s own local performance indicator. Measured against the national performance indicator, this score is even lower at 24%.
- Pa2 It is encouraging that the Council is systematically undertaking access audits of all its operational premises that result in a plan of action for improving access to them. However the Subgroup is concerned that the lack of a central ring fenced budget to pay for

access improvements may lead to important improvement being postponed because of competing pressures on Business Group budgets. The Subgroup recommends that a central ring fenced budget should be created to pay for access improvements to premises.

- Pa3 Action to improve disabled access to RBKC premises does not appear to be sufficiently well co-ordinated across the Council. One option would be for the Facilities Management Group to take responsibility for driving this agenda and for making sure that access improvements take place consistently across all services and business groups.
- Pa4 A Cabinet Member should be given responsibility for championing disability issues in the Council.
- Pa5 The availability of disabled parking should be considered alongside disabled access to buildings.
- Pa6 Public lavatories classified as poor should be upgraded over a period of time to make them accessible to disabled people and this should be built into the budget planning cycle.
- Pa7 A “Good Loo Guide” should be produced with information on public lavatories in each locality with disabled access.
- Pa8 There is a great need for at least three loos located north south and central which are larger and have changing facilities for people with severe physical/learning disabilities. At the moment those people cannot go out for longer than two hours, which additional to transport issues means they cannot venture very far from home

## **Recommendations on Transport**

- T1 Arrangements for consulting with disabled people on transport issues should be enhanced, perhaps through creating a disabled user group representing the full spectrum of the local disabled population, to inform the development, implementation and evaluation of transport.
- T2 Adult Social Care should include the transport and mobility needs of disabled people when making assessments within the new system of promoting independent living. One example would be to include the use of escorts to help people with learning disabilities to learn and be comfortable with their travel routes.
- T3 The PCT and local hospitals should be asked to look at more flexible ways of using their budgets to meet individual needs such as allocating resources to local authorities for taxi-cards or other transport services.
- T4 The setting up of the Scooter Loan Pilot Scheme in the Royal Borough is very welcome. The scheme offers a valuable addition to the transport options available to disabled people in the borough, particularly in relation to accessing local shopping and leisure facilities. Although this is clearly a worthwhile scheme, and public awareness takes time to build up, the Subgroup was surprised at the relatively low take-up of the scheme (74 people over 9 months). The amount spent on promotion and publicity (£400) seems to be low for a scheme that relies on disabled people being aware of its existence. More effort in this direction could be cost efficient in terms of significantly increasing uptake of the scheme.
- T5 The Council's recent announcement to work with the central London boroughs to look at introducing a single central London badge scheme to improve accessibility is welcome. Purple badge holders (and their equivalents in other central London boroughs) should be able to use their badges in any of the central London boroughs operating such a scheme. At present there are too many complications and a more simplified scheme is needed.
- T6 Given that the Royal Borough attracts a large number of visitors, and has some nationally renowned specialist hospitals, ways of achieving greater uniformity in parking schemes nationally should be investigated so that visitors could be confident of what to expect.
- T7 The existing system should be changed so that it becomes possible to collect blue and purple badges from other Council offices and premises in addition to the Town Hall.
- T8 Transport for London should ensure that the ramps on buses are kept in good working order and that bus drivers are appropriately trained and instructed to assist disabled passengers. Greater

emphasis should be given to developing audible announcement on buses and bus stops.

- T9 More information in visual form about delays, or other changes to services should be provided by TfL to help those who cannot hear announcements.
- T10 The Public Transport and Road Safety Advisory Group should be formally asked to make representations to TfL to enhance disability awareness training for their staff.
- T11 Specific improvements could be made to help people with sensory impairments by providing visual information boards at all stations, having more staff to assist particularly at problem stations such as Northern Line stations with central platforms, and providing more information about routes and services such as times when stations are manned and which stations have lifts.

### **Recommendations on the Built Environment and Planning**

- P1 The Subgroup welcomed the Council's commitment to making its streetscape accessible to all sections of the community including disabled people. A positive development is the target of introducing "white light" to all residential areas by 2010.
- P2 The Subgroup noted that despite this commitment to equal access, considerable work was still needed to bring the streetscape in some areas of the borough to the standard that would provide the desired equal access for disabled people. The Subgroup endorsed *Inclusive Kensington and Chelsea's* recommendations in the following areas:
  - a. Any new streetscape development should be subject to in-depth consultation with disabled people,
  - b. People with visual impairments should be consulted on the use of tactile pavements, warnings and lighting,
  - c. A system should be set up for monitoring and reporting by residents of obstructions to roads and pavements, which should be subject to a rapid response by the Council and its contractors,
  - d. All drop curbs should be in line with the recommended gradient.
- P3 The Subgroup was pleased to note that the Council had made Access a central theme in the development of its LDF and had appointed an Access Officer as long ago as August 2003. From the evidence presented, it was clear that the Access Officer had made a significant contribution to the development of good practice guides and the training of staff. Her expertise had been used to assess the quality of Access Statements, and to advise applicants on how to improve them.

- P4 The Subgroup was therefore puzzled and very concerned to hear that from August 2006 the Access Officer had been moved from the Planning Department to the Corporate centre, and even more importantly, that in future she would have no role in advising the Planning Department on access issues. The Subgroup has no issue with the Council using the Access Officer to improve access to its own premises for its service users and staff, but the loss of her expertise at Planning, where so much more needs to be done as evidenced in the recent ADKC report, is regrettable and should be remedied.
- P5 The Council should seek to use S106 agreements more systematically to achieve inclusive environments as a matter of priority.
- P6 The Council should consider using planning permission more proactively as a tool for ensuring wider access to local facilities for disabled people.
- P7 The format of planning applications should be amended to make applicants think proactively about inclusive design, as recommended in the DCLG's Good Practice guide.
- P8 Training on disability access issues should be ongoing and all planning officers should attend a refresher course at least once a year.
- P9 Designated planning officers should have responsibility for liaising with local access groups and feeding back any changes to planning practices as a result of any consultation with such groups.
- P10 The Council should consider monitoring accessibility in new developments in the Royal Borough.