

Taunton Deane Disability Discussion Group
22nd January 2008

Group Facilitated by Mandy Seaman – Compass Disability Services, SAIN Project Coordinator.

1.0 Introductions

Mandy Seaman opened the meeting with apologies from Harry Connery at Taunton Deane Borough Council and The Somerset Waste Partnership who were unable to attend. Discussions will continue in order for the Waste Partnership to attend in future and a copy of the information from this meeting will be sent for comment.

2.0 Building Control

For the first part of the meeting Ed Norton – Principal Building Control Surveyor and Access Officer for Taunton Deane Borough Council, provided a presentation on the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and his role at the Council to advise those providing public services in the Taunton Deane area of their responsibilities under the act.

A copy of the presentation is enclosed. Ed is a member of the South West Access Forum.

The Taunton Deane Disability Forum also reviews planning applications regarding access. For more information on this group please contact David Atkinson on 01823 282712.

The Disability Discrimination Act provides for reasonable adjustment to be made to allow access to public buildings for disabled people. This may not be possible in the case of listed buildings, further investigations will be made on this and reported back.

A discussion then took place concerning the term reasonable and what people think it should mean, one suggestion was ‘where both sides reach an agreement’.

In the case of council owned homes, it is up to the occupational therapist to work together with the council under guidance to decide what adjustments can be made. Building regulations need to be considered.

Access issues that people had experienced in the town centre were discussed where dropped kerbs were considered not to be low enough. One location given was at the front of Debenhams. Issues such as this should be directed to Somerset County Councils Highways department.

Taunton Deane Borough Councils own reception area was highlighted as being poorly lit for people with visual impairments. This is something which has been highlighted in the Councils Action Plan. Yellow marks on the edge of steps are useful for some people.

Contrasting surroundings should also be considered for visual impairments. Compass Disability's' reception toilet was mentioned as not having contrasting surroundings. The management are aware of this and will be incorporating this into future maintenance programmes.

Ed Norton explained that he has written to all public buildings in the Wellington/Taunton Deane area and the chamber of commerce explaining their obligations under the DDA. Ed recommended that those in charge of public buildings carried out access audits. The Centre for Accessible Environments were noted as providing a pack to assist people to carry out an access audit for approx. £30. Their contact details can be found below;

**Centre for the Accessible Environments and the Access Lab
70 South Lambeth Road
London
SW8 1RL**

Tel/textphone: 020 7840 0125

Fax: 020 7840 5811

SMS: 07921 700098

Email:info@cae.org.uk

A member asked who you would need to speak to regarding a disabled parking bay outside your own home. Somerset County Councils Highways Dept need to be contacted for this on 0845 345 9155.

3.0 Waste

A representative from the Somerset Waste Partnership was unable to attend the meeting. It was therefore agreed that the specific points concerning waste would be summarised and sent to the Partnership for a response. These are detailed below;

Long life Light Bulbs – where and how should these be disposed of?

Clinical Waste – how do you obtain a bin for clinical waste?

Plastic Segregation if it goes to Landfill why the need to segregate.

Animal Waste is there another method for disposal if we will be charged by weight in future.

Bishops Lydeard – recycling box and food bin has to be paid for if broken – is this correct.

Segregation plastic and recycling – can bins be provided more centrally in rural places such as Bishops Lydeard for people who do not have their own transport.

Batteries – small alkaline cell type, where can these be disposed of. Some reported that they have been taken in the green box in certain areas.

Can electrical plugs be recycled?

If people are going to be fined for failing to segregate their waste does this mean people with mental health issues and other disabilities will be fined as waste segregation is a problem for them.

A person on the “assisted list for bins” reported that the recycling service is great, they always empty the respective bins and put them back in the same place, however with the wheelie bin service they empty the bin but do not return it to the garden, sometimes it is left further down the road (up to 4 doors away). They have complained to Taunton Deane from time to time, but have now resolved to phone them every time it happens because still nothing has improved. Taunton Deane advise that the message will be passed on to waste disposal.

At a previous meeting of this group, customer service representatives from Taunton Deane Borough Council took back with them specific problems people had with waste collection. It was noted that these were acted upon and things had improved. Contact details for Customer Service are:

Telephone 01823 356356 or you can complete a complaint form online at www.tauntondeane.gov.uk. Or visit the Council offices in person.

4.0 Other Issues

For the last part of meeting the group were asked the type of information they would like to receive at future meetings. These are summarised below;

Access to education – for example, Learn Direct, Adult Learning & Leisure.

Benefit information – Possibly Citizens Advice.

Mobility Scooters – Legislative information.

Voluntary working – Possibly CVS

Musgrove hospital – Access/parking

Sports facilities – Wellington Sports Centre is accessible,

Wellsprings have combined baby changing and disabled toilets

which means toilets become very busy. Taunton junior pool – need for changing rooms and pool assistance.

Encourage different agencies to work together regarding care packages and rehabilitation/fitness needs particularly on discharge from hospital.

Minutes compiled by Mandy Seaman

Somerset Access and Inclusion Network

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