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## **A question of independence: What future for disabled people?**

**Wednesday 8 May 2013**

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### **BRIEFING**

A total of 24 people attended the seminar on 8<sup>th</sup> May. The aims were to:

- Understand the changes to the welfare system which impacts on people with disabilities
- Identify concerns and
- Seek a way forward to address some of the concerns,

#### **Key points raised**

- Fit for work assessments can fail disabled people
- National statistics back the evidence that the impact of the welfare cuts on the disabled is unfair
- Disabled people recognise these are new times and that adjustments need to be made but need to be made in a fair way.
- There is some evidence to show that it is getting more difficult for disabled people to get access funding. More local evidence is required on this so a national picture can be painted.

#### **Assessments**

- People going for fit for work assessments suffer additional stress by simply going through the process of assessment. Some disabled people at the event spoke of feeling more stressed because they are unsure of how long they will remain on personal independence payments - it is the not knowing that causes the stress.
- There is some evidence to show that some assessment centres have improved the way they work with and assess disabled people but there is still a way to go.
- Three disabled people at the event stated that the time spent in assessments was not long enough. Also people are not aware they can bring their own medical evidence one disabled person stated that the assessor did not pay attention to the medical evidence she brought.
- One disabled person at the event highlighted her case where she was assessed and placed in the work related group. However she has a condition which is not visibly evident for much

of the time and can depend on how she is feeling on that day. She now sometimes has difficulty getting out of bed to go to the job centre and has missed appointments. She states that she is too scared to appeal

## **Employment**

- Two disabled people stated that when they suggested to the social worker that they may want to work they then feel pushed by the social worker to find work. The social worker does not realize that this may be the start of a journey for a disabled person and will take some time to gather the confidence and support required for this to happen.
- There are extra burdens and pressures placed on disabled people in the workplace.

## **Housing**

- There is not enough accessible housing for disabled people and so causes difficult for disabled people.

## **Questions raised**

- How will personal independence payments tie in financially with people's care package and the personalisation agenda? – There seems to be a lack of information on this at local and national level.
  - Can council work in a productive way with ADKC around direct payments. Being involved all the way through not just engagement but co production.
  - Can information from the GLA be fed into ADKC particularly around legal requirements?
  - Disabled people have experienced problems with evidence of ramps not working when required. Bus drivers are supposed to test bus ramps before leaving the depot but this is not happening consistently. Is there a way that transport for London can get the message to bus companies to ensure a consistent approach to ensuring bus ramps are working before leaving the depot?
  - South Kensington leveled pavements in just 28 days. The council kept its promise to do this after scouting the area with a wheelchair user. Could this happen across the whole borough?
  - Disabled people with ESOL face multiple barriers. Can ADKC ensure they engage with BME disabled people and ensure their views feed into their campaigns and issues?
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