

Pat Russell – Head of the Office for Disability Issues

Pat started the meeting by telling everyone the plan for the day. She told everyone that this meeting would mainly be about the review of the Forum.



It would be a chance for members to share with the rest of the Forum what they had already talked about in their one to one meetings with the Office for Disability Issues.



Mark Harper – Minister of State for Disabled People

- The Minister welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their time and what they had brought to the Forum over the past year.



He talked about how important he thinks it is for the government to work with disabled people and their organisations. He said that the Forum is a good way of working together and that it could be made even better.



- The Minister asked members to say what they think about how the Forum had worked. He also asked for ideas about what could have been done differently. He said that when a new policy is being thought about, government departments should share their ideas from the beginning.



- He talked about the decision not to put in place a Fulfilling Potential Advice Service. He felt that this was not now needed and could be done by linking in with disabled people when policies are first being thought about. The Forum would be one way for disabled people to give advice to the government.



Members said the following:

- Government departments need to make sure that they think about the words used for people with a learning disability and whether they are accessible. They said that Mencap had done a good job on the documents that they had put into Easy Read.



- There are barriers for Disabled People's User Led Organisations and other voluntary organisations in **local commissioning**. The Minister said that working together on **commissioning** would be helpful. He said that his **cross-government Ministerial Group** could take this forward in the future.



Local commissioning: this is the way that services are planned and bought into a local area by the local authority.

Cross-Departmental Ministerial Group: this is a group made up of people from different government departments. It aims to make sure that disabled people are a part of society and can reach their goals.

- Disabled people need to be a part of putting together policies on **devolution**. The Minister agreed that linking in with disabled people was needed before any policies are decided.



Devolution: in this document this means giving more powers from the UK parliament in London, to parliaments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

- Was it right to make the Office for Disability Issues a part of the Department for Work and Pensions? Or should the Office for Disability Issues be a part of another government department? The Minister said that he thought it was best to be part of the Department for Work and Pensions.



He said this is because they are a big department that spend a lot of money and have a place in **Cabinet**. He said he thought this made the Office for Disability Issues stronger and meant they could use Department for Work and Pension **resources** to support it.



Cabinet: the Cabinet is made up of top members of government departments. Every week during Parliament, members of the Cabinet meet with the Prime Minister to talk about the governments most important issues.

Resources: here, this means, the funds, staff and other useful things that the Department for Work and Pensions have. These can be used by the Office for Disability Issues to make sure that it works well.

- Changes to the Disabled Students Allowance were talked about. The Minister said that as far as he knew, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills had not linked in with **stakeholders** about this. He will therefore put this forward to them so that they do this.



Stakeholder: this is a person or organisation with an interest in an area or decision. In this case it is people or organisations with an interest in the Disabled Students Allowance.

- The amount of time it takes to get accessible formats was talked about. The Minister agreed that sometimes getting accessible formats can be difficult and sometimes it is because people are trying to get it perfect.



He knows that the NHS was working on an accessible communication standard, these are rules around accessible information, that health and social care organisations must follow by law. This took a year to put together and will be shared by the NHS soon.



After the Minister left, members talked about the most important points for the future. They talked about the following things:

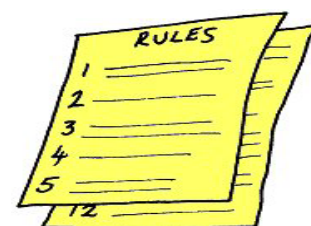
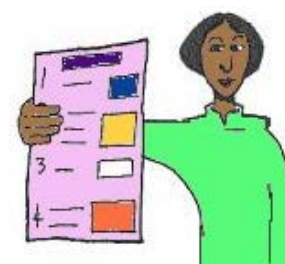
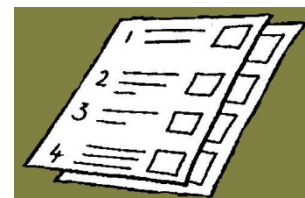
- Benefits – **welfare reform**
- The Care Act and the extra resources needed to carry this out
- Accessible Communication
- Extra **duties** for local government to carry out
- When policy areas are talked about at parliament, it is important that Ministers go to parliament. This is very important when the policy area comes under a Ministers government department.



Welfare reform: these are changes to the way that the government spends money on health, social care, benefits, housing and other support given to people.

Duties: here, these are things that the local government must do by law.

- Look at the ways of dealing with problems and not the problems themselves
- It would be good if the Forum have areas that they will look at, these can be called topics
- 4 times each year before the Forum meetings start, the Forum should set an area that will be looked at over the next 3 months. This should be for all parts of the UK so that they can get information from local people and organisations, and feedback
- There should be a set of rules about how to make sure disabled people can take part in making policy
- More should be done to make sure that disability is a part of policy around **commissioning**. This is to make sure that disability organisations can take part more, in **commissioning**.

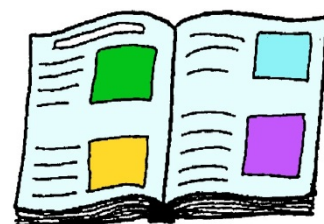


Commissioning: this is the way that services are planned and bought by the local authority or the national government.

Extra Costs Commission Report

Extra Costs Commission: this is a group that was set up to look at the extra costs that disabled people and their families face.

- **Anna Bird from Scope** talked about a report on the 'Extra Costs Commission'. It showed the extra costs faced by disabled people.



The report is a consultation document and Anna asked members of the Forum to give some feedback on the findings and ideas.



She also asked members about how to link in with Disabled People's Organisations and User Led Organisations to take forward some of the ideas given during the consultation.



Talking about the Forum Review;

During the afternoon the Forum talked about three questions:

1. What is the Forum here to do and are we doing it?

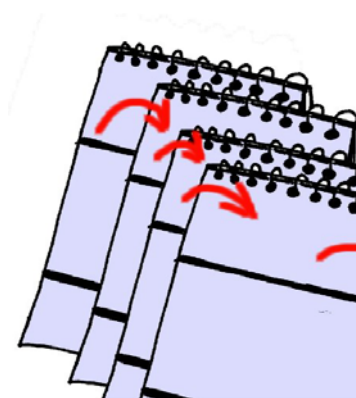


Some of the things said are below:

- Members need feedback from the issues talked about
- It will depend on the main plans of the next Government. It might be better to wait until that is clear
- There had been a good change in how the new Minister was linking in with disabled people
- Maybe we should be more like a think tank, this means a group of experts giving advice and ideas
- Is it possible for the group to have more say about what does on the meeting agendas



- The Forum started late in the last government so most policy decisions had already been made and put into place without the Forum being part of this. At least with the next government we will have the whole 5 years ahead



- The next time the Forum meets there is likely to be a new minister, this will make it a perfect time to give ideas about the future of the Forum and how to get results



2. Who: Are the members of the Forum the right people?

We could invite the people below:

- Young disabled people
- Young carers
- People with epilepsy
- People with dementia
- National Survivor User Networks (NSUN) should be invited to join the Forum
- Inviting other organisations to the group could be good, and not just Government organisations.



Size of the Forum:

- Most people said that the size is about right and the Forum is made up of the right people
- Disabled People's User Led Organisations need an equal voice and access to Ministers. However, it is important that the larger charities are also at the Forum. This is because they are able to fundraise and have money for things such as research



Devolved: this means people taking part from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

- Most people felt that it was useful to have people from the whole of the UK



What about bringing in experts for some areas?

- Could do a review about the skills of Forum members, this can also be called a skills audit
- People from University Research Departments could be a part of the Forum



- The Equality and Human Rights Commission should be invited to come to a future Forum meeting and give information
- Academics should be thought about for future Forums, these are people who have studied a lot, usually at university and know a lot about the area that they have studied.
- Young ambassadors need to be heard, these are young people that work to set an example for other young people. We should think about inviting them to the Forum



3. How can we make sure that they Forum works well?

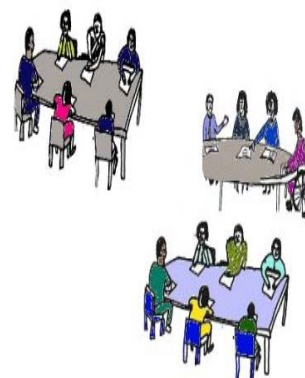
- Forum members could chair meetings and help to put the agenda together



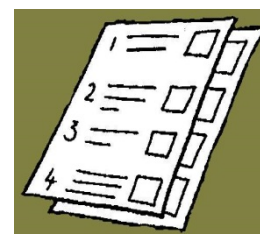
To make the Forum's advice more useful, rather than having to wait for the next meeting, we could make use of:



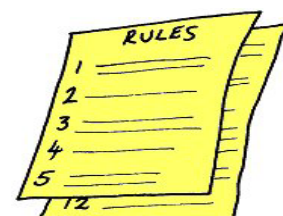
- Sub-Groups could be set up to take away and work on issues. The sub-group could then bring information back to the Forum for a decision to be made. This would make meetings of the Forum clearer and mean that the group could set its own agenda



- What the Forum wants to do needs to be clear and the issues need to be put in order of how important they are



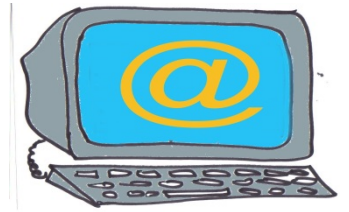
- Should decide on a 'code of practice', these are rules about how people should behave at the Forum. Or 'roles and responsibilities', this is information about what a person must do as a member of the Forum.



Part of this should be an agreement about confidentiality, this means keeping important information from Forum meetings private. It should also have information about how often people must come to meetings and how to let the Forum know if you are not able to come to a meeting.



Could link up and work in between meetings by email - an online group could be set up



- Email updates



Conclusion

Pat Russell thanked Forum members for what they had said and their ideas. These will be used as advice that will be given to the next Minister after the Election.



People who came to the Forum meeting

Jill Allen-King – National Federation of the Blind

June Best – Northern Ireland Ambassador

Kieran Bright – Disabled People's User Led Organisation, South West Region

Dan Burden – Spinal Injuries Association

David Buxton – British Deaf Association

Anna Bird - Scope

Louise Cotelo Redford (observer) from Mencap

Rhian Davies – Disability Wales

Mick Dillon – Disabled People's User Led Organisation, East Region

Kevin Doherty – Disability Action Northern Ireland

Diana Foster – Disabled People's User Led Organisation, Yorks and Humberside Region

Stacey Hemington – Disabled People's User Led Organisation, North West Region

Theresa Hodge – Disabled People's User Led Organisation, South East Region

Barry Horne – English Federation of Disability Sport



Hugh Huddy – Royal National Institute of Blind People

Andy Kempster - MIND

Pete Millington – Disabled People’s User Led
Organisation, West Midlands Region

Alan Milner - Mencap

Tim Nicholls – National Autistic Society

Guy Parkhar – Leonard Cheshire

Paula Reid – Rethink Mental Illness

Lauren Robinson – Disabled People’s User Led
Organisation, North East Region

Joanne Sawyer – Age UK

Liz Sayce – Disability Rights UK

Charley Streater - BLESMA

Roger Wickes – Action on Hearing Loss

Sally Witcher – Inclusion Scotland