

# **World Café Event July 2006**

## **Summary of issues raised**

A wide range of issues were raised and information gathered at the event. Attendees were asked to write comments and ideas onto the table cloths, and afterwards these were gathered together and put into themes by the Equality Officers from each of the partnership organisations.

Here is a summary of the information that was recorded:

### **Employment**

The accessibility of the working environment is an important consideration to disabled people in employment. Although there was awareness of the 'Access to Work scheme' people were concerned that it is financed capped especially in the private sector.

The benefits system was given as a barrier to employment and suggestions were made that organisations in the Borough should offer more voluntary work opportunities for disabled people.

### **Retail and Private Sector**

There was a general consensus that the larger retail outlets in the town were accessible with wide aisles and large changing rooms. Some shops don't have the wide aisles and automatic doors. The people in the shops are considered friendly and helpful, however it was felt that in some shops there wasn't always help available and there is a lack of disability awareness amongst staff.

People would like to see the 'A boards' on the footpaths outside shops removed.

## **Parking**

A lot of comments were made relating to accessible parking in Bolton. Misuse of accessible car parking bays and the blue badge scheme received much discussion. The location of accessible bays was also considered an issue, and the conflict between loading bays and accessible parking bays. The parking at Royal Bolton Hospital was raised as a specific issue.

## **Waste Management**

The waste collection service was raised as a specific service which should consider disabled people needs.

## **Training and Development**

Mental health was considered to be an area where there was a lack of understanding and knowledge amongst public facing staff and services providers.

People felt irritated by others making assumptions about their disability, and what they can and can't do, and prefer to be seen as an individual person instead of being labelled by their disability.

## **Public Conveniences**

People felt accessible public toilets can have an effect on how a town is perceived. Concern was expressed on the provision of accessible toilets in the town centre during the daytime and in the evening.

## **Attitudes**

Generally people felt that Bolton Council had a positive attitude towards disabled people and there has been improvements made over the years.

## **Leisure Facilities**

Access and cost were considered important factors for disabled people using leisure facilities. Swimming pools, water facilities and green areas were specifically mentioned. Positive comments were made on the pleasant environment of Bolton Town Centre and the accessibility of the museum and libraries.

## **Transport**

Comments were made on the accessibility of bus and train services, and the variation in the level of service provided by different companies. The concessionary travel pass and travel vouchers for disabled people were discussed.

Issues relating to the accessibility of the highway were raised.

## **Housing**

Consultation with disabled tenants and the provision of accessible housing were considered as important issues.

## **Communications and Marketing**

Organisations such as Bolton Council are considered to have the power to promote a positive image of disabled people and raise the awareness of disability related issues.

## **Information**

World Café attendees were keen that the information gathered from the event would be used effectively and any outcomes fed back to them at a later date.

Information on how and where to pass on comments and complaints relating to service provision was important to disabled people, as well as where to get information on entitlements and benefits.

## **Mental Health**

An effective mental health support network exists in Bolton but people felt there is a lack of awareness of mental health issues amongst others which needs to be addressed.

## **Education**

People considered access to good quality inclusive educational facilities important. The closing of Clarence Street College and paying for exam fees were raised as specific issues.

## **Town Centre Access**

Issues raised under this theme related to how accessible the environment in the town centre is for disabled people. It was generally felt that improvements are being made but the number of dropped kerbs and A boards on the footpaths are specific issues that need to be addressed.

## **Benefits**

Benefits can be a barrier to disabled people taking up employment opportunities.

## **Shop Mobility**

People felt that shop mobility should be available for longer hours.

## **Consultation and Involvement**

Overall there was agreement that disabled people should be consulted and involved before decisions are made, and feed back given on the results and reasons why actions have been taken.

There was a general feeling that if the main decision makers, such as Councillors and Chief Officers take part in consultation processes a better outcome will be achieved.

Existing systems, processes and networks should be used for consultation purposes such disabled employees and the voluntary sector networks.

JC/FT/2006 07