



Skillnet Group
Achieve Equality

Update from the Regional and National Forums June 2016



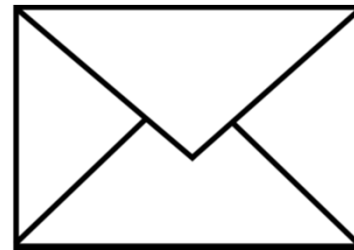
South East Regional Forum

- We held a successful Regional Forum at The Waterloo Action Centre in London on the 9th May.
- People came from across the region. We will be working over the next few months to engage more people in the Forum's work.
- The next Regional Forum is going to be in mid September.



South East Regional Forum

- We have set up a Facebook page to reach more people, the link is
- www.facebook.com/groups/southeastforum/
- We have regular correspondence with people through email, contact either Tina or Holly to be added to the mailing list on
- tina.walker@skillnetgroup.co.uk or holly.smith@skillnetgroup.co.uk



The National Forum

- The National Forum Action Plan has identified three areas to work on they are
- **Having a Voice**
- **Keeping Safe**
- **Benefits and work**



Having a Voice:



- The National Forum would like us to find out about advocacy in our Region.
- What is going well and what isn't working?
- How many self advocacy groups are there now compared to involvement groups?
- Do self advocacy groups support people with complex needs?

- We have been asked to gather examples from peoples personal experience of good advocacy and what the situation is for self advocacy groups now i.e budget cuts or lack of service, how is this affecting people?



Can you help us gather this information?

Keeping Safe



- The foundation for people with learning disabilities is doing some research on disability hate crime.
- They have done a survey to find out what work groups are doing and what is working well and will meet with 10 different hate crime projects nationally.
- The Foundation will write a report which they will present to the government in March 2017.
- Jill Davies from the Foundation would like to work with each Region to run an event launching the research. Would we like to host this in our Region?

Benefits and work



Department
for Work &
Pensions

- Members from the National Forum and National Valuing Families Forum will meet quarterly with Amanda Wadsworth from the DWP.
- Amanda said she is the representative for work and not benefits so was not able to answer all of our questions but said she would pass to the relevant person in the department.
- Forum members asked that a representative from DWP who specialises in benefits be at the meetings to answer peoples questions.

- Both National Forums are putting together a paper about the cuts and how they are affecting people. Each region has been asked to gather 2 – 3 stories of individuals experiences of the cuts to be given as evidence on the paper. We have a form to send out to people.



Can you help us gather this information?

Question Time with the Care Minister

Alistair Burt

Money/ Cuts



- The Minister explained that it all comes from the same pot – taxes and has to pay for health, welfare, pensions, police etc
- Someone has to make a decision as to where to spend it.
- Things are better for people than they used to be some years ago.
- Everyone wants more resource but it can't be provided.

- Responsibility has gone to local areas and government is not responsible for the choices local councils make.
- Organisations will have to look at ways to raise money themselves.
- **The Minister was asked why he voted for the £30 cut to ESA**
- He said that the extra benefit going in to the hand wasn't making that much difference to people gaining employment.



- Instead they would be paying the money to employers to encourage them to support people into the work place and to job centres where there will be specialist disability advisors.
- He said we know that individual support makes a difference but we can't afford it for everyone.
- By using the benefit in a different way it is hoped there will be more support for people to gain work.



- A member of the forum asked what support will be given to people with more of a difficulty or disability who it might be harder to find work for.
- The Minister said that the Department of Health and the Department of Work and Pensions will be working together to reduce the employment gap and that the government has a commitment to halve this. He invited the Forums to measure their progress.



Mazars

- The minister said there should be the same standards of care for everyone.
- There have been changes in the board at Southern Health and the House was having a debate about Southern Health and Carers on Thursday 9th June. The minister invited the Forums to follow this and said more should be done to support whistle-blowers and educate staff.



- Connor Sparrowhawk's mum Sarah was at the meeting and afterwards thanked the Forums for their support with this.
- My Life My Choice have created a letter template for people to send to their MP's to call for action and raise awareness. We will be sending this out to the region.



Report on the Equality Act

- The House of Lords Select Committee has released a report on the Equality Act 2010 and has concluded that the Government is failing in its duty of care to disabled people.

 HOUSE OF LORDS
Equality Act committee



- From taxi drivers refusing to take disabled people, to "disgraceful" accessibility at sports grounds, to pubs and clubs failing to provide disabled toilets, the report, entitled 'The Equality Act 2010: the impact on disabled people', says practice in all areas must be improved.
- You can request an easy read paper version of the report by calling 02072194384 or download from
- <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/equality-act/Web-accessible-ER-EA2010-report.pdf>
- There is a short accessible film on You Tube titled 'Disability report | Equality Act 2010 and Disability Committee | Lords | BSL'

The report states that the government must:

- Make sure the equality act works better for disabled people.
- Make sure that information is accessible
- Equality impact assessments should look at things that make it more difficult for people to use tribunals and the courts
- The Forum called for more training in this.
- ‘Knowing our rights and challenging discrimination’.



What do you think? What do you want to do about it?

- The National Forum have asked us to share the report with our networks, CCGs and partnership boards to find out what people think and what they would like to do about it.
- Does our partnership board have an equality policy?

