



Report of the October 29, 2008, meeting of East Lothian Equality Forum in Tynepark Resource Centre.

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Who was there:

Alex Donnally	Service User MS Society
Rikki Richardson	Service User
Alan Brown	JPG Representative
Val Vincent	JPG Representative
Phyllis Wilson	Carers of East Lothian
Carrie Poole	Local Area Co-ordinator
Jim Goddard	Carer
Joyce Cattanach	Headway
Lesley Aitkenhead	ELCCF Development Manager
George Paterson	ELCCF Information Worker

PDSI Strategy:

Lesley reported on the progress of the Strategy, now a document of some size, which is still being worked on by the Planning Group. Comments by the Forum have been embraced within the Strategy. The Forum will have a chance to see a near final draft of the document before it goes to the Chief Officers Group.

Eligibility criteria:

East Lothian Council's 'temporary' policy on eligibility criteria was drawn up without consultation with the Forum, but was in danger of being permanently embedded.

At a recent service users' meeting, there had been a chance to gather opinion on issues and present them to the Council's Nigel Porter, who had been on hand to hear views expressed.

Visit the Equality Forum on the web at www.elccf.org/forumeq.asp

His response and summary of the issues raised was brought up at the Forum meeting.

Nigel had taken on board many of the points.

Domiciliary care, the way it was managed, and the liaison between staff and service user were bones of contention from Forum members.



Domiciliary care is a hot topic.

"I had two people turn up at our house unannounced determined to tell us that my wife could have a home help on a Tuesday or a Thursday.

"If somebody's needs have markedly changed, that's okay... nobody should have any issue with that - and there's no clarity as to what right of appeal you may have to the decision.

"A lot of people may be agreeing to things and they don't understand the consequences of what's actually being said to them. All too often it's glossed over, it's official phrases to people who don't fully understand, who don't have the proper support or have anyone to advocate on their behalf."

During the discussion, a number of issues were raised on the subject:

- There was no clarity about equity of service. Some people are receiving lots of care and others receiving little, despite similar disability.
- There is disparity on quality of care. Some care workers are amenable to do what is asked of them, others not.
- Care assessment should not be specific about cleaning tasks. Domiciliary care workers should work out with the service user what needs to be done. Forum members raised instances of service users only getting their kitchen and bathroom cleaned, where other parts of the house needed attention.

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"Domiciliary care is out of control, and needs have to be properly assessed by a care manager."

"The Council should have the same standards as private providers!"

In terms of Best Practice, the Forum recommended:

- Professionals should make an appointment to visit and arrange a time that suits the service user and carer.
- They should explain the purpose of the meeting and if requested send it out in writing in an accessible format prior to the meeting.
- Time must be given for the service user to arrange an advocate to be present.
- They should tell you the outcome of the meeting before they leave the house and inform you of any decisions made regarding your care.
- If a decision is made to cut the service, the Care Manager should explain in writing the eligibility criteria and how they reached their decision.
- Address the gender disparity - there are instances where young female DCWs attend to older men.
- A simple information card should be given to service users to inform them of the process of assessment and appeal.

Forum members felt a member of DC management staff should be invited to a future Forum meeting.

Role and remit

There was discussion, ending in the recommendation the need for research in acquiring evidence, which could be presented to the Planning Group by Forum representatives.

All accepted there was a need for training to provide data acceptable to authority bodies if the Forum, or Forums, are to make an impact.

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Information, notices and consultations

Concern was raised over the spread, or lack of it, of important information on consultations, meetings, events or policy changes which might be of great importance to the ELCCF Forums community.

Since people find such information by stumbling upon it, rather than notified, it was suggested that anyone coming across such information could pass it on to the ELCCF office to be posted up on the website, where references and paperwork may be linked.



It was also suggested the site have a 'Latest Notices' section where new information could be found at a glance.

SMART Centre visit

Forum members were keen to reorganise a visit to the SMART Centre at the Astley Ainslie hospital, and drew up prospective dates for January 27th or February 3rd, 2009.

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**The Equality Forum meet; again from 10.30am-12 .00 on
Thursday 18th December at Tynepark Resource Centre.**

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