

Notes from the Deaf and Disabled Stakeholders Group meeting

Thursday 9 February 2012, 15:00 – 17:00 at the GLA, City Hall

Attendees

RB Richard Barnes, Statutory Deputy Mayor of London (Chair)
AK Alan Kerr, Artsline
TL Thomas Lichy, BDA
EJ Elcena Jeffers, Black Disabled People's Association
HD Henrietta Doyle, Inclusion London
SL Stewart Lucas, Interactive
MP Mehdi Pournezami, Iranian DSA
MR Monica Rivers, Mencap
AR Andrew Rice, Transport for All
CG Claire Glassman, Winvisible

Presenters

DL Debra Levison, GLA
ST Stefan Trinder, Transport for London
HM Huma Munshi, GLA

In attendance

WL Wayne Lawley, GLA
TD Terry Day, GLA
DH David Haralambidis, GLA
CG Christian Gaezkowski, GLA
JH Julie Hill, GLA (notes)

Item	Minutes	Actions
1	Welcome and Introductions	
	<p>Richard Barnes (RB) opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees and there was a round table of introductions.</p> <p>Stefan Trinder presented on the TfL Accessibility Implementation Plan in place of Stephen Golden.</p>	
2	Mayor's revised London Housing Strategy (Debra Levison, GLA)	
	<p>Mayor's revised London Housing Strategy (Debra Levison, GLA)</p> <p>DL presented the key areas of the Mayor's revised London Housing Strategy.</p> <p>The revised strategy among other issues covers the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tackling need 2. Empowering communities 3. Increasing supply and transforming places 4. Improving quality <p>The following issues and comments were raised:</p> <p>The Mayor has a target for a delivery of 55,000 affordable homes between 2011 and 2015: 20,000 social rent, 17,000 affordable rent and 18,000 First Steps homes. These will include supported housing and regeneration schemes. The Mayor exceeded his target for the delivery of new supported homes in 2008-11 by almost 100 per cent.</p> <p>The Mayor is keen to support enabling independent living and responding to changing needs over time. In particular, there is a pressing need in the capital to increase the supply of extra care housing, with an estimated 16,700 homes required over the next six years.</p>	

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	<p>Over the last three years, the Mayor has sought to enhance older and disabled people's housing choices and meet their housing needs. The London Housing Design Guide and London Plan both specify that all new homes should be built to Lifetime Homes standards and at least ten per cent should be wheelchair accessible. Between 2008 and 2011, 53 per cent of new affordable homes were at Lifetime Homes standards and eight per cent were wheelchair accessible. In addition, the London Accessible Housing Register has been rolled out across the capital, with 25 boroughs now implementing this.</p> <p>The revised strategy makes the following specific commitments:</p> <p>The Mayor will ensure that older people become a higher priority for housing in London, by bringing together his powers in planning, health and housing to improve the provision of new housing, including extra care;</p> <p>All new homes should be built to Lifetime Homes standards and ten per cent should be wheelchair accessible;</p> <p>The London Accessible Housing Register should be widely used for the advertising and marketing of both affordable and market housing, with all boroughs and larger housing associations implementing, or having a clear timetable for implementing, the Register by the end of 2012;</p> <p>Older and disabled people should be enabled to adapt and maintain their homes to meet their needs, and the Mayor will explore how the adaptations and extensions on offer to older people in London can be improved.</p> <p>The options available to older underoccupying social tenants who wish to move to a smaller home should be increased.</p>	

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	<p>The Mayor will explore the role of Lifetime Neighbourhoods in regeneration initiatives.</p> <p>HD asked about the impact of the Strategy on housing benefit claimants. DL replied that new publicly funded housing would be affordable, i.e. an average of about 65% of market rents across the programme as a whole, and would work within the benefit caps.</p> <p>DL said the 10% target for wheelchair-accessible homes remains in the London Plan and the Strategy.</p> <p>CG asked what representations the GLA is making to lobby against the welfare reform bill, given the risk of making people homeless as a result. DL said that the Mayor has worked closely with government on this and that London has received the lion's share of discretionary housing payment funding.</p> <p>Some concerns were raised about the loss of housing benefit for disabled working age social tenants affected by the introduction of the size criteria for social housing. DL said that as with local housing allowance, those on housing benefit in social housing would have a bedroom for a non-resident carer taken into account in determining the relevant size criteria where they provide overnight care for the claimant or their partner.</p> <p>TL noted that many Deaf people would benefit from having a video phone instead of a normal intercom device. He also said that housing associations should offer sign language for Deaf clients visiting their offices. DL said that the issue of video phones relating to design guides for accessible new homes could be raised at the consultation for the London housing design guide due to take place but is noted here as well.</p> <p>DL provided hard copies of the consultation document for all attendees.</p>	

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3	Transport for London (TfL) Accessibility Implementation Plan (Stefan Trinder, TfL)	
	<p>Stefan Trinder (ST) presented the TfL Accessibility Implementation Plan (AIP).</p> <p>The main points of his presentation were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Key themes of the AIP; 2. Who has been involved in consultation and how disabled people have been involved in developing the AIP; 3. The role of TfL's Independent Disability Advisory Group in putting together the AIP; 4. How the AIP will be monitored; <p>The following issues and comments were raised:</p> <p>ST noted that the plan stems from a report of the London Assembly which suggested that Transport for London (TfL) expand upon the AIP in the Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS).</p> <p>ST reported that there had been nearly 80 responses to the public consultation on the TfL Accessibility Action Plan in 2011 and that the Plan is almost ready to be published.</p> <p>The AIP will be based on the "whole journey approach". This approach aims to achieve a better, more predictable, journey experience from start to end. It takes into account not only disabled and Deaf people but the prediction that by 2031, children and older people will make up a greater proportion of London's overall population than they do now.</p> <p>The Journey Planner is available in a range of formats and this will be further developed to use new technologies notifying transport users of the latest</p>	

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	<p>developments in accessible facilities and any problems that may arise as soon as they appear.</p> <p>The large programme of committed improvements across London's transport system will continue to be delivered. This includes works such as Crossrail, Thameslink and the Tube Upgrades. TfL and the Mayor will lobby for further funding for improvements to continue over the long term beyond current commitments.</p> <p>All buses (except heritage routes) are low floor and provide both audible and visual information provision. The new bus has a bigger space for wheelchairs while 60 per cent of bus stops meet the accessibility standards and by April 2013 the percentage will be 70%.</p> <p>TfL will continue its part in operating the Dial-a-Ride service and continuing to maintain that and improve it where possible.</p> <p>Support for range of privileges and exemptions for Blue Badge holders will continue (for example the 100% discount from the congestion charge) while the Mayor supports improvements to support independent car use by disabled people, for example at petrol stations and car parks.</p> <p>The AIP envisages joint working with National Rail to improve the consistency of experience across London's rail networks, including the Mayor's aim of greater control of the specification of service standards on London's suburban rail network.</p> <p>The creation of step free stations is a hugely expensive programme and this needs time to be implemented. However 30 rail stations in the suburbs of London are going to be step free in the next 3 years through the Access for All programme. In central London big interchanges on Crossrail and Thameslink, such as Farringdon, Bond Street and Tottenham Court Road will be fully accessible.</p>	

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	<p>Accessibility of trains will also be improved as a result of the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Requirements legislation.</p> <p>Staff will continue to receive initial and refresher training to ensure an understanding of the needs of disabled and other people. Service quality will continue to be monitored by mystery traveller surveys conducted by disabled people.</p> <p>London 2012 has also initiated transport improvements to help disabled and older people.</p> <p>Stewart Lucas (SL) highlighted the difficulty of people with dyslexia trying to use the TfL journey planner. He suggested that an advanced spelling recognition facility could be helpful, rather than predictive text.</p> <p>Monica Rivers (MR) suggested that information should be provided in Easy Read format to assist people with learning difficulties when making plans to travel and during travel.</p> <p>ST informed the group about TfL's travel mentoring scheme, which is helpful for passengers with a range of impairments or disabilities.</p> <p>Elcena Jeffers (EJ) asked about the Taxicard system across London, noting that the service is being cut back. She requested a full comprehensive needs assessment for disabled people, so that all elements could be joined up.</p> <p>ST confirmed that TfL's funding for Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard and Capital Call will continue.</p> <p>CG pointed out that there are a lot of complaints about ramps on buses which do not operate.</p> <p>ST stated that ramps on all buses are checked every morning and the policy is that buses are not allowed to leave until they are in working order.</p>	

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4	The GLA response to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Huma Munshi, GLA)	
	<p>Huma Munshi (HM) informed delegates about the authority's intention to produce objectives (which will be reviewed every 4 years) to meet the needs of disabled and Deaf people in its response to the Public Sector Equality Duty. They were asked to send through data and information on the inequalities disabled people experience to add to the existing evidence base. The equality objectives will be outlined as part of the Mayor's revised equality framework, Equal Life Chances for All II launched on 21 February.</p> <p>RB stated that equality has always been at the heart of the Mayor's policies and strategies but it is clear that a focus on equality should be ongoing and frequently reviewed.</p> <p>CG pointed out that often certain communities, like disabled women or women from BAME backgrounds, face hidden disadvantages that women in general may not face so there are differing levels of disadvantage or poverty.</p> <p>HD raised the concern that as the Equality Act 2010 brings together all equality strands, the objectives concerning disabled and Deaf people may not be specific enough.</p> <p>Terry Day (TD) stated that there is a duty to publish equality objectives by 6 April across all equality strands. Despite a fear that this may lead to a reduced focus on disability issues, TD noted that the measures may be broad and where appropriate they would specifically relate to disability equality.</p> <p>RB stated that he recognizes the concern of generalization but it is down to the integrity of the organization to make sure that, as far as disabled and Deaf peoples' issues are concerned, these are highlighted and recognized. This is intention of this</p>	

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	<p>authority.</p> <p>The slides of the Equality Duty presentation are to be circulated to the group following the meeting.</p>	<p>DH to circulate the presentation along with the rest to the group.</p>
5	National Disability Equality Strategy (Huma Munshi, GLA)	
	<p>HM informed the delegates about the roundtable, chaired by RB on 7 February to give participants the opportunity to inform the GLA's response to the Government's consultation to develop a national disability equality strategy entitled "Fulfilling Potential".</p>	
6	AOB	
	<p>EJ informed the group about the World Disability Union which was launched in October 2011. Updates from the GLA and members of this group were circulated at this meeting.</p> <p>TL expressed an interest in improving the effectiveness of these meetings. TD agreed that it may be time to review the function of this group, as this was last done two years ago.</p> <p>In response to a question about the Disability Capital Conference, RB said that it would not be happening this year because of the work undertaken to support the delivery of the 2012 Games.</p> <p>The date of the next meeting will be announced in due course.</p>	