

DRAFT MINUTES OF PUBLIC MEETING
Held Tuesday 18th July 2006 - from 12.30 pm to 3.00 pm
At New Oriel Hall, Brookleaze Buildings, Larkhall, Bath, BA1 6RA

ATTENDEES

PPI Forum Members:

Connie Wright	Chair of Forum
Kate Mountford	Vice-chair of Forum
Hilary Elms	Member
Susan Fremantle	Member
Nancy Young	Member
Nan Stephens	Mendip PPI Forum
Sylvia Corry	Chair, AWP Mental Health PPI Forum
Helen Thompson	Vice-Chair, AWP Mental Health PPI Forum
Sarah Oughton	SWAN Advice Network, Volunteer Transport Scheme

HAP (Forum Support Organisation):

Deb Hawken	Forum Advisor
Paul Howard	Forum Adviser

RNHRD NHS FT

Laura Davies	PALS/PPI Officer
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Other Organisations

Alison Godwin	Headway Bath and District
Dan Carey	Public Transport Officer, B&NES Council
Eva Lewis	Action for Pensioners
Pru Thomas	Action for Pensioners
Ray Hardy	Business Manager, First Bus Company (Avon and Somerset)
Mike Scuse	Business Manager, First Bus Company (Avon and Somerset)
Delyth Morris	Public Transport Officer (Community), B&NES Council
Paul Thomas	Action for Pensioners

Members of the Public

Ms Lisa Phillips	
Mr J Ducat	

APOLOGIES

David Greenwood	Weston Hospital PPI Forum
Richard Ford	Bath Community Transport
Jill Tompkins	RUH PPI Forum

For further information, to request papers in a different format, or notify apologies – please address all correspondence to:

The Health Advocacy Partnership, 5 Spa Road, Melksham, Wiltshire, SN12 7NP
 Public Information Line: 0845 601 5859
 Team Administrator: 01225 701 146
 Fax: 01225 701 138
 Email: lucieclark@hapforums.co.uk

Abbreviations:

RNHRD	Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases NHS Foundation Trust
NHS	National Health Service
OSC	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
B&NES	Bath and North East Somerset
Grp	Group
SWAN	Volunteer transport scheme, part of the SWAN Adviser Network

1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR PERSON**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially on such a hot day, introduced the Forum and explained that they are attached to the RNHRD NHS Foundation Trust. The Chair also thanked Deb Hawken for setting up the meeting, and Paul Howard for attending to help.

The Forum is hoping to set up a transport working group in partnership with other Patient and Public Involvement Forums, local service user support groups, voluntary transport services, B&NES City Council, and local transport providers (e.g. First Bus Company, taxi companies). There is a need to understand the challenges facing vulnerable users and local transport providers, then finding a way to work together to find solutions to ensure equal access to public for all. It is important too develop options for change in consultation with the people who use the services. This Public meeting was arranged to open up a dialogue between stakeholders and providers.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – noted above.**

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – none.**

4. **MINUTES OF PUBLIC MEETING HELD 23RD MAY 2006**

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record subject to the following corrections:

(5) Should read "The Council of Members hasn't communicated with the wider membership".

4.1 **Matters Arising – None.**

5. **MINUTES OF PRIVATE MEETING HELD 23RD MAY 2006**

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record subject to the following corrections:

- Kate Lyon did not report that the PCT will be using the model of the Forum seminar; it is the Trust that will be using the model. B&NES PPI Development and Implementation group will also use the model.
- To clarify, that it is B&NES Council that issue taxi licences, and could make those companies aware of issues. Users could take the taxi licence number.
- Should read Councillor Dr Sarah Webb.
- Should read Caudal not Cawdal.
- Members were asked to decide on an initiative and focus on it.
- Change to read "It is regrettable that this decision has been made now that Forums have learned about the NHS...etc".

5.1 **Matters Arising**

- **(5.2)** Paul Thomas has spoken to staff about the Chairs. Steve Pike, who is project managing the refurbishment of the Trust, reports that the input has been very helpful.
- **(7.1)** Reply about out-of-hours services not received by Chair although Deb Hawken believes she has seen a copy of a letter that has been posted to the Chair from HAP. She will check this out and report back.
- **(7.3)** Drs Bhalla and Harris have replied to the Osteoporosis letter.
- **(Actions)** Need to check whether replies have been received to 20 day letters, one cannot be traced.

Question/Comment	For	Answer
<p>There is a problem with ramps if there is not a raised curb. Bristol is much better. There are no raised curbs at the bus station.</p>	<p>First Bus Co.</p>	<p>The ramp on the bus is effective when there is a raised curb but there are problems where there are not raised curbs. B&NES are proactive, all main routes are done, however local/rural routes are a problem. Bristol is a bigger council with a higher profile and it does make it easier.</p> <p>B&NES Council: are attempting to put in raised curbs, but more are still needed. Finance is an issue. £42m has been given by the Government to improve the Bristol Bus Network; part of this money will be used to put in raised curbs. In addition there is another bid in for further funding.</p> <p>Forum Chair: This is a very interesting issue and exactly the sort of thing the Forum needs to know. This issue can be taken forward to MPs, local council OSCs, other interested parties.</p>
<p>Is the Trust a member of Bath Community Transport</p>	<p>RNHRD</p>	<p>Do not have this information, will find out.</p>
<p>Not everyone has access to websites</p> <p>Has further funding been provided?</p> <p>Volunteers are ageing and it is difficult for them to keep going. How do we get younger people to volunteer? Traffic problems are making things more difficult.</p>	<p>Delyth Morris</p>	<p>B&NES will continue to print community transport booklets for the area. The website is to make information available area-wide.</p> <p>Yes, this is the money being used to extend the dial-a-ride service. Community transport is marginalised; at the moment the Council is able to address the tip of the iceberg.</p> <p>There is a shortage of volunteers in all aspects of public life. Some areas have a poorer culture of volunteering. In some areas the committee members are also doing the work. Health and safety is also an issue. Legislation is now more complex and some companies have not been able to keep up with requirements. The Council supports Health and Safety Legislation and does not work with any company that does not comply.</p>
<p>Does anyone log complaints and the area in which problems occur? This would help with planning and enable the Council and Bus Companies to target their funding to routes where there is need.</p> <p>Are reports put into the public domain?</p> <p>Could these reports be copied to other interested organisations such as Action for Pensioners and PPI</p>	<p>Delyth Morris</p>	<p>Complaints are recorded and logs sent to various providers and departments.</p> <p>Does not have this answer, but will look into it.</p> <p>Will follow this up because it is a good idea.</p>

Forums?		
<p data-bbox="177 197 608 264">What is the situation regarding training of bus drivers?</p> <p data-bbox="177 405 608 539">There are small buses on route 14 and the drivers are still saying they are not trained.</p> <p data-bbox="177 577 608 689">The bus company needs specific details of the problems.</p> <p data-bbox="177 1216 608 1429">Does the bus company put out literature explaining to people how to make them aware of issues? Could there be a poster with the customer care line on each bus?</p> <p data-bbox="177 1462 608 1641">Does the bus company have a means of monitoring where problems are developing? Members have never seen a bus inspector.</p> <p data-bbox="177 1675 608 1921">Buses only have a small number of opening windows and no air conditioning. This is a particular worry in an area with a high number of elderly people accessing bus transport.</p>	<p data-bbox="608 197 815 230">First Bus Co.</p>	<p data-bbox="815 197 1495 365">All drivers should now be trained to use the ramps; would be very interested to hear about problems as they should not occur. Only two services in the Bath area cannot take wheelchairs due to safety considerations.</p> <p data-bbox="815 405 1495 539">A driver may not use ramps if they feel that it is dangerous. There are issues with drivers who are not fit to use the ramps and the bus company are trying to resolve this issue without job losses.</p> <p data-bbox="815 577 1495 790">The company will double check their training schedules to ensure that all drivers are trained. There are issues such as drivers who have been on long-term sick leave, etc. Please take details of the bus including number plate and the company will look into it.</p> <p data-bbox="815 831 1495 999">The Chair said that the Forum will be trying to take this forward and looking for partnership working with the bus company and others to resolve issues. When she had a problem with a bus the issue was solved within an hour.</p> <p data-bbox="815 1039 1495 1173">If cars are parked on bus stops then the bus cannot get into the curb and drivers cannot use ramps. This is a policing issue and would need to be resolved by them.</p> <p data-bbox="815 1214 1495 1281">There is an office at the bus station where such leaflets are available.</p> <p data-bbox="815 1462 1495 1574">There are inspectors available. There are inspectors on the Keynsham route this week. Quality control is on-going.</p> <p data-bbox="815 1675 1495 1843">The company is trying to address this issue. The company does not have control over the manufacture of buses. The drivers do not have air conditioning either. Buses are commissioned from Aberdeen.</p> <p data-bbox="815 1883 1495 2051">There are other health and safety issues involving ramps, weight and size of wheelchairs, sometimes making it difficult to transport wheelchairs at all. The ramifications of an accident don't bear thinking about.</p>
<p data-bbox="177 2067 608 2092">Swindon has just bought 10</p>	<p data-bbox="608 2067 815 2092">First Bus Co</p>	<p data-bbox="815 2067 1495 2092">The company has to look at whether it is worth</p>

buses with air conditioning.		buying vehicles to transport 20 people.
<p>Is it possible for the bus company to feed comments back to companies working in other areas? When the West Mendip Hospital was built there was an undertaking that access into the hospital would be provided to buses, this did not happen and it has taken a long time to resolve. They don't want this to happen with the new build at Frome. It is not feasible for the elderly and infirm to walk from a bus stop.</p> <p>It is important to go back to local politicians and ensure that they listen.</p> <p>It is also important to report back to the Head Office in Aberdeen and report that some vehicles have weaknesses in design identified by wheelchair users. First Bus could go back to manufacturers and ask if adjustments could be made to vehicle designs to improve safety and comfort for wheelchair users.</p>	First Bus Co	<p>Bus companies always want access to NHS property.</p> <p>B&NES Council: Bus companies always want access because it makes their services more attractive. It is important to ensure that the local government are aware of the access issue and access is provided.</p>
Why is the train service so much better?	First Bus Co	Because they get far more subsidies than the bus services.

The Chair thanked the Bus Company for attending and said that it is important to know how to feed information to companies to help them to improve services. These services are very important to people with health and disability issues.

It is important that information is available for people to see what is happening, particularly with improvements. Their problems must also be understood.

The Forum hopes for strong partnership working as a result of this meeting in order that groups can work together to ensure that all voices are heard and problems addressed.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and contributing. The dialogue has been enormously helpful. She hopes that the Bus Company representatives did not feel 'under attack' because it has been a very good arena for members of the public to speak with the appropriate people, to inform the suppliers of services of the problems faced by wheelchair users in accessing public transport.

Deb Hawken said that she and Paul Howard will support the Forum in taking these issues forward. It has been very effective to have the bus company present because it is important to understand their issues. It has been even more important to have members of the public present because if they don't bring their issues the Forum cannot act on their behalf.

The Forum hopes to take this forward by joint working with other Forums in the HAP area, and also the bus companies, train companies, taxi companies, local community transport providers, and others who may be interested.

The Chair thanked the Forum team for all their help. There were many compliments from attendees.

6. FUTURE VISITS TO RNHRD NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

The Forum is visiting the Bath Head Injury Unit at the RNHRD NHS Foundation Trust on 1st August 2006. As Paul Thomas is only able to attend as an observer he will write the visit report.

Kate Mountford asked if the Unit had invited the Forum. The Chair said that the Unit had invited the Forum because they were anxious for the Forum to visit.

There will be a preliminary introduction to the Unit. The Chair suggested that members ask for literature, and particularly to find out whether Forum information is available. The quality assurance process should be investigated. Need to check the environment and that the patients enjoy the full range of facilities they require. The Chair suggested a pre-visit meeting an hour before the visit. Kate, Hilary and Paul will attend.

There are no further visits planned at this time.

7. TO CONFIRM DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

There will be no public meeting in September. Instead there will be a private joint meeting on transport. Members will also discuss the future.

Action	7.1	To inform Lucie Clarke to cancel the public meeting in September and change the date to 12 th September.
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END OF PUBLIC MEETING

Members of the public were invited to stay to listen to the following discussion.

8. TAKING THE TRANSPORT ISSUE FORWARD

Meeting on Tuesday 12th September 1.30 – 3.30pm to discuss Transport.

At New Oriel Hall, Brookleaze Buildings, Larkhall, Bath, BA1 6RA.

Nancy Young's notes

TRANSPORT FOR WHEELCHAIR USERS IN THE BATH AREA

1. I have been using taxi services in Bath for the last 7 years and, although I now have my own vehicle, I do not always have a driver so I continue to use public transport. I would like to take this opportunity to explain why it is such a difficult and stressful process to get out and about if you are a wheelchair user.
2. With the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act in 2004, the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles increased but with little thought for the comfort and safety of pass. Most vehicles are very small inside and all have extremely difficult ramps to negotiate, most being steep and very narrow. I have almost slipped off on more than one occasion.
3. Apart from the London cabs, no two vehicles are the same. There are vehicles on the market which can be converted for wheelchair access which are safe, comfortable and easy to access but taxi drivers never seem to go for them.
4. Booking a taxi has always been difficult. Some firms seem reluctant to take a wheelchair booking, offering various excuses. Many drivers only work certain days or hours and some just work from the ranks and cannot be booked in advance. During term time it is almost impossible to make a booking before 10am or after 2pm because of the school run. Weekend and evening bookings are also extremely difficult as very few drivers work after 5pm or at weekends.
5. There have been instances of a pre-booked taxi not turning up. This has happened to Lisa more than once. On one occasion I was waiting with her outside my house for a taxi she had booked for 10pm, we waited until 10.30, phoned the firm and they denied the booking had ever been made. When you are in a wheelchair, being stranded is one of the most frightening and stressful things that can happen.
6. The charges made can vary enormously and some fares are suspiciously high. I was once charged £10 for a journey that normally cost £5 and when I queried it with the driver he said it was a new thing the boss had brought in to charge £10 for all wheelchairs. I later contacted 'the boss' and it turned out to be completely untrue. I received a letter of apology and a refund. Taxi fares have now become so high and this, along with the withdrawal of Transport Tokens, has made some of us resort to using buses.
7. Travelling by bus is a bit of a lottery: not all areas of Bath are served by low floor buses and not all buses are accessible and on some routes you can wait a long time before one comes along. Furthermore, the driver may refuse to put the ramp down because he has not been trained. Most drivers are happy to do the ramp but it's the not knowing that is so worrying.
8. Lisa made the front page of the Chronicle a year ago after being left stranded because the driver refused to lower the ramp. It happened to me last week. It is now a year later and the drivers have still not been trained to do something that takes no more than 10 seconds to carry out.
9. As for the buses themselves, it appears they have been designed purely for manual chairs, with very little room to negotiate your way on and off and into the tiny space. On the smaller buses, it is impossible to get into the designated space because there is a pole in the way. You are then subjected to a very bumpy ride, which is not good for those of us with painful conditions, and, as the chair is not secured, you can slide all over the place.
10. If the free bus pass is supposed to replace the transport tokens then the bus companies and the council should at least make sure that a service is available.
11. I hope you can now appreciate just how difficult and stressful it is to get out and about in a wheelchair. Sometimes it is easier just to stay at home.
12. Finally, I would also like to point out that not only has the council abolished Transport Tokens, but they have also cut their funding to Bath Community Transport by 15%. Consequently, BCT have had to increase their charges, again hitting elderly and disabled people in the pocket.