

Disability Forum held on 7 August 2018

Notes of the meeting

Attendees: Tony Rosenberg
Joy Hammond
Dot Allen
Anna Sherlock
Daisy Bushby (SHS)

Maureen Chapman-Towns
Shelagh Wilkinson
Ann Davies
Lynn Goodman (SHS)
Glynis Gatenby (SHS)

Apologies: Joan Cox
Liz Gridley

1. Welcome & Introductions

Glynis welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked attendees for giving up their time to attend.

Everyone introduced themselves and stated which scheme/area they were from; everyone had attended the meeting to find out more about the Disability Forum.

2. Why are we here?

Glynis explained that the reason for inviting people living with disabilities in Sutton housing Society (SHS) homes to a Disability Forum, was that following the profiling exercise carried out in August and September 2017, it became evident that there is a high number of residents with disabilities.

Just over 66% of all SHS residents completed the profiling form; from this 45% of people indicated that they had disabilities.

The “top 3” disabilities that SHS residents responding to the profiling exercise have is:

- Hearing impairments (23.5%)
- Mobility issues and partial/full use of a wheelchair (17%)
- Mental health (15%)

This was followed closely with sight loss.

Glynis explained that once SHS analysed the information from the profiling data, the staff training plan for 2018/19 was then designed to include issues such as hearing loss, mental health etc. She also advised that the profiling returns showed other concerns such as the very low numbers of people with home contents insurance; this was why SHS then reviewed and highlighted the National Housing Federation's Home Contents Insurance scheme in the last resident newsletter.

Glynis stressed the importance of residents having a voice and being able to influence the services and work of SHS. All the surveys that we ask residents to complete are reviewed and outcomes from these actioned; however we need to get better at communicating this to residents.

Glynis advised that SHS does not want to make assumptions or presume to know best about what people living with various disabilities need in their homes or in communal spaces; instead SHS wants to ask people living in our homes and then respond to these needs as much as possible. Everyone's experiences are different and the way that other people respond to those with disabilities varies.

3. Areas of focus for the Disability Forum

Residents were asked about how easily can they move around their home, buildings and communal spaces and what obstacles is there that make it difficult to fully access or make good use of the space in their homes and communal spaces.

The responses were:

- Door entrance and exits
- Bathing facilities – would like a walk in shower
- Slope outside the front door to the car park – need a handrail
- Front door doesn't always shut
- Lift isn't very quick; breaks down upstairs
- Need wider corridors
- Anxious when using the shower
- Slopes and dips in the communal garden
- Getting in and out of the bath.
- I have a shower and a bath; would like rid of the bath
- Opening width of most doors is too narrow

- Opening kitchen windows and locking them is difficult
- Doors are too heavy to open when using a walking frame
- Bit of a slope in to the garden and also into the building
- Shower takes up too much space; wet room is better
- Higher seats in communal areas
- Toilet & bedroom is upstairs
- Access to bin area is bad; difficult to get to the cupboard with the normal sacks
- Walking out with a frame, uphill, around the building, or upstairs is difficult
- Access in a wheelchair in passageways is difficult as they are very narrow.
- Accessing some communal areas is hard.
- Uphill battle to access the building, particularly in a mobility scooter as doors are heavy and not automatic.
- No access to communal kitchen at Trickett House; stairs only.
- Getting up from the seat in the shower in to the wheelchair is very awkward.
- Limited space/access in the laundry when using a wheelchair
- Access from the rear garden to the lounge is difficult.

Glynis then spoke about what obstacles people feel there are in accessing SHS services or attending SHS organised events, meetings etc.

The responses were:

- Lack of communication
- Not really a problem; depends if you are wanting to know about something you are interested in
- Have hearing problems; hard to hear some people today
- Transport
- Going to meetings is fine but I do not enjoy being with crowds and am afraid of being knocked over
- Uptight with a lot of people about
- Can drive if parking is available; if not would need transport
- Making that internal first step to take part/join in
- Transport for wheelchair users
- Heavy doors when using a mobility scooter.

Glynis explained that SHS is to arrange for a stock condition survey to be undertaken across all of the properties during the autumn. All residents will receive letters about this and asking for access to their homes so that an assessment can be made on when new kitchens, bathrooms, roofs etc. will be needed. This work enables SHS to then plan its programme of work going forward.

One of the issues the surveyors have been asked to consider is access to/from buildings and around all communal spaces.

Glynis asked the group if they would be interested to hear about the outcomes of stock condition survey (this should be available by the end of November 2018) and to help SHS plan and implement the recommendations. There was an overwhelming “yes” to this!

Glynis asked the group if they would be interested in SHS organising an event with them to mark the United Nations (UN) “International Day of Persons with Disabilities” which takes place on 3 December 2018.

The group was very interested in this. Glynis explained that there’s usually a theme to the day which the UN decide on but as yet there’s nothing on the website. She will keep looking and let the group know about this.

The group agreed that we will hold our next meeting on Monday 3 December, followed by a celebratory event, inviting other residents to attend.

4. Any other business

Anna asked if she could be advised of events happening at our schemes. Glynis will advise Laura, the Community Engagement Officer of this and ask Laura to send a monthly calendar to her.

Shelagh asked if she could also have a calendar; Glynis will again advise Laura and advised that there is already a calendar available at her scheme.

Maureen asked about events at Thomas House as she felt that there isn't anything held there. Glynis reassured Maureen that there have definitely been events at Thomas House as both Glynis and Laura have attended but no residents have. Glynis advised that she will shortly be contacting all residents at Thomas house about helping to redesign the lounge, replace the carpet and some of the furniture to make it more welcoming and that perhaps on the back of this more residents would engage.

Tony said that there used to be a representative from each scheme that agreed and arranged various events and asked if this could be resurrected. Glynis said that a Residents' Events Panel sounded like a great idea and that she would ask Laura to take this forward; it would also help Laura in her role.

Tony added that he felt the meeting had been good and that the group's involvement will help all SHS residents; others agreed.

Ann said she has attended coffee and chat with Laura and only 3 or 4 residents turn up and it's usually the same people. Ann felt it was a shame that more people don't turn up. Lynn agreed but added that for the people turning up they've had a chance to get out and have a chat for others which can make all the difference.

Glynis thanked everyone for coming and advised that she would issue the minutes to everyone attending and also to the people that had said they would come but were absent.

5. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 3 December 2018; venue and event to be advised and agreed.