

Disability Independent Advisory Group

Terms of Reference

Aims of the Disability Independent Advisory Group

The Disability Independent Advisory Group's principle focus is to enable engagement between disabled people, community and voluntary sector organisations that support disabled people, their carers and family members, and Nottinghamshire County Council and other statutory organisations that deliver services within the geographic county of Nottinghamshire (ie including the city).

The purpose of the group is to improve services for vulnerable and marginalised groups and individuals, including children and young people, who live, work in or visit Nottinghamshire. Contribute to the way services are delivered to individuals, carers, groups and challenge the way these are delivered now. Talking to individuals, carers and groups about the services they receive, identifying issues with services and look at how these can be improved by challenging and scrutinising the policies, procedures and services. Look at how to influence and help to change decision making processes.

Defining Disability

This group uses the term "social model of disability" to underpin its structure, processes and actions. We have researched many authors and accept the following to be a true representation of the "social model of disability":

Disabled people are oppressed by societies:

1. Attitudes
2. Environment (eg no access, poor signage, lack of facilities)
3. Structures (eg spoken English, written documents, fixed work routines).

The social model argues for the removal of these barriers which impose a 'social death' on disabled people. Barrier removal enables disabled people to contribute fully as citizens and to be included in public life.

The Equality Act 2010 has now come into being. Disability has a broad meaning. It is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. 'Substantial' means more than minor or trivial. 'Impairment' covers, for example, long-term medical conditions such as asthma and diabetes, and fluctuating or progressive conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis or motor neurone disease. A mental impairment includes mental health conditions (such as bipolar disorder or depression), learning difficulties (such as dyslexia) and learning disabilities (such as Autism and Down's syndrome). Some people, including those with cancer, multiple sclerosis and HIV/AIDS, are automatically protected as disabled people by the Act. People with severe disfigurement will be protected as disabled without needing to show that it has a substantial adverse effect on day-to-day activities.

The role of the Disability Independent Advisory Group

The Disability Independent Advisory Group roles include providing:

- a valuable platform for disabled people's organisations, disabled people and their carers and family members

- a structure for engaging with other relevant partners and agencies including gaining representation on other appropriate forums
- a good opportunity challenge the barriers that have been built up over time including between different areas of disability
- opportunities to support agencies access funds and resources
- the chance to hold Nottinghamshire County Council and other statutory organisations to account and to advise in the design and delivery of services for disabled people by being involved at the beginning of the process and monitor outcomes
- identify priority issues that really matter to members of the group and to disabled people and for improving services to disabled people. Key themes identified for development are adult health and social care, community transport, community safety, personalisation and employment for disabled people, impact on Welfare Reform, monitoring loss of services and future impact.

Membership of the Disability Independent Advisory Group

Membership will be open to disabled people and carers of disabled people, voluntary organisations which represent disabled people. Members of the group shall have a clear understanding of the issues relating to disability and a commitment to training and self-development. Membership shall also be available, by invitation of the group, to appropriate strategic-level representatives of statutory organisations (local authorities, health, police etc) who can support decision making. Representatives of organisations attending the Advisory Group must be designated officers who accept responsibility to attend and speak at the meeting and be able to demonstrate what has changed as a result. The group aims to ensure that a minimum of 60% of its membership shall comprise disabled people and carers of disabled people.

Meetings and conduct of business

The Disability Independent Advisory Group will meet quarterly and may establish task groups to conduct detailed business on its behalf between meetings.

The Disability Independent Advisory Group may appoint from its membership to represent it at other groups as appropriate.

The Group will appoint a Chair on an annual basis and minutes of the meeting will be taken and circulated.

Meetings will take place at suitable venues around the county to enable as many people as possible to have an opportunity to attend.

Members of the Disability Independent Advisory Group who attend network meetings are invited to claim for re-imburement of travel expenses if they are attending in an unpaid capacity and are not able to re-claim any expenses from any other source.

As far as possible, meetings will be focused, proactive and fruitful. Meetings will be in two parts. The first part will focus on internal organisational issues; the second part will focus on engagement and consultation.

Terms of reference for the group will be reviewed annually.

Final version March 2010

First review April 2011