

JUNE
2012
£3.00

The magazine of the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People

coalition

Great Expectations?



Superheroes & Disability - Part 2



A Time For Renewal?



Learning From Our Past



Also: The return of Scorpio, Poetry from Caron Batton and much much more

Coalition, the official magazine of the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled



People, aims to act as a forum for debate, analysis, and expression of opinion on all issues relating to disabled people.

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Coalition Magazine is published by the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People. To contribute or subscribe, please contact: The Editor, GMCDP, Aked Close, Manchester M12 4AN

Tel: 0161 273 5154

Email: info@gmcdp.com

Subscriptions: £15 per year

GMCDP Magazine Working Group: Lorraine Gradwell, Angela Madeley, Anne Rae, Jacqui Tracey, Neville Strowger

Acknowledgements

Guest Editor: Brian Hilton

Layout: Brian Hilton

Additional Support: Richard Currie
Caron Blake, Linda Marsh

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Editorial Comment

There is a real mixed bag in this edition of Coalition, tackling some tough issues that mirror the hard times many disabled people are currently facing.

A perfect example of the current climate is the case of Mary Garland, a disabled woman who recently had her support hours cut by Westminster Council from 19 to 10 hours a week. Raising concerns about how she would manage with fewer hours, Mary was told by her care manager that she would be better 'cutting off her hair' to save time for her carers. If this wasn't bad enough, Mary also enquired what would happen if her health worsened, and was told she might have to go into a residential home!

So what do we have for you in this edition? There is the welcome return of Scorpio, who lifts the lid on ATOS and their links to the Olympics; and an article by Eowyn Amath on her experiences of having her care package chipped away bit by bit. There is an insightful history lesson from Kirsten Hearn, cartoons by Crippen and poetry from the pithy Carol Batton.

Also, in the article 'A Time for Change', T Pain, suggests that some disabled people's organisations apparent support for REMPLOY is misguided. If you have a view on this or other issues please get in touch.

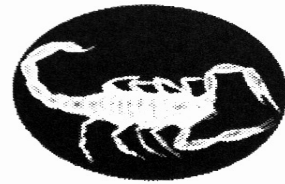
Finally, we have increased the font size of the magazine to 14 point, in line with other GMCDP printed material.



Again, your comments on this are welcome.

Brian Hilton

The Sting



Divide and Rule

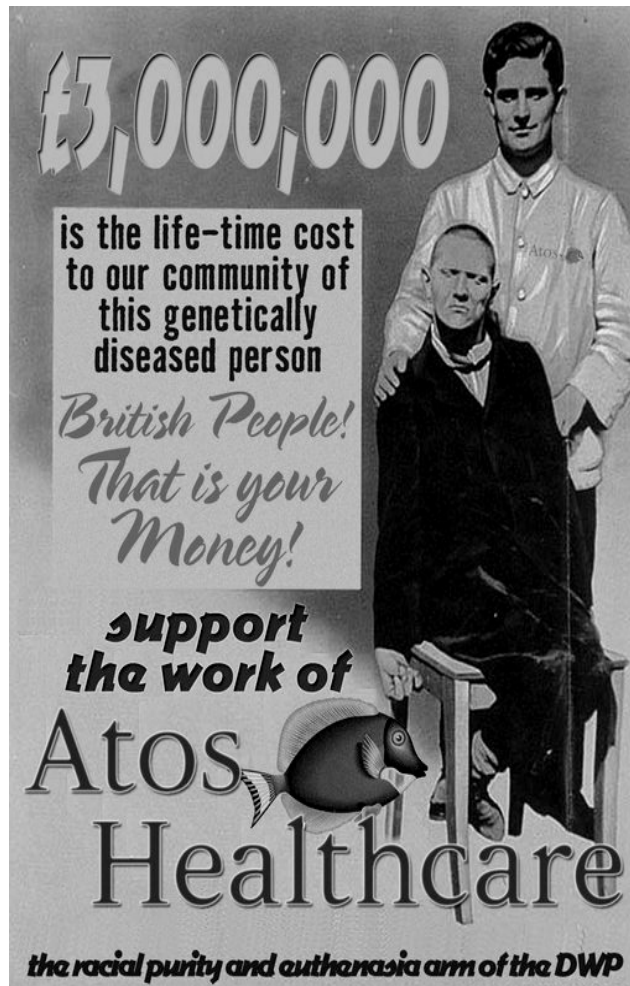
It's hardly a surprise that the Eton led Coalition stand accused of promoting a 'them and us' culture despite Dodgy Dave's protestations that 'we are all in it together'. Official figures show that the gap between rich and poor has increased significantly over the last two years and public funds have been shifted from north to south further increasing the geographical divide.

More subtle has been the systematic drive to promote the Victorian doctrine of the deserving and undeserving poor. This can be seen best in the way they treat disabled people. If you acquire an impairment as a result of 'the war on terror' you are worthy of support (though only until you are kicked out of the Forces), the same applies to those who can claim against an insurance company as a result of an accident. For the rest of us our 'worthiness' is determined by whether or not we are 'cute' enough to qualify for Charidee.

If we don't fall into the above categories we are automatically part of the undeserving and should, consequently, be viewed with suspicion; work-shy, scroungers, or fraudsters. To become deserving of State aid we

have to accept every degrading and humiliating assessment that a power-crazed, neo-Nazi can dream up. Indeed many of the tests of 'functionality' have their roots in Nazi experimentation.

History teaches us that the only way to beat such cynical attempts at division is to stick together and refuse to allow the ConDems to play us off against one another. Now more than ever we need to reach out and build that unity amongst disabled people. Our common enemy are those who refuse to pay their fair share; if the super-rich and big business stopped



evading and avoiding tax we wouldn't be in this mess.



Tested to Death

Stephen Hill died one month after being told by ATOS that he was fit to work and should therefore have his Incapacity Benefit withdrawn. He had previously won an earlier appeal against a similar decision. He died before his latest appeal could be heard. Many of the 150,000 people who have also been successful in appealing against the Work Capability Assessment live in fear that they will also face the same threat from ATOS, which receives £100m a year from the Department of Work and Pensions, is a major funder of the Olympics and the Paralympics.

If you share the anger of many of us at the way this company treats disabled people then turn out and demonstrate when the Olympic Torch passes through your area in the coming weeks.



If you are unable to get to a torch event then why not contact ATOS direct and share with them your experiences, or just ask how many more people have died whilst awaiting an appeal: ATOS, 4 Triton Square, Regent's Place, London, NW1 3HG, Tel 0207 830 4444, or via Twitter and Facebook.

It's a Funny Old Game



The football authorities bang on about the importance of fair play and showing respect to match officials. It's pretty hard to show any form of respect, however, to referee Gary Mellor, who officiates in the Rotherham and District Sunday League.

Mr. Mellor halted an important league game because of one of the player's 'dangerous' hearing aids! Craig Beech has played more than 120 games over six seasons without any previous problems. He even offered to wear a headband to try and placate the ref's Health and Safety concerns; to no avail.

Thankfully Craig's team-mates do believe in both fair play and showing respect and refused to play on without him, leading to the match being abandoned.

As Club Secretary Lol Clarke explained, 'I've seen players with electronic tags and they cover them up and it's accepted'.

It's over to the FA to practice what they preach.

Blind or Drunk?



Twenty years ago I reported on the struggle by a blind New Yorker to exercise his Constitutional Right to bear arms. After taking his case all the way to the Supreme Court he won and received his gun permit.

The case has recently been in the news again as the permit has been withdrawn. Following a number of shooting incidents (including shooting himself on a number of occasions) the

authorities decided to act. The grounds given for revoking the licence were that the holder was a danger to himself and to others; not because of his visual impairment but because of his alcoholism.

Apparently it's alright to be a blind gun owner, but not a drunken one. I feel another legal challenge coming along.



The Ethics of Murder

Writing in the Journal of Medical Ethics (an offshoot of the British Medical Journal) two Australian-based academics have called for the killing of some new born babies to be legalised. It won't surprise you to learn that it is disabled children they have in their sights.

Francesca Minerva and Alberto Giubilini argue that there is no real difference between a foetus and a newborn as neither are "persons". Consequently, any baby who may be a burden to the parents, or society, 'perhaps through disability', should be killed.

It's important to note that these two Oxbridge educated charmers are not advocating infanticide, merely promoting "after-birth abortion"!

Superheroes and Disability – Part 2

Contributor Brett Savage concludes his exploration of how disability is portrayed in the works of Marvel and DC comics

The X-Men

The Uncanny X-Men was, and still is, one of Marvel's most successful properties. Debuting in 1963, the X-Men are a group of mutants (superheroes who are born with or developed superpowers without an external agency). The group is led by Professor X, a wheelchair user, who is arguably the most famous disabled superhero in the field of comics. As an aside, the writer of Doom Patrol felt that Marvel had stolen his idea of having a disabled superhero. Professor X possesses wondrous telepathic powers which allow him to read minds, and if need be, control the thoughts of others. After seeing a rise in anti-mutant sentiment in the general public, Professor X searches out other mutants to join 'Charles Xavier's School For The Gifted' (a clear case of segregated education, if ever I saw one).

Professor X is painted very much as a benign, moral figure who feels that humanity should accept mutants as equals, without having

to endure discrimination and bigotry. Although he could coerce people with his telepathic powers, he feels that is unethical and hopes that the rest of society will one day learn to accept mutants. The original X-Men drew a lot of inspiration from the Civil Rights Movement, and although he was most likely inspired by Martin Luther King Jr., many noted that the name 'Professor X' is strikingly similar to Malcolm X. However, Professor X is very much in favour of the peaceful affirmation of mutant rights, whereas his arch-nemesis, Magneto seeks a more violent solution to the issue. The Brotherhood of Evil Mutants is effectively a splinter group who feels that mutants are in every way superior to human beings. They seek to dominate humanity and see mutation as the next step in human evolution.

In the mid 80's, Professor X is reborn into a clone body by an advanced alien society, in which he can now walk (although the alien scientist clearly hadn't gotten around to the pressing matter of sorting out Male Pattern Baldness at the time). Although there were some clumsy emotional rendering of the good professors joy at being able to walk again, it wasn't long until he was back in his wheelchair (as a result of an anti-mutant hate crime). Worryingly, infrequently throughout the run of

the comic, Professor X, muses that he could maybe walk if he put in the 'right' amount of mental effort.

Eugenics and marginalisation are common themes throughout the comics, where mutants constantly voice their anxiety



about being different and feel that they are shunned by mainstream society. Politicians are often calling for eugenic restrictions and the registration of mutants.

The Uncanny X-Men can be seen as quite a clear analogy for disabled people, though it had plenty of racial allegories too. It skillfully shows an oppressed people, who are undervalued, surviving in a harsh world where the general public openly scorn them; where politicians make decisions that try to threaten their survival and often engage with other mutants who threaten peaceful co-existence. It also touches on feelings of isolation and trying to fit in with

society (even by hiding their mutation), which is inevitably futile. The X-Men are often seen at odds with society, even if they are saving it on a monthly basis from peril. Often times their actions are misrepresented or misinterpreted as being sinister. Yes, it is often clumsy, it avoids real life issues (Professor X doesn't seem to encounter much in the way of access issues) and paints characters broadly, but it does serve as an interesting parable for people who would not consider themselves to be part of mainstream society.

Batgirl

As with most popular superheroes in the fifties, Batman found himself with a female counterpart – Batgirl, who was Barbara Gordon, daughter of Batman's chief ally, Commissioner Gordon.

Batman: The Killing Joke, written by Alan Moore, was a chief exponent of giving mainstream superhero comics more of an adult sensibility. In part of an elaborate plot to break Commissioner Gordon's spirit (and by extension, Batman's), the Joker shoots Batgirl through the spine.

The Joker photographs her (in various states of undress) and shows a captured Commissioner Gordon his handiwork. The Joker's intention is

to drive both Batman and Gordon into a position where they are no longer upholding the law, driven by a need to mete out their own retribution. This seems to work as after speaking to Batgirl, and realising she will no longer walk, Batman sets out to capture The Joker by any means necessary. As you would expect, Batman retains his composure at the last minute and brings The Joker to justice. The Killing Joke is perhaps the first time that The Joker's mental health is addressed with any level of maturity and sensitivity. Although clearly a villain, he is given a traumatic back story with which the reader can on some level empathise with, and places his mental health issues into some kind of believable framework.

With Batgirl, this left a popular comic character in a position that would be troublesome for a medium that is based largely in action sequences. Batgirl is re-introduced as Oracle. Oracle is now an information provider, whose knowledge of the police's communication and computer systems assists the Suicide Squad, and later the Justice League of America. Of course, being a comic

character, it was only a matter of time until Barbara Gordon had her broken back fixed by some contrivance or another. Actually no, it

turned out that Oracle was a highly popular character in the DC stable, and many attempts by writers to ‘rejuvenate’ her were nipped in the bud by the editorial team.

Oracle was given her own team, The Birds of Prey, which was an all female team of bird (in the avian sense) influenced crimefighters. It took a long time for Oracle (and Birds Of Prey) to find a stable writing team. Consequently, the characters of Birds Of Prey were often badly written. Oracle could be full of patronising platitudes or gung-ho attempts at ‘overcoming’ her impairment, written by writers who were not generally used to writing characters who weren’t muscle-bound, heterosexual, non-disabled and white, let alone female. It took Gail Simone to write Oracle as a fully realised character with any kind of depth. In some respects, disability issues were acknowledged. Supervillains and petty thugs alike would often remove Oracle from her wheelchair. She would always be victorious in the end, but with some realistic difficulty. Oracle wasn’t always relegated to IT support, and would often pitch in with the action.

Clearly, Simone had been listening to disabled people in her audience as access issues are often brought up.

In recent years, Comics have seen a decline in sales (along with print media in general). A popular move for comic companies is to 'reboot' their properties, meaning re-writing the character arc from a new starting point. It is a way of generating more sales and hopefully, a new audience. The rebirth of Batgirl as Cassandra Cain (who is conspicuously non-disabled) was met with a lot of criticism. Many thought that it devalued Oracle as a character, especially as she was one of the only high profile disabled comic characters.

There has been online petition called 'Barbara's Not Broken', which has cut across many platforms of social media. It is interesting to see how the audience has reacted to a disabled superhero, and perhaps against expectation, lobbied for her survival.



The Cliffhanger

This article has only really just scratched the surface of the relationship between comic characters and disability. I'm sure plenty of connections can be drawn, not least in the traditional way villains are often portrayed as the typical bitter and twisted disabled person, with a grudge against humanity. It is worth remembering that comics were (and pretty much still are) a medium for young people who demand escapist action adventure stories. Most comic characters (and the development of the medium) were also born in an era where disability issues were never really considered by mainstream society.

There are some really good comic writers who have a social awareness in the field of comic writing, but to be honest, most real world issues such as race, homophobia and any other form of oppression are often seen as uncomfortable realities that shouldn't invade a medium that deals with fantasy. Although comics routinely deal with violence (often on a grand scale), the real battles in the world go, for the most part, undocumented.

Brett Savage

Learning from our Past

Here, Kirsten Hearn reflects on her experiences of being involved with women's liberation, dyke politics and the disabled people's movement.

Nothing I say today makes sense unless you understand this: Forever it seems, disabled people have been blamed for existing. We are shunned, excluded and our right to exist challenged; challenged by attitudes that sees us as less, inferior or even unaffordable.

You need go no further than the Welfare Reform Act and the Health and Social Care Act for examples. In a time of austerity, we, disabled people, are expendable. Benefit scroungers, malingerers, they call us, and the hate crimes rise as we are insulted, attacked and sometimes killed. But the truth is this, it's the world in which we live that puts up barriers to stop disabled people being equal, not our impairments. Being disabled isn't the problem; it's more the way the world is designed. Medical labels package us for non-disabled convenience and we are denied a right to exist.

If we want full equality in society, we must remove the barriers that

deny inclusion and not attack disabled people for existing, and then we'll have an equal world.

When I came out as a lesbian way back in 1982, I thought I was the only blind dyke in the world. Nowhere could I find signs of inclusion. Disabled dykes were consequently very thin on the ground. But not for long. I soon found other disabled dykes. Most often, I'd find them sitting outside the pubs, discos and conferences, or within such events, existing on the margins, struggling to be included and feeling incredibly disempowered.



But you know, when disempowerment turns to rage, this fuels action. Sisters against Disablement were formed to challenge that exclusion. Our aim was to make an inclusive world for disabled and non-disabled women.

Our anger took political form; pickets and articles. Our anger took practical form; the SAD access code.

The values of the women's movement and of the lesbian feminist scene in which I was involved, tried to embrace the inclusion of disabled women. There were some lamentable failures like the inaccessible Lesbian Sex and Sexuality Conference and Feminist Book Faire. There were some resounding successes, such as provision of audio versions of the London Women's Liberation Newsletter, and the use of the SAD access code to plan inclusive events such as Lesbian Line Socials.

The personal is political, and the political personal, the women's liberation movement declared. The "who we were" was at the heart of what we did. This is why when we argued, it was so very painful. Our very identity was being challenged or so we felt.

As the eighties rolled on, I found myself working more and more in mixed lesbian and gay campaigns. I had become a professional lesbian, (working for the Haringey Lesbian and Gay Unit). When Section 28 reared its ugly head, we had to do something to stop it. It was necessary to compromise, which I did for the

sake of the greater good. For we were all in it together weren't we!

After years working with gay men and trying to make events such as Pride London more inclusive of LGBT disabled people, what I found was that the compromise was made mostly on my side. We disabled lesbians were as excluded as ever.

They just didn't get it. They didn't get it that the problem was the world and not us. Tied to their fiercely symmetrical, slim fit young look, anything that rucked up the smoothness of that image was and still is forbidden.



History tempered by our memories is always being rewritten. It's fashionable to remember

the last Lesbian Strength march as that time when dykes fought each other, over what, I'm not precisely sure, even though apparently, I was there. It's fashionable to decry the whole of the second-wave women's movement as a force for exclusion rather than what it was, a revolutionary movement for social change responsible for so much that is positive about women's position and rights today.

Our liberation as lesbians is every bit as bound up in the need to smash patriarchy as it is about our love rights. When we challenge patriarchy whose outward manifestation is male domination which is still at the heart of how our society organises, we set women free to love whom so ever we want, to dance fully with ourselves alone, with one or more partners, in temporary or permanent connection. When we challenge patriarchy, we set people free to be whoever they are upon the continuum of the gender identity spectrum from female to male and back to female again and all points in-between.



So here we are at Dyke March London. Here, is an attempt to recognise the diversity of our community and to include us all. Let us reach out to connect with each other, to celebrate what unites us, to respect what divides us. Whoever we are. For history is a wise and loving teacher. We'd do well to listen to her wisdom.

Kirsten Hearn

Thanks: Photographs from the Dyke March by Peter Marshall

Backless Bears

Well I didn't mean to..
Sniff, Sniff
But I've limited mobility...
When she lays me on my
back...
I've little choice in the
Matter, but to stay there

All bears have mobility
Difficulties, even teddy bear,
So phone now, and pledge
Your donations to the Bear
Fund for bear appeal

"Bear Mobility" promises to
promote bear awareness
week and support all
"backless bears"

I must say, how very grateful
I am to the Bear Mobility
Funding
But,
Please don't visit me,
Look down on me from above
Announce - deliberately,
Slowly and loudly...

"How are you today,
Within yourself,
You poor bear?"

And pay for the heating and
The...er...chairs?!!!
"Cos I'm still on my back"
I've little choice in the
Matter

Carol Batton

A Time for Renewal?

The following brief article questions whether the good intentions of some disabled people's organisations are misguided in relation to REMPLOY

The disabled people's movement is in desperate need of leadership and coherence. With the Coalition Government's blatant disregard for the Social Model of Disability and paradoxical approach to policy making, the disabled people's movement seems to be in a state of uncertainty.

Nowhere is this reflected more than the reaction to the closure of RemploY factories. It is a perverse coincidence that disabled activists support a business that actively promotes segregation in the workplace.

As disabled people, we have used the Social Model of Disability to actively campaign for the removal of all forms of segregation in society.

The subject of disabled people and unemployment is a sensitive one. No-one is comfortable with the idea of disabled people losing their jobs.

However, the reaction of organisations such as DPAC and Inclusion London inadvertently supports the view of disabled people being tragic and in need of protection.

The position of the disabled people's movement should be to welcome the closure of Remploy factories as an end to sheltered employment, whilst advocating a policy whereby disabled individuals are supported to find employment in the open job market. This policy is not painless and is fraught with difficulties, however as disabled activists we must realise that the path to equality for disabled people is a long, hard one.

The purpose of this short article is not to criticise, but to stimulate debate. With disabled people being attacked from every quarter it is vital that the movement coalesces around a robust set of principles, underpinned by the principle of disabled people's emancipation and inclusion in society.

Many may disagree the contents and tone of this article if so lets have the debate the movement was at it strongest when this very magazine was a platform for that debate.

T Pain

Great Expectations?

Eowyn Amath recounts her experiences of having her care package being slashed through successive care reviews.

They built us up, and now they are doing a very good job of knocking us down. We aren't disabled people, we are skittles, and the ball careering amongst us is the government.

History

In the 1980s there was a groundswell of lobbying and activity to radically change the lives of disabled people through the concept of Independent Living. From disabled people's perspective, this was having choice and control over our lives. Rather than being stuck in residential institutions or inaccessible family homes we could start choosing to have our own homes and set up the support we need to live how we choose.

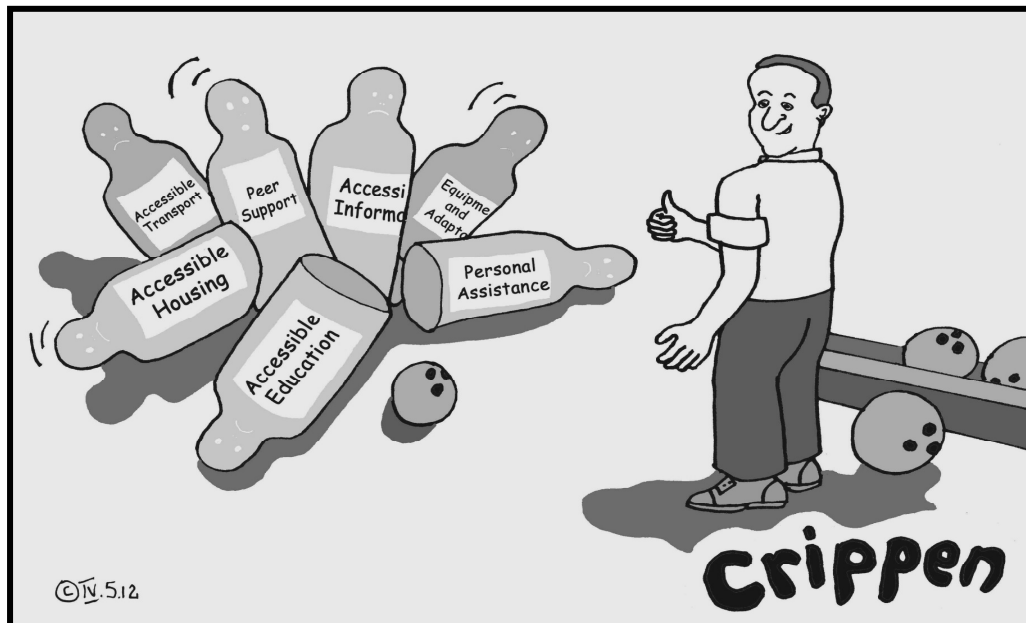
As the 1980s and 1990s progressed, the Seven Needs of Independent Living identified by the Disabled People's Movement – accessible information, peer support, accessible housing, equipment / adaptations, personal

assistance, accessible environment and accessible transport – were fought for by a variety of disabled people's groups.

The opportunity to employ personal assistants was initially provided by some local authorities “through the back door” by using third parties to channel the funds to individual disabled people. This, and the establishment of the Independent Living Fund in 1988 were the foundation of the glimmering hope and expectation that disabled people started to feel.

Success

1996 brought a significant change when Direct Payments became legal. Guidelines were drawn up for the use of Direct Payments. Both the letter and spirit of Direct Payments were based on the premise that disabled people would no longer need to depend on unpaid assistance from family and friends, nor would we only have the choice of residential care or home care provided by the local authority. Assessments by Social Workers started from the point of what disabled people needed support with not only to exist, but to live a fulfilling and rounded life as part of the community we live in rather than isolated from it.



The advent of Individual Budget seemed to take this one step further by allowing people not only to use the money for employing a personal assistant, but for some other elements – such as buying equipment.

Going Backwards

There has been a dramatic change in the last three years or so. Assessments no longer begin from the point of what support disabled person needs, they now start from the point of asking what informal support a person has and then looking at how much of the gap left can be filled with the available resources from the local authority.

Adding to this, applications to the Independent Living Fund, which tops up cash from the local

authority for people with greater support needs, have been suspended.

People who used to receive 24-7 support are now told this is under threat. People who used to have enough PA hours support to do more than get up in the morning, eat and have other personal needs met are now being told their hours will be cut to the point where that is all they can do. And the latest I have heard is disabled people being told that for even the most basic needs, such as cooking, there will be no support – they must either use microwave food or apply to a voluntary sector organisation for support/volunteers.

It seems as though the door to this wonderful new world of disabled people having the same choice control over our lives as non-disabled people is being closed to us.

Many disabled people have ventured into this world. We have been able to go out socially, become involved in community activities, be visibly out and about in our local towns and cities, and much more.

Now it feels as though all this is being taken away from us, just as we are beginning to get used to having it.

Political Becomes Personal

Before I became involved in the Disabled People's Movement in the mid 90s I "accepted my fate" so to speak. I wanted a good life, I wanted a job, and a pleasant home, but it didn't occur to me that the inconveniences (and sometimes mortifications) I experienced could be removed from my life. I either had to ask friends or family to help me with my post and other personal issues, or had to ask shop assistants to help me find what I needed in the shops. It wasn't pleasant, it wasn't easy, but I just got on with it and managed. I didn't have much variety in my life, as it was hard to get to new places on my own. There were some things it

was not possible to get support with. For a start off I didn't want my parents assisting me to any social or peer support event. For many disabled people, not only myself, we can't be "out" to our families as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans. And most young people in their teens and 20s don't want their parents around when they are going out for a good time anyway!

Then Direct Payments came along. That just opened up life for me 1,000 fold. I started off in 2003 with a very generous 24 hours a week – I had a ball!! I could buy all my shopping



so easily; I went for walks in parks and countryside; I went to social events; I could have anything I was interested in read to me; and I attended evening classes. All so easy with a PA – it was the second revelation of my life! (The first revelation being the Social Model of Disability).

Since those heydays life has changed so dramatically for the worse. I moved cities and my Direct Payments was almost halved. Although it did restrict what I could do compared to before, it was OK. Though not able to do everything I wanted to, I managed to still get shopping easily, have a few things read, and go to an evening group for peer support. I

just had to prioritise more carefully and make choices between tasks and activities. In hindsight, I still class those as part of the “heydays”.

Then I moved again, to a town that feels like it is, in terms of Adult Social Care, 20 years behind, and grudgingly venturing into the 1990s never mind the 2010s.

My Direct Payments was cut to 3 hours a week. This town considers there is no need for combating social isolation for disabled people. We should be grateful to have support to get up, eat and go to bed. And if we're lucky, go to a social services run dominos club once a week. OK, slight exaggeration, but not that far wrong! That is what my 40 year old partner has just been offered when asking for individual budget hours to reduce her isolation.

My 3 hours a week are 1 hour for reading post (generous?), and two hours for shopping. I was told the time for shopping is a concession to me because I have a very specific diet which it is hard to satisfy in standard supermarkets and with internet food shopping.

No more going out, no more walks for exercise, no more reading interesting books and other material, no more evening classes, no more

accessing peer support from the lesbian community, nothing. So much for the spirit of Direct Payments and Individual Budget!!

I do feel like my life is so much more constricted than it was for those 7 years that I had a reasonable amount of PA support. There is a difference in my health, and most of all I feel like I've received a huge metaphorical slap in the face.

It really does feel like we disabled people have had our expectations of life built up, and then snatched away from us just when we started to have trust in life being better for us.

Eowyn Amath

To Know is Not to Appreciate

Jade March reflects on a new understanding for the barriers faced by wheelchair users.

Experiences in the last year have brought me to understand that to “know” about various access issues isn’t to “appreciate” how important they are to the people who experience them, and it has been a very humbling realisation.

I have been involved in disabled people’s groups for 19 years now, and have a number of friends who are wheelchair users. I did consider myself very well versed in the variety of access issues and barriers disabled people face, including those access issues which do not apply to me. I suppose, in some way, I was quite conceited, thinking that I had a good understanding of at least some of the access issues that do not affect me, but I now realise I was wrong...

Last year my partner became a wheelchair user. We both have other impairments which lead to some access issues already, but very different ones to those we are now facing. Neither of us drive, and because of other impairment reasons neither of us will ever be

able to drive. Getting around streets and on public transport has been a real eye-opener for us both.

Obviously it doesn't impact on me directly, but when with my partner I feel a little bit (although no where near all) the frustration and anger caused by streets, shops, buildings and transport not being accessible to us when we are out and about together.

I've lost count of the number of times we have had to back-track because we get to a side road which has no dropped kerb, or left an apparently wheelchair accessible shop because it is too crammed with shelves to be able to get in any further than the doorway, or gone to a shop we used to go in only to remember it has a step so we can't get in.

And then going further... When we have wanted to go somewhere that doesn't have a wheelchair accessible bus route or wheelchair accessible train station. The vagaries of public transport staff are also another experience entirely.

I will give credit where it is due, some bus and train staff are excellent. No fuss, no flap, and seemingly with the attitude that you are just another passenger with the same right to be on

the bus or train as anyone else. And the Northern Rail support line is excellent too.

But you still get the others who resent having to get a ramp out, and, for example, even though you have booked a space on the train, will not let you on because it is crowded and 4 people can stand in the space you have booked for yourself.

I used to “know” that for mobility impaired people their cars are important and precious, but I feel I now understand why. That is a very big difference in understanding. It has led me to wonder how much of my “knowledge” of access issues isn’t worth even the paper it could be written on...



Jade March

Sanity

I found it
When I said
"I've got it"

You said
"You haven't"
And I lost it

Carol Batton

"Coerced Medication"

I've been coerced
Victimized, cornered, tortured,
Vilified, caught, condemned,
Institutionalised,
deprived of children
had the will-to-live taken from me

I've been regulated, deregulated,
Denounced, disparaged, denied,
Blamed for inactivity,
told to lose weight,
assumed to be 'Illiterate'

Yes, Doctor
I complied with 'Medication'

Carol Batton

Friendly Monsters

(For Andrew Kernan - killed in Liverpool)

You bubble all your chemicals
In your upstairs pharmaceuticals
You turn us into
'Frankensteins'.

A 'Frankenstein' is gentle
and a 'Frankenstein' is kind
and a 'Frankenstein' is killed
and a 'Frankenstein' is blamed

Carol Batton

Wish We Wouldn't See!

Thought We'd Never See!



Wish We Wouldn't See: ConDem Ministers launching yet another attack on disabled people under the guise of supporting greater independence and integration. It has probably gone unnoticed by IDS and co that every time they demonise disabled people hate crimes

against us increase – or could it be that they just don't care?

Thought We'd Never See: Commiserations go to Manchester City FC supporters on winning the Premier League, for the first time in 44 years. You now face the prospect of being sidelined by the Glory-Hunters who bedevil successful clubs, just look at what has happened over the border in Trafford; genuine fans priced-out by the prawn sandwich brigade.

Still it was typical of City to win it the hard way, but at least this had the benefit of making United even sicker at losing out.

GREATER
MANCHESTER
coalition
— of disabled people —



**GMCDP, BEVC, Aked Close,
Ardwick, Manchester, M12 4AN
Voice & Text: 0161 273 5154
Fax: 0161 273 4164
E-mail: info@gmcdp.com**

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