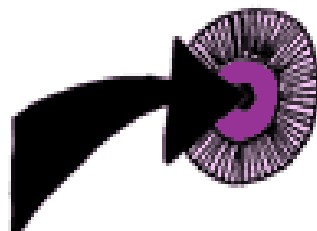


# OUT AND ABOUT IN MANCHESTER



**A Quality Sub Group Report  
By Janet Flood and John Cookney  
Assisted by Anna Fedeczko – Senior Quality Development  
Officer and Melanie Chapman – Research Associate.  
December 2006**

## WHAT THIS REPORT IS ABOUT

This report is about the work Janet Flood and John Cookney have been doing as members of the Quality sub Group of the Manchester Learning Disability Partnership Board. Janet and John have been members of the group for nearly two years; they are self advocates and volunteers on the Quality, Research and Service Development Team.

In 2003 the Quality Sub Group wrote a report about the quality safeguards in learning disability services in Manchester. One of the recommendations agreed was to “consider ways of monitoring how well those ordinary services available to the general public are serving learning disabled people, for example, by means of surveys and visits etc.” Janet and John said they would be interested in going out and about in Manchester and finding out how accessible places were, so the group helped them with suggestions of places to visit. This report is about those visits and the key issues which arose.



Janet and John were also keen to have their comments noted on how people treated them as they both felt that was just as important as being able to physically use a building.



## John at the Learning Disability Today Conference and Exhibition – March 2006 – telling someone all about the Manchester Learning Disability Partnership.



### **This is what John says about himself:**

I am a volunteer for the Quality, Research and Service Development Team. I do that work in an office and live in supported lodgings. As a volunteer I am doing research into holidays to see how accessible they are for disabled people. I am doing this with Melanie Chapman who is a researcher. We've had meetings with other people doing research and attended residential workshops paid for by the University of Manchester. We've also given presentations. I also go to Think Quality, which is a group that meets every month to discuss different issues like transport, health, where people live, and what people do in their spare time. I take the minutes and then type them up at the office. I also go to the Partnership Board Quality Sub Group. For the Quality Sub Group Janet and I have gone on visits to different places – this report is about those visits.

I am also a committee member of Manchester People First, a member of a consultancy group for Adult Placement Services which meets at their Wythenshawe office, and, of the Disabled People's Access Group which meets monthly at Manchester Town Hall. Sometimes I am asked to be a volunteer panel member when services are interviewing for new staff.

In my spare time I am a British Trust Conservation Volunteer based at Reddish Vale. I work with the wardens collecting litter, mending fences and footpaths. I usually cycle everywhere and know all the cycle paths in Manchester!

## **This is what Janet says about herself:**



Hi! My name is Janet. I live on my own and have done so for the past five years. Last year four particular things happened to me:

- I went to my brother's wedding in Scotland.
- I went to see G4 in concert with my dad.
- I met G4 at a book signing at the opening of Borders bookshop in Cheetham Hill.
- I was told something that was to change my life forever. I was told I had diabetes. I had been staying with my mum and dad when my mum noticed that I was always getting tired and thirsty. She knew something was wrong and took me to the doctor at my local surgery. It took me a long time to get used to the idea and learn about diabetes and how to eat properly. Now, I can test myself.

I have been a member of the Learning Disability Partnership Board since it was set up in 2002 and enjoy taking part in the meetings. Being on the board has led to me being involved in the Quality Sub Group, doing roadshows in the day centres and telling people about 'Valuing People', being a volunteer on staff interview panels (I was on the interview panel that appointed the Head of Service for the Manchester Learning Disability Partnership), chairing seminars at the Learning Disability Today Exhibitions, and just generally speaking up on behalf of people who have a learning disability. Sometimes I have also worked with Manmedia and starred in one of their DVD productions.

For a long time I have been involved with Mencap in Manchester and at one time was one of their paid admin workers.

In the future I would like to get involved in staff training.

I get support from a domiciliary carer and from a care manager to live independently.

My parents do a lot to support me too and I see them and speak on the phone regularly

## The Visits

We decided what visits to do at the Quality Sub Group meetings.

We would meet up and go on visits to different places to see how accessible they are and talk to staff about some of the issues. We would meet in Manchester and travel by public transport to different places like museums, shops, restaurants.

We would walk around the buildings and talk to members of staff introducing ourselves as members of the Quality Sub Group. We would note whether there were ramps or stairs or lifts and we always checked the toilets. We would go around all of the building. To return home we would always try to use a different form of transport. Some of the visits were to public buildings, as we were interested in how easy it was to find your way around.

Something that we were both interested in was the way that people treated us and how they behaved because that is just as important as, and sometimes more important than physical access.



The cost of getting out and about sometimes makes places inaccessible to people with disabilities and for this report we've tried to consider that along with all the other issues.



To help with this work John thought it would be a good idea to visit the Manchester Disabled Access Group to find out how they do their access audits. It was explained that members of the group have a checklist which they take to places and tick off as they go

around. The group will train people who would like to get involved in these kinds of audits. They liked the idea that Janet and John were also looking at how helpful and polite staff are to people who are disabled. John was given the contact details for Councillor Martin Pagel who has special responsibility for disabled access issues on the City Council.



<http://www.mdpag.org.uk/campaigns.htm>

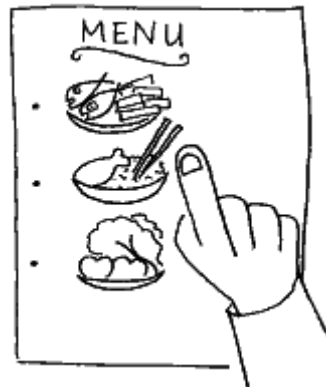
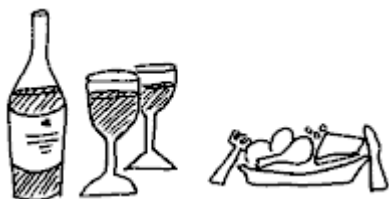
We didn't have a checklist on a clipboard but these are the things we considered for each visit:

- Getting to and from
- Getting around the building
- Toilets
- About the people who work there
- Cost
- What we thought

We wanted this report to give an idea of life in Manchester; that's why we've been to restaurants, shops and museums as well as to more official type places like the Town Hall.

## OUT AND ABOUT

### 1. The Number 1 Buffet – Whitworth St. Manchester.



There's a bus stop very close to this Chinese buffet style restaurant if you are traveling from south Manchester, but even so, it is very close to the city centre. However, there is no wheelchair access and you have to go down some steps to get in. It costs £5.50 for the buffet meal and you can eat as much as you like and even go back for more!!! Because the restaurant is buffet style and you have to help yourself there is more space to get around than in places where you are served. There were lots of choices including English dishes. The staff were very nice and helped to explain the menu.

Toilets are located on a different floor and you have to use stairs.

This was a lovely friendly place to eat and not too expensive, but unfortunately the building is not very accessible to people who use wheelchairs or who have mobility problems.

In 2004 the Manchester Disabled People's Access Group did a survey of restaurants, pubs and shops in Manchester. They have kept all the information they collected and are happy to advise people. The telephone number is **0161 273 5033**.

## **2. The Museum of Science and Industry.**



The 33 bus takes you very close to this museum in Castlefields, Manchester.

At the admissions desk there is lots of information about how to get around the museum; we found it very complicated but the reception staff were very helpful. There are lots of interesting things to see with lifts to all the floors. The only inaccessible place is the underground hall as you have to use the stairs.

The 'Light and Sound' exhibition is good fun as you can touch, feel, see and listen to things.

There are lots of toilets and separate ones for people who use wheelchairs.

There is a charge to visit the special exhibitions but entrance to the museum itself is free. The café is very expensive.

### **3. Councillor's surgery.**



**Councillor Alexander Cowan – Liberal Democrat – Levenshulme. Surgeries at St. Andrew's School.**

Councillor Cowan was very friendly and very helpful. We spent a whole hour talking to him about the things we do. We talked to him about 'Valuing People' and whether he knew how many people with a learning disability lived in his ward. He didn't know the exact number but said it was something he would try to find out. He answered all our questions. The building was very accessible and he said he always makes sure that the public have easy access. The toilets were locked though and the nearest ones were ten minutes away.

We were made to feel very welcome.

### **4. Borders Bookshop and G4. Janet's favourite visit!**



This excursion was very enjoyable and exciting but complicated to plan and tiring to live through, however it was worth it if you are a 'real fan'. People with a learning disability would need a lot of

support to do what we did, you have to look out for news of these events and then plan how to get there and support someone to enjoy the experience. On the day itself you have to be very patient because of all the waiting and queuing.

This event took place in Cheetham Hill. The no. 135 bus from Piccadilly takes you there. Janet had to travel by train and then by tram to get the bus!

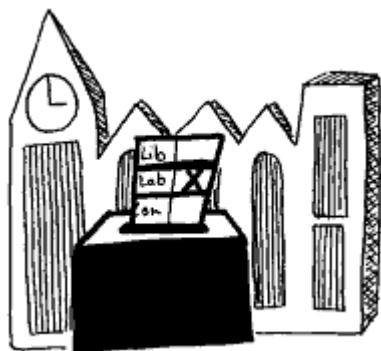
Janet is a big fan of G4, she had already seen them in concert and had bought the book, ready for them to sign. There was some confusion over where Janet had bought the book because for it to be signed she had to have bought it in that bookshop. Janet spoke to the event organizer who agreed to allow her to have it signed.

There were lots of people there. We had to form a queue outside and wait for about twenty minutes until they finally came out to greet their fans, sing a song and invite people in to meet them. When we eventually met they were great. Very friendly and genuine. Janet got her poster signed too.

The bookshop itself is very accessible. Everything is on one level, there are toilets, seating areas, and a coffee shop. It is more than just a bookshop, it sells CD's and DVD's, posters, games, stationery, greeting cards, gifts and trinkets. Staff are very polite and will help you look for things. There is a really big car park with lots of parking spaces for vehicles with a disabled sticker.

This shopping centre is a quieter alternative to the busy city centre. Most of the other shops in this 'shopping village' are single-storey except for 'George', 'TK Max' and 'Sports World', but they have lifts as well as escalators. There are no public toilets except for in the café/restaurant places. By public transport it is easily accessible, with many and frequent buses.

## 5. Member of Parliament Surgery.



## Paul Goggins – Wythenshawe and Sale East.



We had to make an appointment to see Paul Goggins – we chose his surgery because it is local to Janet. Appointments are only for Saturdays as he's in London at the House of Commons during the week. Our appointment was on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January, 2006 at 10.35am.

We'd met at Sale Metrolink station in plenty of time to get to his surgery. We both introduced ourselves and he shook our hands and said it was nice of us to take the time to come and see him. He asked us if we had had any difficulty finding his surgery. All the time we were there a secretary was taking notes. We gave him a copy of the easy read version of Valuing People which he said he would read. We had a long discussion about transport as he was very interested in whether public transport was accessible. We explained some of the issues for people who are disabled. We spent quite a long time with him. He gave us his business card and said he would write to us. We did receive a letter on House of Commons paper thanking us for our visit.

More people should visit their local MP's. The more they see and hear from us the better they will understand our needs. Our votes count too.



## 6. Telephone Calls.



Whilst working in the office John has been making a note of how people respond to him when he phones them up. The Think Quality Group gave him this idea because people said that generally they had no confidence in using the phone, it was sometimes hard to understand people and very upsetting if anyone was rude, insulting, or just impatient. So far John has only phoned staff who work for the Manchester Learning Disability Partnership. He's phoned his local Community Learning Disability Team and asked to speak to his care manager, the Central Supported Living Scheme, Day Resource Centres and the Adult Placement Service.

On the whole he has found people to be polite and well mannered, he has been asked his name and who he would like to speak to. He did however think that the service offices have very long names and it is sometimes difficult to know whether you have got through to the right place.

If you know who you want to speak to it's easier than if you are just phoning to find something out.

## 7. City of Manchester Town Hall.



John and Janet visited the Town Hall on the 29/09/06. John travelled from Levenshulme on the bus and Janet from Wythenshawe on the tram.

At the main entrance in Albert Square there are steps leading to the entrance. There is a ramp at the Lloyd St. entrance. There is an information desk close to both entrances. At the information desk a very polite receptionist called Lisa spoke to us. She was very helpful and very friendly, explaining that the Town Hall had recently been closed to the public because of the Labour Party Conference. We explained who we were and what we were doing. We walked along the ground floor corridor and took the lift to the second floor as Janet isn't very confident using long, winding staircases. There was no-one on the desk. We walked around and had a look in some of the committee rooms and even the Lord Mayor's Parlour. We eventually ended up in the Sculpture Hall on the ground floor where there was a coffee morning in aid of McMillan Cancer Research. The people serving were very helpful and offered to go and get us drinks of our choice. Drinks were free but you could make a donation. Janet recognized Tony Lloyd MP who had been to a meeting and we went over to talk to him and his wife, again explaining ourselves. We even had our photos taken with him.

The Town Hall is a beautiful building but can look very frightening because of its size. It is very easy to get around and very accessible. All the staff members we met were very friendly. The toilets are all accessible. It's free to get in and really interesting if you want to find out more about the history of Manchester.

The Tourist Information Centre is next to the Town Hall. People working there will tell you anything you want to know about Manchester in a patient and polite manner.

## **8. Choosing Staff – Being on interview panels**



John has been on a training course to learn how to be a volunteer on an interview panel. This is a good way of people being more involved in choosing staff. John has been on a panel four times. He says, " before the day of the interviews you are

invited to a meeting to discuss what questions to ask, and what time to arrive. Taxis are paid for and lunch is provided as well as tea and coffee throughout the day. I get paid for this work and get to see the different offices staff work in. Sometimes interviewing can go on for three days. I enjoy phoning people and telling them whether or not they've got the job".

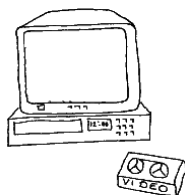
Janet has also been involved on interview panels. She enjoys asking questions and finding out what people are like and how they would deal with certain situations but more importantly she likes knowing that her opinions count.

### 9. Library visits



In October 2006 John visited Longsight Library to find out about services available. He met with the supervisor and one of the assistants who told him about Active Advice. An Active Advice worker is available in libraries across Manchester to give advice and guidance sessions to disabled people about photo-copying, the internet, borrowing books, book sales, and leaflets about training, employment, education and skills development. Support to use the library is available if you have a physical disability, learning disability or a mental health problem. All library staff know about Active Advice, or contact Patty on **0161 234 1995**.

Janet visited Wythenshawe Forum Library at the Civic Centre. She asked about joining. The assistant was very helpful and explained to Janet what she had to do, taking her through each step slowly. She had her library card within minutes and can now borrow books, cd's and use the internet.



## 10. Manchester Royal Infirmary



John went to the Manchester Royal Infirmary in October to find out how easy it would be to find various places. He wanted to find his way to out-patients, the PALS office, the cafeteria and to find one of the doctors who has a special interest in learning disabilities.

John thought the signs for out-patients, the cafeteria and the PALS office were clear and easy to follow if you can read, otherwise you would have to ask people all the time. The cafeteria is very expensive. At the PALS office John introduced himself and met with one of the officers. PALS officers are people who advise patients and their families. At the Infirmary there are four officers. They are very friendly and can give you lots of information. I was told I would have to go to another building in the grounds to find the doctor I was looking for and that it would be easier to make an appointment first.

Two months later John went to his appointment. The office was very hard to find, he was given a colour-coded map but found it difficult to follow. John said, “the doctor’s secretary was very polite and took my name and address. The doctor did not look at me when I spoke to him though, which made it difficult to talk to him so I did not stay very long”.

“I made my way home on the number 197 bus.”



## 11. Levenshulme Health Centre



John has found everyone working at his local health centre to be very helpful and polite. There is a ramp at the entrance and inside there are three receptionists. In the waiting area there is a sign that lights up and tells you when the doctor is free, the receptionists will advise you if it's your turn.

There are other services at the centre too, like the district nurse and a community dentist. You can also pick up leaflets about things to do with your health but you need to be able to read them or have someone read them to you.

## 12. ` Fitness First `



'Fitness First ' is a health and leisure club with a swimming pool. There are three in Manchester. John went along to his local one and introduced himself. He was shown around and all the facilities were explained to him. The club was very accessible, there was a lift and separate changing and toilet facilities for people who are disabled. The staff were very helpful and asked John questions about the exercise he does. John thought people

might not be able to use the exercise machines without support from people who are trained to use them.

Not all the activities are about exercise, you can have massages and aromatherapy treatments to help you relax. There is also a small café and a shop selling clothes and equipment.

You have to be a member to join the club. It costs about £20 a month if you join when they have a special offer otherwise it's more expensive. Sometimes you can get a discount depending on your age. The clubs are open every day of the week and are also open in the evenings.

Keeping fit is very important. John likes to cycle and will cycle everywhere as long as the weather is fine. He knows all the cycle routes around Manchester and sometimes goes on organized bike rides. Janet likes to swim and enjoys going to the Aquatics Centre.

### **13. Janet's holiday in Blackpool**



In November 2006 Janet went on a short break to Blackpool with her mum and dad. They go every year during the quiet season to take in the sea air and see some of the shows. They stayed at the Sheraton Hotel. The staff were polite and friendly, the food was 'yummy', very spacious rooms, not too expensive if you share, entertainment every night! Highly recommended!!!!!!! Transport is sometimes a problem in low season as fewer buses operate in the sea front area but there are trams, even though they tend to get rather full and are not very accessible to people who have a wheelchair.



## More about John and Janet

John is now a volunteer warden at Reddish Vale Country Park. His work includes picking litter, repairing fences, footpath maintenance and woodland management. He works with Tony, Graham and Ann. Here are some photos of John at work:



Sometimes John will go out on patrol with Tony in one of the Stockport Council vehicles looking for abandoned vehicles. If any are found they phone the police who then check if the vehicles have been stolen. John and Tony also check the car parks for fly

tipping. John goes on all the health walks and helps out at events in the visitors centre at weekends.

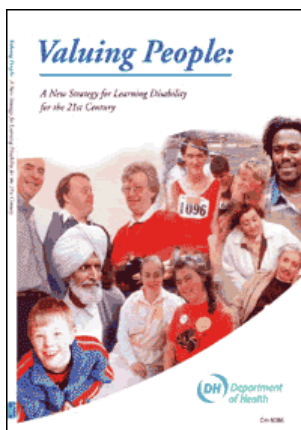
Janet also keeps herself extremely busy. She is now working on an article for Quality Counts (newsletter produced by the Quality and Research team), about someone who is receiving similar services and is hoping to get involved in the Fighting Fit training by doing a short presentation on living with diabetes.



## **Main points in this report**

- The cost of getting out and about sometimes makes places inaccessible to people with disabilities, and especially if you have to pay for someone to support you.
- Manchester Disabled People's Access Group has lots of information on physical access to places in Manchester so it's worth contacting them in advance of any trip or outing.
- It's worth making yourself known to your local councillors and MP's. They need to know more about the people with disabilities living in their areas. Remember, our votes count!
- Being a fan or a supporter can be very tiring, so, some people will need a lot of help to plan an outing to meet their idols!
- Telephone receptionists need to be patient, speak slowly and clearly, and only ask short questions.
- Some service offices have long names or the opening lines can sound long. This can be confusing.
- Don't be frightened of going into the Town Hall – it's very accessible.

- Libraries are great places - free to join and borrow and you don't need to be able to read! Staff are trained to advise you.
- You do need to be able to read to get around a hospital and the colour-coded maps are difficult to follow. Most of the leaflets are also too difficult to understand and this is the same in clinics and surgeries.
- It's difficult to talk to people who don't look at you!!!



## What does Valuing People say?

Valuing People says

*"too many people with learning disabilities and their families lead lives apart with limited opportunities and poor life chances... People with learning disabilities should have the same opportunities as other people to lead full and active lives."*

It also says

*"Being part of the mainstream is something most of us take for granted. we go to work, look after families, visit our GPs, use transport, and go to the swimming pool or cinema. Inclusion means enabling people with learning disabilities to do those ordinary things, make use of mainstream services and be fully included in the local community."*

People with learning disabilities can live just as good a life as anyone else.



John and Janet have enjoyed working to produce this report and would be happy to review other services and facilities at the request of the Partnership Board.

If you would like them to do so contact Anna Fedeczko or Melanie Chapman at:

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and from the Valuing People web site: [www.valuingpeople.gov.uk](http://www.valuingpeople.gov.uk)