

West Berkshire Disability Alliance (WBDA) Annual Report

Prepared for WBDA AGM 10/09/2015 by Mick Hutchins, WBDA Chairman

At the last AGM I stated that WBDA like many other local user-led Disabled Peoples Organisation's (DPO's) have seen some of our active members having to step down because of health problems and more demand on their caring duties. Unfortunately we have found it hard to recruit any replacements to our executive committee which is the engine room of WBDA, but we continue to look to recruit some new members to its executive committee.

However I can report that we did manage to recruit one vital person, Jane who has seamlessly took on the role of Treasurer from Peter Dolphin who retired after doing such a marvellous job for us since we were formed in 2003.

However as usual we have still managed to carry on our core functions, to ensure that local disabled people's views have been represented in many areas. We have therefore continued to have representatives on the following committees, bodies and panels:

- **The West Berks Council (WBC) Access Panel**
- **WBC Disability Equality Scrutiny (DES) Board** – The WBC DES Board has been set up by WBC and local disabled people to monitor the council's performance against its duties as set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- **Other relevant WBC and NHS meetings covering a range of issues**
- **The WBC Transport Inclusion Group** – the future of which looks undecided
- **Working with in partnerships with other local relevant voluntary groups and projects**
- **Working with local taxi operators and WBC to improve local taxi services** – taxi survey and meeting on 22nd September

In these uncertain times with council funding still being slashed year on year and all the changes to the NHS it's just as important as ever that User Led Organisations representing local disabled people and Carers like WBDA maintain a strong and independent voice to ensure at least disabled people's views are taken into account. And, any negative preconceived attitudes about disabled people are challenged.

We also plan to get more pro-active and are planning to hold 2 open meetings in Newbury on 7th October and 3rd December in partnership with WBILN to follow on from very successful event held in the summer which covered a wide agenda of issues that local disabled people face.

In 2016 we intend to move these events around the district.

We don't receive any funding from public sector bodies like WBC and the NHS so we can speak as we find without fear or favour. We would like to do more but need fresh blood to give us fresh ideas and impetuous. We need more people to step forward and get things done.

I would like to thank the West Berks Therapy Centre for hosting this year's AGM, Jane for organizing the food and Matt Castle for arranging transport for our members who needed it.

Finally I would like to thank all the committee including those who have stepped down since the last AGM for all the work they have undertaken on behalf of WBDA.

Mick Hutchins, WBDA Chairman.