

BARKING & DAGENHAM
Progress Project



The Young People's Development Forum (Disabled Children & Young People)

Young People's Consultation Report

“Becontree Heath Leisure Centre”

November 2009

*“New Innovations for working with
Disabled Children & Young People”*

Barking & Dagenham Progress Project operate as a
Charitable Company Limited By Guarantee.

The Consortium has a democratically elected Board of Directors / Management
Committee representing partner organisations, disabled children & young
people and the general community which supports our aims :-

Charity Number : 1102465

Company No. : 4574234

Barking & Dagenham Progress Project

Consultation – “Becontree Heath Leisure Centre”

Introduction to Barking and Dagenham Progress Project :

B & D Progress Project is a voluntary sector partnership initiated in July 1998 by 5 local agencies.

- DABD
- B & D Crossroads
- PACT
- B & D Mencap Society
- CIIL

The project was established to support disabled children and young people in Barking and Dagenham and any agencies working with them.

It attempts to bring together agencies so that resources can be best used and services can be improved.

Introduction to the Young People’s Development Forum :

A key feature of the Progress Project is to involve the young people at every level, which is why the YPD Forum was established.

- The Forum currently has 18 registered members who meet monthly to discuss different issues that are relevant to their lives.

They may be subjects either that the group have identified as important or that we have been commissioned to gain feedback on.

The forum is truly inclusive, and finds innovative ways for disabled young people to give their opinions and express themselves.

We also aim to be a model of good practice in that the opinions of the young people and their development are paramount and the process is transparent.

Introduction to the Session re : "Becontree Heath Leisure Centre" :

The Local Authority (London Borough of Barking & Dagenham) has recently begun planning the development of a brand new Leisure Centre on the grounds of Dagenham Swimming Pool and Seabrook Hall.

After an initial meeting with Paul Hogan, alongside Cross Roads Care (Barking & Dagenham), the Local Authority sought the Disabled Children's Parliaments' support in making the centre as accessible and user friendly as possible.

They have welcomed our experiences and views on the type of service we have previously had when using Leisure Centres in the Borough.

The plan was to have an initial explanation of who Paul Hogan is and open up the subject of the new Leisure Centre, and then to ask, and gain feedback on the question :-

1. What can we do to make the new Leisure Centre as accessible and user friendly as possible?

Structure of the session :

The question posed had to be translated into a session that would be accessible, relevant and enjoyable for all the forum members.

To achieve this, the session was delivered to the group of young people by Paul Hogan himself, so that he can ask the relevant questions and answer any difficult questions the young people may ask.

This enabled all members to understand the aim of the session and the topics to be discussed.

Participants Demographic Profile :

No. of Participants: -----14

Gender:-							
No.	%						
Male	6	75					
Female	2	25					
Age:-							
	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>		<u>Total</u>		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
11-16	3	38	1	13	4	50	
17-19	2	25			2	25	
20-25	1	13	1	13	2	25	
Ethnic Origin:-							
White	5	63	2	25	7	88	
Black African							
Black Caribbean	1	13			1	13	
Mixed – White & Black African							
Mixed – White & Black Caribbean							
Asian							
Other							
Nature of Disability:-							
LDD	3	38	2	25	5	63	
ASD	2	25			2	25	
Wheelchair User	1	13			1	13	
Epilepsy							
Physical Disability	2	25			2	25	
ADD/ADHD							
Deaf							
Other							
Attendance of Other Clubs in LBBB:-							
DABD/Ab Phab	5	63	2	25			
CIIL							
Crossroads	2	25	1	13	3	38	
Mencap	1	13			1	13	
PACT	1	13			1	13	

Feedback Gained :

Feedback collected from the young people can be divided into 3 different themes as follows :-

1. Facilities (Main Building)

- Drinking Fountains
- Accessible reception area, with a lower level for wheelchair users
- To maintain the lifts, especially as there is only one lift.

The young people have had previous experiences where the only lift in a facility has broken which has made it unable for them to use
- Vending machines with healthy choices
- Unisex changing rooms (like Goresbrook), where carers can help us get changed
- Jacuzzi / Sauna
- More hoists
- More lockers in the changing rooms – which are free to use!
- Special offers to regular members, rather than offers to draw people in. This will prevent users going in to ‘mess about’.
- Have a scheme where the more times you use the facility, the more prizes you win!
- Advertise timetables more effectively; i.e. internet, leaflets, posters etc.
- Still offer fun activities for young people
- Use this building instead of ‘Extended Schools’ as it seems to be more accessible on paper

2. Facilities (Swimming Pool)

- Waterslide
- Deep enough water for diving
- Adult only swimming times
– so that the adults don’t get ‘annoyed’ with the young people
- Indoor wave machine
- Underwater music for the ‘Night Wave’ discos
- More hoists
- Warmer water

3. Staff

- Make sure that there is someone around when we are using all facilities in the building. They don't necessarily have to be a buddy, just someone we can go to **IF** we need help.
- Staff to be trained in specialist areas, such as: Makaton, Braille and British Sign Language.

This will make their communication skills better for us.

- To have Health and Safety Awareness Training specifically for disabled people; i.e. hoists, weight distribution etc
- To have more people trained to use the hoists, as currently we are dictated to when we can go to leisure centres as they have to make sure appropriate staff are working.
- To take their job more seriously and not to just think about themselves.

Conclusions :

The feedback in this report evidences that once discussions start about unfamiliar topics, the young people are able to think of themselves and others.

It proves that when adequate structures are put in place young people whatever their abilities are able to comment on subjects that are relevant to moving on within their lives.

In the case of this session those structures involved adequate support staff, and a central person asking all of the questions.

Looking at the results as a whole, they followed 3 main themes :-

1. **Accessibility** – the young people are very concerned with the availability of hoists at the new venue, especially as they have had bad experiences in the past.

They would like all members of staff to be trained up appropriately in using the hoist, alongside having training for the personal care issues than run alongside it.

This coincides with having the availability for group changing rooms.

Not only would this be extremely helpful to the young people, but also to staff working on Playschemes etc.

These would ideally be made unisex.

All desk fronts need to be placed at a variety of levels, as well as vending machines, water fountains and lockers, so that disabled young people can have the opportunity to visit the leisure centre independently.

2. **Provisions For Young People** – the young people of the forum would still like to have lots of fun activities on the timetable for the new centre, although they do appreciate being treated like adults too !

They have made suggestions of a Night Disco in the swimming pool, complete with wave machine and underwater music. A waterslide, and a Jacuzzi / Sauna would be good too!

They would like warmer water in the swimming pool as the temperature of the water can affect some peoples' disabilities and difficulties, as well as 'Adult Only' swimming times so that they can prevent friction between adults and young people using the facilities at the same time.

The young people feel that having incentives to using the facility is a good idea, but would like to see offers and prizes for those who use the facilities the most – instead of the other way round.

They feel that this will help prevent young people going into the leisure centre to just muck around, which is what has happened with the introduction of 'Free Swimming Sessions'.

- 3. Training** – the young people would ideally like the staff at the leisure centre to be trained in all aspects of working with people with disabilities. This includes being trained in different ways of communication, such as Makaton, British Sign Language and Braille to name a few.

They also need **ALL** of the staff to be trained with using the hoist, and all of the aspects that go with it including Health & Safety Awareness.

But overall, the young people would like the staff to have a good attitude to the job, and have the ability to think of others before themselves.

They feel that this would make their experiences of using leisure centres in LBBD much better, and encourage them to use the facilities more frequently.

This conclusion will be extremely helpful in planning and improving the current plans for the new Leisure Centre, as it is now apparent what disabled young people want from the service as a whole.

It was suggested that the young people can be involved at every stage of the project, even going to visit the venue when it is being built. They have expressed a big interest to take part in this, as well as becoming 'mystery shoppers' when the venue is finished.

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