

Action on Disability Annual General Meeting 2024

Date: Tuesday 3rd December 2024
Time: 11.10am
Venue: Harris Suite, Chelsea Football Club

In attendance:

Sharon Holder (Chair)
David Buxton OBE (CEO)
49 members and 14 AoD staff

1 Welcome

- 1.1 Sharon Holder (Chair) welcomed members and supporters to the AGM and AoD's 45th year celebration. She noted that all share a common cause - working and campaigning together to ensure Disabled people and families receive the support they need. Sharon thanked AoD workers, volunteers and projects for making this possible.
- 1.2 She introduced Ben Coleman, new MP for Chelsea and Fulham, who has been a strong supporter of Action on Disability for a number of years.

2 Speech by Ben Coleman, MP for Chelsea and Fulham

- 2.1 Ben Coleman explained that he was a Councillor in the borough before becoming MP in July. He is proud that LBHF is the only council offering Disabled people free care at home, despite a difficult budget round. Now in parliament, he has joined the Health and Social Care Select Committee, which is examining the cost of failing to resolve the adult care crisis. He welcomed AoD's involvement in the national debate, for example, through work with Inclusion London to push for better accessibility in new housing developments.
- 2.2 He confirmed Labour's commitment to delivering its manifesto and championing the rights of Disabled people, whose voices must be heard. After 14 years of austerity and cuts, it will take time to rebuild, but it will be achieved.
- 2.3 He identified key issues, including:
 - A SEND system that is "messy, ineffective and broken." The Government has found £1 billion just to keep councils' SEND provision going but much work remains.
 - The right to equal pay at work.
 - The urgent need for emergency evacuation plans for Disabled people in housing - a lack of which contributed to the deaths of 15 Disabled people in Grenfell.
- 2.4 Finally, Ben Coleman noted that he voted against the assisted dying bill the previous week due to the concerns about the coercion of vulnerable people. He emphasised that such coercion may not always be overt – Disabled people can feel less valued, which may lead them to feel obliged to end their lives. Although the Bill has passed, there will be several opportunities to propose amendments.

3 Apologies for Absence

- 3.1 Kate Betteridge, Kevin Caulfield, Michael Gannon.

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4 Minutes of the previous AGM

Decision	The minutes were accepted as an accurate record. Proposed by Jane Wilmot OBE; seconded by David Isaac.
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5 Chair's Report 2023-24

- 5.1 Sharon Holder gave an overview of notable events in 2023-24, including the grand opening of the new centre, the launch of Family Hubs, and a study visit by the Ukrainian Government and VCSO.
- 5.2 Key achievements included:
- 1,644 clients visiting the centre for one-to-one support, with 729 people attending training and group meetings;
 - More than 20 young Disabled interns were supported, with 85% moving into paid employment;
 - Five youth projects delivered 164 activity sessions;
 - Nine young people achieved Duke of Edinburgh's Awards;
 - A 38% increase in referrals for Direct Payments.
 - 70 Disabled participants attended four co-production and disability equality training courses, leading to 50 becoming involved in resident-led groups.
 - AoD is increasingly recognised as the "go to" source for partners such as H&F Council and the Imperial College NHS Trust seeking to consult and hear the voices of Disabled people.

Member Questions:

- (1) **Are there welfare benefits for adults as well as children and young people?** *John McNeely:* Aileen Hughes is now on board, so there is a full adult service again.
- (2) **Were the slides produced beforehand? Can they be circulated? I am visually impaired.** *Sharon:* We will share the slides and try to send in advance next year.

Action	Share the slides with attendees and aim to distribute them in advance next year.
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6 Treasurer's Report 2023-24

- 6.1 David Buxton explained that Peter Hardin stepped down as Treasurer at the end of his nine-year term. Unfortunately, a replacement has not been found, so a freelance chartered accountant currently checks the accounts every three months. David asked members to help identify a qualified accountant willing to take on the role.
- 6.2 There was a 21% rise in income in 2023-24 due to the expansion of support services and the setting up of Our Place. Total expenditure increased by £215k to £1,252,838 and there was a surplus of £29,300 - smaller than the previous year.
- 6.3 The Balance Sheet summary shows large tangible fixed assets mainly due to the new centre, which will depreciate over time. The General Fund stands at £324,648, giving AoD 2.7 months or free reserves – just short of the desired three months.
- 6.4 The overall financial position is much stronger than in previous years.

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Member Questions:

- (1) **Can you help Haringey to have an organisation like AoD where Disabled people work together? You are making such a difference.** *David Buxton:* We are members of Inclusion London and part of a strong Disabled people's network, including links to Haringey. However, we see national organisations coming in and taking over work of DPOs, so we all need to work together to strengthen our position.

Decision	Accounts were accepted with no objections by a show of hands.
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7 Approval of new Trustees 2024-27

- 7.1 David Buxton explained that, as Company Secretary, he sent out nominations. Four responses were received for the five vacancies:

- Thomas Buter
- Jack Hill
- Jenny Parker
- Ashley Pearce.

There is still a vacancy for an Honorary Treasurer.

Decision	Members elected all four nominees by a show of hands.
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8 Special Announcements

- 8.1 David Buxton provided an update on the new strategy announced at last year's AGM. After eight months of focus groups and co-production, a new statement and mission have been agreed.

The four new strategic objectives are:

- Engage Disabled people;
- Enable Disabled people to thrive and use their strengths;
- Grow Disabled leaders of social change;
- Lead by example.

The aim is to influence policy and bring about change. As an outcome of this work, David will be meeting Government ministers tomorrow to present a paper on issues identified, in particular Access to Work.

- 8.2 David also reported progress on developing a Theory of Change and encouraged members to review this working document.

9 Vote of Thanks

- 9.1 Sharon Holder asked members to thank AoD staff and volunteers for their dedication over another successful year. She also thanked funders, including the

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London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham, the National Lottery Community Fund, City Bridge Trust, Dr Edwards and Bishops King Fulham Fund, Trust for London, Inclusion London, John Lyons Charity and others.

- 9.2 Sharon ended with a big thank you to attendees for coming together to celebrate International Day of Disabled People.

10 Close

- 10.1 Sharon Holder closed the AGM at 12.15pm.