

Minutes of a meeting of the Disabled People's Forum held at on Friday 8 October 2021 at 11.00 am.

Present Jatish Shah, Adam Faulkner, Rebekah Furniss, Tom Williams, Kit Nicholas, Paul Meadows, Nigel Hinch, Debs Burns, Debbie MacColl

Welcome & Apologies

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting and introductions were made around the screen. Apologies were received from Martin DeRosario, Cllr Alan Chantler, Graeme Wilson, John Rawlings and Rashmi Shah.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

Minutes were agreed as a true record.

Matters Arising

VOI ScootersTopm WT

Ian Achurch said he welcomed this opportunity to speak to the forum. He had been involved with the launch of the scheme across the seven major towns of the county from Northampton to Burton Latimer. Each had their own challenges as they were very different sizes. Usually the scooters were focussed on major cities but there had been a desire to trial them in our towns and to be see what the challenges were. The launch had been just over 12 months ago and Voi had been selected through a competitive tender process. They had proven very popular – 50k users making about 1 million journeys but this had not been without its challenges which is why it was a trial and they would continue to work with communities, police and Wardens to tackle them.

Tom introduced himself as the Voi Manager for Northamptonshire. Voi originated in Sweden with the idea of helping cities go green by getting people out of their cars and using more sustainable modes of transport. Voi had been carbon neutral since 2020 and had ambitions to be fully electric across the operation. E-scooters were not the be all against climate change but they could make a significant effect. The initial signs were very encouraging with a million journeys made across the county and over 40% of those were replacing car journeys. The knock on impact on pollution was a saving of 93k litres of gasoline and the resultant reduction of lung damaging matter that had not been released into the air. They had also been able to support people including 75k discounted or free rides for emergency services personnel.

The issues encountered could be classed in 3 categories as below:-

- Safe journey
- Responsible ridership

- Considerable parking

Steps to deal with issues included in person training sessions, online training, helmet giveaways along with a discount if people took a photo of themselves wearing their helmets. Policies and rules had been strengthened since the start of the trial to make sure people took responsibility and to ban those who didn't want to abide by the rules. There was still some way to go regarding parking. Taking a photo of where the scooter had been parked with feedback being sent if inappropriately parked and potentially a fine as well. So far there had been 3,500 bans, some temporary others permanent. Over 5,000 fines had been issued for bad parking. Over 85% of rides now resulted in compliant parking compared with less than 60% in March.

Further improvements to the services included:

- Acoustic vehicle alert system to assist visually impaired assess where they were. A small fleet was being introduced to trial and a study was being done around the sound that would be best to use.
- Parking infra-structure with 25 parking racks being introduced across the county with 10 being installed this week. They were similar to cycle racks and RNIBP had help design the side panels. Painted parking bays had a similar result.
- Technology to recognise pavement riding so user could be banned. Looking at similar technology to recognise double riding.

Nigel stated that double rider and underaged use or riding on pavements was not permitted and he had previously reported incidents he had seen to Voi who had responded very well. He asked for everyone to do the same as Voi would be able to identify the user and take action. Private electric scooters were not permitted in a public space and police were taking enforcement action.

Voi scooters had a switch off system for no-ride areas such as Market Square and Abington Street.

Jatish stated that he had been annoyed at the scheme and why was the research around issues not undertaken beforehand. People rode on the pavement with no consideration for those with disabilities. He had been involved in a few incidents and had been abused by one user. He asked what happened with the fines and that he was not seeing helmets being used.

Ian responded that the all Voi scooters had individual reference numbers which was not mandatory in law but had been part of the learning and urged people to report any incidents they witnessed. Tom stated that fines ranged from £5 to £25 and were set centrally. The money collected went into running the system – all the photos taken were reviewed by a person paid for by the fines also it went towards developing and improving the scheme. Helmet use was not mandated by the Government but Voi would like the users to do so and incentivise them to do so.

Kit stated that they had witnessed scooters being parked on a pavement in a way that a wheelchair would not be able to get past but did not know what the rules were for parking on pavements that were too narrow. Tom replied that there were no rules around it but they had defined their own standards and would like to achieve a minimum of 1.5m. Mapping this was a challenge but when an incident was reported this would be looked at and, if it was too narrow, the whole road would be designated as no parking. Photos were also reviewed. He encouraged everyone to report as this would help make the changes. Kit asked if they got moved when parked incorrectly, Tom responded that a team went out regularly to move them generally within a few hours and they were looking at how they could do this better. Ian stated

it would be reviewed from a Highways perspective, also to avoid dropped kerbs for incentivised schemes.

Jatish asked if higher fines would not achieve better outcomes. Tom responded that they were set at that level centrally and used across Europe. £25 was about the same amount as a monthly pass. Ian added that they needed to look at whether the actions were having the desired effect. When the scheme was first launched they were seen as a bit of a novelty but now most rides were between Monday and Friday during the morning and evening commuting peak times.

Debbie stated that most of complaints she had heard were not necessarily that the rider had parked them badly, but that someone had consequently come passed and tossed them across the walkway. Tom responded that there were sensors in the scooter that can detect whether it is upright or not so that they can quickly respond and move it.

How to contact Voi and report issues:-

Report a Scooter: Online form that allows reporting of poor parking, anti-social behaviour and submission of comments, complaints and suggestions.

Link: <https://www.voiscooters.com/report/uk>

Support Email: email address for Voi support team who will do their best to respond to your message and will triage it to the appropriate team in the UK as required.

Email: support@voiapp.io

Support telephone: Phone line to our support team who will listen to your concerns and pass the information along to the relevant team in the UK.

Tel: 0800 376 8179

Blue Badge

Rebekah introduced herself as a Team Leader for West Northants Council and the lead for the Blue Badge Team.

She explained that the reason the Blue Badge renewal process was not automatic is that individual's situations and mobility could change during 3 years even with life-long conditions, so needed to be individually assessed on a case by case basis.

Jatish asked if they were too easy to obtain as he had often seen people who looked very mobile parking on double yellow lines with a badge. Rebekah explained that each case was judged on its merits against the Government's criteria, GP's would give a recommendation and letter of support but could not make the decision. Some had hidden disabilities. However, misuse needed to be reported and asked if anyone suspected this was happening to report it either by telephone to 0300 126 7000 or by email to bluebadge.ncc@westnorthants.gov.uk quoting the badge number if possible. Nigel stated that there used to be an organisational Blue Badge for agencies such as the Council or Age UK so they could get closer to people's front doors for pick ups and drop offs but that had been taken away and they had been told individuals needed their own badge. However, most of these people did not drive so did not

tend to apply for a badge. Rebekah stated there was still an organisational badge but again, the circumstance had to adhere to the Government guidelines and criteria. However, they did have some flexibility around this and would be happy to look at individual cases if she was contacted directly.

Council Libraries were now back on stream to help with applications but it was best to contact them first. They were also able to take the photos and scan in documentation. Everything was being done in a socially distanced way.

Reminders were not sent out anymore as they had automatically been going to families of deceased which had been distressing for them. The service was now paperless. The process was currently working on a 3 – 4 week timescale but people were advised it would be 6 weeks to ensure they applied in time.

The website was currently down but it did set out the new criteria for hidden disabilities. However, some of the content was outdated and was being reviewed and updated. Nigel asked that the council libraries should be named as people did not necessarily know which ones they were.

NHFT Peer Support Worker and Volunteer to Career Programme

Kit, project coordinator for the Volunteer to Career Project gave an overview of the project. She emphasised that volunteering must be a choice and not mandated. All volunteers should have made that decision and there could be many reasons for doing so including:-

- Wanting to make a difference
- Opportunity to get out and about to meet new people
- Improved self-esteem and sense of purpose
- Help to cope with own ill health
- Learn new skills
- Experience of professional setting
- Improve CV

It would be a route into working for the NHS and could help those who might be:-

- Currently unemployed with little or no recent work experience
- Needing a gradual route into work
- Previously turned down for roles in the NHS due to lack of relevant knowledge/experience
- Looking for a change in career
- Not sure if healthcare is correct career path and want opportunity to try it out

No previous healthcare experience was needed, the training was flexible and free with opportunities to gain experience in clinical areas as well as functional skills courses.

For more information:-

Tel 07841 860522

Email: Volunteering@nhft.nhs.uk

Website: <https://www.nhft.nhs.uk/volunteer>

Peer Support Programme

Adam introduced himself as someone who had already been through the training, having lived experience including being hospitalised on more than one occasion. He

had not received peer support himself and was still in recovery but had found the most support and comfort from other patients who understood what he was going through. It wasn't a case of symptoms ending but overall well-being and walking alongside someone to help them support their own recovery. He had been through the training and was now a peer trainer himself.

Peer support was people using their own lived experiences and empathy to support others. It could be informal and taking place in everyday life and/or formal with a trained peer support worker.

NHFT were training peer support workers and developing a variety of roles in different services. They were currently recruiting for a 12 week training programme (1 day a week) which would start in January 2022. Closing date for expressions of interest is midnight 19 October. During the training you would be expected to keep a reflective journal which could be expressed in writing and/or drawings. Interviews were generally in groups of 4-6 people – if that would be difficult for someone, there could be discussions to see how best to support that person. After the training there would be a placement somewhere that interested you and where there was a need. The training had been held virtually recently due to Covid but it was hoped to return to face to face soon.

More information could be found via the links below.

The [Competence Framework for Mental Health Peer Support Workers](#) –Health Education England. Page 13 is a good summary

[NHFT Peer Support web page](#) – Useful resources tab for videos and ImROC guidance -

Contact admin.peersupport@nhft.nhs.uk

Any questions with these opportunities please do not hesitate to contact:-

Kit Nicholas for Volunteer to Career - kit.nicholas@nhft.nhs.uk

Adam Faulkner for Peer Support - adam.faulkner@nhft.nhs.uk

The members thanked Adam for sharing his experiences. Paul stated he ran a support group for dads with children with disabilities or special educational needs and perhaps there would be the opportunity to work together at some stage.

Community Updates

Debbie to see if any members want to contribute to IDPWD or if there is anything they specifically want covered. Also to remind people to say what day of week/time of day would be best for the meeting for 2022.

Next Meeting

Friday 3 December – virtual event for IDPWD