

## ORAL HISTORY EXTRACT TRANSCRIPT

### 'Fighting for our Rights' project

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#### Extract 1: advising Kingston Hospital

I didn't know what an occupational therapist was, I thought it was to do with an occupation [laughs]. But she obviously then went into greater detail as to what an occupational therapist did. So I had no insight at all of what went on if you had a physical or mental impairment, you know, I didn't know what was around, what people were doing, what people were fighting for, the difficulties people were encountering on a daily basis until it happened to me.

After working for the disability support team, part of--, the other thing that we did on that team was we provided some training--, disability training, myself and the psychologist did some disability awareness training and we actually were invited into Kingston Hospital and we did some training sessions for--, not so much the nursing staff as managers, what were known as CMG Managers at the time. And that went down very well, we did that several times, and then we were told that our team was going to--, they could no longer fund it after the nine years. So, the Chief Executive at Kingston Hospital got to hear about it and asked if I was interested in working for the hospital in what was known then as personnel, now known as HR, as their equality--, or what was called equal opportunities officer at the time. So I ended up doing that and became their equality adviser. And that involved doing equality training, which covered everything from race, disability, all that sort of thing, but I--, my main focus was on the disability side of it regarding employing disabled people, what to do, what not to do, how to interview. Also advising the other HR advisers if any of the staff became disabled, the sort of things they'd have to consider and put into place. Also advise the hospital on things like what they should be putting in their leaflets for patients coming in if they were disabled people. Would also advise--, we then did training for nurses, that was a difficult one because a lot of nurses felt that they didn't particularly need any training regarding disability because they didn't see that as--, they didn't quite understand why there should be a focus on it, you know, that all patients should be treated the same, but we--, we had a bit of a battle on our hands to try and get the managers to encourage the nurses to come along. Because nurses that had been there for a long time would say things like oh we've nursed lots of disabled people and we know what we're doing, but we knew that there were areas that were being overlooked and things that were not being considered. And we also--, I mean through Kingston Association of Disabled People and talking to disabled people that I knew, and also having been a patient myself I knew there were areas that were being overlooked. And to be fair, when they did come on the training they gave very good feedback and said that, you know, there were things that perhaps they hadn't considered and it was going to make them rethink for the future, and they'd go away and do an action plan, that sort of thing.

#### Extracts 2: having a voice

It was really just getting disabled people together to talk about what was--, what they felt the community was lacking in terms of provision for disabled people, where they wanted to see improvements, just encouraging people to have a voice and actually give them the opportunity to

express themselves and then we would feed that back to the various areas that needed to know. Most of it would be back to the council, back to social services usually, to give people a voice, to listen to what they had to say and then to act on it and lobby for improvements. Working with the council but also making sure that the council, you know, didn't just say oh yes we'll look into it, but really sort of keeping the pressure on, yeah. And there were some very good people, Jenny Webb, she was a fantastic Director of Adult Social Services. Since Jenny's gone I'm afraid it's, you know, the whole thing is very poor, social workers – non-existent, I don't know, I haven't known for a couple of years who my social worker is, my care manager. I used to have a social worker that really was interested in me, would come round and want to know about how I was, what I'd been doing, was I managing okay, could things be improved. A few months ago I had a student social worker who came round and all she wanted to do was--, wanted to know why I had some money left in my direct payments account and I said well, the reason I've got money left in that account is because if I need, if I had an emergency and needed, you know, twice the amount of hours for any reason, I've got--, I've managed it so I've got some money there as a sort of emergency pot. No, you can't do that, it's all got to be used up, if you don't use it all up by the end of the month we take it back. She just sat there and went on about finance, I don't think she even asked me once how I was, how was my shoulder since my operation, she wasn't interested in me at all. And when she went I thought well, you know, I'm very lucky that I can articulate, I can speak up, I can represent myself quite well, it just made me feel for the people who can't.

### Extract 3: fight continues

I get a little bit fed up with people saying things like oh it's so much better for disabled people these days. They say that all the time and in a lot of respects it is when you look back to 20 years ago, 50 years ago, but people are still having to vocalise it all the time, having to remind people, having to... It doesn't seem to come as second nature to people to consider people with impairments, you're still having to--, not--, well, yes, in some cases yes you do have to fight for it, but it is quite exhausting to constantly remind people and justify why you want something. I just think that we can't take it for granted that because some things have improved we don't still have to fight our corner, I think that will be something that continues for a long time. And I just--, I'm very lucky that I'm in a position to still argue for things and still get my point of view across. So when people say oh isn't it great that it's all been considered, if you look a bit further, no, people don't always think of it, it's organisations or individuals that will point it out to them. So the fight goes on really, if you want to call it a fight, but yeah, it is I suppose.