

ORAL HISTORY EXTRACT TRANSCRIPT

'Fighting for our Rights' project

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Extract 1: facilitating the scheme

Well the first I knew anything about it, my recollection, and bear in mind this is a long time ago, I remember my boss who was Jane Bearman was the team, I think she was by then team manager, and Jenny Webb who was assistant director told me about it and they asked me whether I would be interested in being the first facilitator of that scheme because two disabled women in Kingston had through, I think it was the Kingston Association of Disabled People, approached social services to say things could be very different to how they are. Rather than home care staff we haven't appointed coming in at times we haven't particularly chosen, and also being very task oriented, the vision was we can have a different way of being here. So I was so lucky 'cause I was in the right place at the right time, I really was very, very lucky. So the first steps for that were then me working, as I recollect, with Ann and Jane, to look at how we set the scheme up. I mean what I do remember is there was an incredible lack of bureaucracy. We just sort of picked up on the idea, they were in the lead, I had to listen hard and get things going and support them in making the vision happen. So yeah, it was something very, very, very different at that time. As far as I can recollect I think there was already a scheme in place in Greenwich and Hampshire, but we were amongst the first in the country. My recollection is also the director, Roy Taylor, was very supportive of it. I think Jenny Webb really made it happen but Roy Taylor was very supportive as well and very committed to making things happen. So there was, it was an exciting time, it was really interesting and really exciting.

Extract 2: social model of disability

Well, as far as I can remember it was very much driven by the individuals who were getting the PAs, and the first self assessments were shaped very much by Jane and Ann. So it was very much looking at key areas of your life, and I think we took a lot of it on trust that you are the expert in your own world. 'Cause most people, and there are exceptions, but most people don't want someone else to be supporting them for a second more than they need it. But if you need it you need it, and I think it was seeing the individual as the professional in their own world and with their own health issues. And I think the other thing was it was very much, and this was new to me, the social model of disability. So actually we are disabled through society, through attitudes, through the way things are around us, through steps for example. We can achieve so much more if those difficulties can be overcome through the right support. So it was very much with the social model of disability underpinning.

Extract 3:

I was able to be in the right place to help people meet their dreams. It was a privilege. I think the traditional service, fantastic as it was, and it was brilliant, some of the best people I've ever worked with have been at Kingston, honestly, they're passion driven. However, not a service quite the same

as the PA service. And what we were able to facilitate with that, and that's thanks to Jenny Webb and Roy Taylor I think, was a personal self assessment that was holistic, it did look at the human being. People weren't looking to be institutionalised in their own home, it was living a life. 'Cause I always say as a social worker or managing services, I want to give people a great life, that's what I want, that's what we all aspire to. We can be 18, 58, 108, it doesn't matter, we want to be dreaming, thinking about tomorrow, enjoying life, having fun. It's very difficult to have that if your personal support needs take over and you have to worry about getting to the loo, such basic things, getting to the loo. Well how are you going to put your trousers on or your underwear on, or you know, how can you have a job when such basic, basic things are difficult? Also we are more than just work, and at that point in the scheme we were able to support people to do everything from go to football matches, go to the pub, go on holiday. People have travelled, I don't know if they still do but you know, some of the postcards I had, oh, so and so and their PA saying, hi Renny, we got here at last! Fabulous! And we take it for granted, we take it for granted, and I still think that is so hard for too many people today. But I think at that point, fabulous, the scheme was helping achieve those ambitions and people were finding their abilities, their dreams and achieving them.