

Selby District Disability Forum

Southern CEF Disability Action Group

Work so far

We now have a total of 15 people registered to our Southern CEF Disability Action Group. These individuals range in ages from early 20s to late 70s. Just this month we have welcomed two new members. Some have disabilities themselves, others have children or other family members with disabilities, and some are from local parish council's and other community organisations. The group goes from strength to strength and meets monthly in Carlton.

Here are some highlights of the work we have been carrying out:

Highways

The group have looked into a few key issues in the CEF area needing to be addressed with Highways. These are just two examples of this: One was the need for a drop curb in Carlton, which has now kindly been addressed by the council. Another is an ongoing issue in Hensall, with a sunken pavement creating a hazardous situation, where pedestrians are forced to walk on the main road.

By supporting various highway issues, the group can highlight issues and needs from a disability angle, supporting Highways and providing a platform for voices to be heard.

Open Letters Project

The group decided that an Open Letter Project would be the perfect way to maximise reach and aim to raise, address and support issues throughout the area.

A series of open letters are enabling this to happen effectively, efficiently and on a Southern CEF-wide scale. Allowing the group to support progress in many villages and areas.

Three main areas have been identified and are being tackled separately, but through a similar system of information sharing, awareness raising and problem solving. These are:

Access to Village Shops

Most recently we have been working on our 'access to local village shops' project. This project has been about identifying ways to support local village shops to improve access for everyone within the community. Specifically focusing on disability access.

We have hand delivered letters to, and spoken with, every village shop in the Southern area including, takeaways, hairdressers etc. These letters have included a cover letter explaining who we are and asking shops to consider their accessibility. We have made sure to congratulate them and thank them on providing an invaluable service.

We have included the Selby district disability forum 'Top Tips for Businesses' guide, which the action group have helped to create. We also included a feedback form, so that businesses can let us know what they are doing to be more accessible, and to ask for disability awareness training should they like some.

Supporting Parish Councils

The group regularly discuss various issues which are experienced in many of the villages in the area, such as:

1. Inconsiderate parking (including parking on pavements)
2. Inconsiderate driving (including speed limits)

3. Dog litter
4. Overgrown hedges
5. Wheelie bins

The group have drafted an open letter to all the parish councils. This raises these age-old issues which we know they are already trying to tackle, but coming at them from a disability angle. Addressing the letter to the public, and pointing out how these issues can have a detrimental impact on those living in the community with disabilities. In-turn supporting the Parish Councils with these on-going localised issues.

We have attended Parish Council meetings as guest speakers, to raise various issues specifically identified in the area. Individual letters to specific parish councils are being compiled by members of the group living in those areas. These will act as cover letters to the open letter to the public, but tackle specific issues relating to those villages. These are a few examples:

- In Carlton, the lack of accessible Playground Equipment
- In Eggborough the lack of benches and bins in public park areas
- In Thorpe Willoughby, if there is any way to support local shops to improve access
- In Hensall, the ongoing concerns around the sunken path

Supporting Village Schools

The group have decided that an open letter, in the form of a leaflet, could be provided to all schools to be handed out to children. This would be directly from the Disability Action Group, informing parents of the dangers linked to poor driving and thoughtless parking at school drop-off and pick-up times, from a disability angle. Supporting schools to try tackling this ongoing issue.

A group member brought to the meeting a fantastic leaflet, which had come out in the children's bookbags at Carlton primary school. The leaflet is an NYCC leaflet all about safer driving and parking around schools.

Since then the group have been working with NYCC to try and establish how this leaflet could be utilised further, using the action group and SDDF as a new angle within this.

Public Transport

Our most recent project has started to look into making public transport more accessible. The group identified that public transport providers often struggle to deliver an accessible and inclusive service. One disabled group member in particular, had experienced terrible service on local buses, not only leaving him feeling unable to travel on the bus, but that he was in actually danger.

The group began to write a 'top tips guide for public transport service providers', but have now decided that in order to approach this properly, they need to gain more feedback from a wider number of members of the community.

The group have therefore written a public transport survey, which they are planning to roll out throughout the district, to get as many opinions as possible, in order to action change and influence transport providers. The Tadcaster CEF Disability Action Group are working with the group on this, as well as the Selby Committee.

This is giving the group the opportunity to look at other issues around public transport such as:

- Staff attitude
- The need for more seating at bus stops
- Accessible time tabling
- The use of audible 'next stop' announcements
- Awareness of local Voluntary Community Transport Schemes

We have been thrilled by how much we have achieved and how we have managed to stretch the funding for this project. We will be able to offer more sessions than expected and are looking at future funding options now, to secure the sustainability of this much need action group.

We have had some feedback from members of our Southern CEF Disability Action Group. These are a few highlights for you:

“I would like to tell you how much the Selby District disability forum disability action group in the southern district has benefited me and my fellow locals in the community. Apart from feeling like we are part of something that is striving forward, and makes us feel like we are gaining good ground in the right directions we want, which is essential I believe for our emotional and mental health.”

“...knowing that there is an avenue to make change and there is a vehicle for us to put our points of view about our community across has been a lift off the pressure that is felt from being unable to change our environment to better us, to be able to allow us to give more back.”

“I have struggled with public transport since I have lived in the district, knowing others have had the same struggles and being able to share points of view has helped me overcome my own mental barriers with public transport... which has given me the confidence to plan new routes and new journeys in my life on many levels.”

“...raising the awareness of local businesses and shops - before I felt we would have single stand-off matches and possibly sometimes confrontations with shop owners, as they have point-blank refused to acknowledge the help we need for accessing their business. I believe we have more weight behind us and as one single shop owner could ignore us before, every shop in the village can't ignore every disabled member of the community.”

“I absolutely love being part of this... and I want more and more members of the community to be a part of this. Thank you for your time and a big thank you to the Selby district disability forum and the southern CEF disability action group.”

“The Southern CEF funding has given us the opportunity to meet regularly to identify issues that cause problems for disabled people in the surrounding villages. We continue to work hard to improve the local area for disabled people.”

Many thanks indeed for your time and continued support.