



Disabled Students' Forum Report

Caroline Butterwick – Forum Chair

January 14th, 2013

Summary

Forum Meetings

The Disabled Students' Forum last met before the Christmas break, and will be meeting again late January.

Venue Accessibility

Six members of the Forum met with Union staff to raise and discuss solutions to access issues experienced by disabled students in Union venues (Ember Lounge, Squeeze Box and LRV / Verve). We raised several points, based on issues raised by others in the Forum at our previous meeting. These included the insufficient wheelchair access to Ember Lounge, having menus in alternative formats available for visually impaired people, tables being too narrow for wheelchair users in Ember Lounge, etc. After much discussion, many of these problems are being resolved as a direct result of the meeting, and we have been provided timescales for when we can expect these to be complete and look forward to seeing these changes implemented. The issue of the Ember Lounge entrance should soon be partially resolved, but the Forum will organise a campaign to lobby the University for automatic doors for the main entrance, so our venue is inclusive for all students. We may soon organise a similar meeting in Stafford if there's a need to discuss venue access there.

Inclusive Practice Forum and Disabled Students' Engagement Group

Five members of the Forum attended the University's Inclusive Practice Forum meeting in November, which has staff from various University departments including faculties, Estates and IS. We gave feedback on issues such as the abuse of disabled parking bays / vehicles parking on double yellow lines or blocking dropped curbs; Science Centre disabled access; Thompson Library access (the Forum will arrange a meeting with IS staff to discuss these points further); campus access issues such as unmarked / incorrectly marked steps, etc. We will be checking up on many of the issues raised to see if / when appropriate action is going to be taken. Chatting to Forum members straight after the meeting everyone was happy with how it went, and getting to voice concerns directly to key University staff is always really useful!

Last year the Student Enabling Centre ran a couple of Disabled Students' Engagement

Group meetings, though now with the formation of the Forum these didn't continue as most who went to one meeting would be at the other anyway! But, because of the Forum's suggestion, the Enabling Centre ran this group again, and also held the meeting in Stafford. All students registered with the Enabling Centre were invited, and the meeting in Stoke had several students turn up. Two of us from the Forum were there, to raise some points and to hear the views of the other students there, who weren't yet involved in the Forum. I spoke about the Forum and all but one student who was there were really interested about getting involved. I also went to the Engagement Group meeting in Stafford where there were three other students, one of whom wasn't yet involved in the Forum but was really interested in it too.