

## **Action on Disability AGM for the year 2021-2022**

**On 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

### **Hybrid meeting**

**At AoD Centre for Independent Living Centre and by Zoom**

#### **In attendance:**

Sharon Holder – Co-Chair

Victoria Brignell – Co-Chair

Peter Harden - Trustee

Mustafa Karim - Trustee

Gabriela Zepf – Trustee

David Buxton – CEO

John McNeely – Youth & Community Services Manager

Louisa Noel – Employment Services Manager

Ellen Barnes – Centre Co-ordinator

#### **36 Members attended.**

---

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

- 1.1 The co-chairs, Sharon Holder and Victoria Brignell, welcomed everyone to Action on Disability's first hybrid AGM, and the first AGM at our new Centre for Independent Living.
- 1.2 Sharon Holder thanked London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham, Shepherds Bush Housing Association and the Mayor of London for their funding and support. She also thanked the staff, volunteers and members for their work and guidance during two challenging years of pandemic. This included the expansion of the Independent Living Service and the new In-Work Support Service. She added that this work shows "how we all work and fight together to ensure that disabled people and their families get the right support they require."

### **2. Apologies for Absence**

- 2.1 Kate Betteridge, Patrick McVeigh

### **3. Minutes of the previous AGM on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

- 3.1 The minutes were approved as an accurate record.
- 3.2 Gregory Patten proposed; Lesley Hale seconded. This was confirmed by a show of hands.

### **4. AoD Annual Report**

- 4.1 Key staff gave updates on the successes and challenges of 2021-22.

#### **4.2 Employment Services**

Louisa Noel outlined activities in 2021-22, including:

## **Action on Disability AGM for the year 2021-2022**

**On 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

- Providing at-cost Disability Equity Training to employers which led to eight trainees gaining employment at the English National Opera.
- The supported internships re-formed after lockdown with a cohort of 12: seven at RBKC and five at LBH&F.
- A new follow-on co-ordinator was hired to expand the service, which led to support for more than 40 SI graduates.
- Developing a pool of in-work support staff by recruiting at local job fairs. This service is increasingly in demand.
- Open days were well attended and job coaches supported clients with applications and interviews, helping 30 clients into paid employment.
- We also provided Access to Work-funded job coaches for trainees at our partner, Fairshot Café.

### **4.3 Independent Living Service**

John MacNeely described how the Independent Living Service, which includes Direct Payments, worked closely on co-production with peer support groups and local residents to ensure service delivery was led by lived experience.

AoD also carried out a consultation with key range of stakeholders and, as a result, has secured funding from the National Lottery Reaching Communities to introduce a new peer-led service. The Earls Court Community Fund also gave funding to support existing peer groups.

### **4.4 Youth Service**

John MacNeely described the Youth Service, which provides fun, informal learning for young disabled people aged 11-25. The aim is for young people to challenge themselves and to have opportunities to gain accreditation and/or volunteer. For example, five young people achieved Gold Duke of Edinburgh awards and another five started on their Silver awards.

The core projects comprised four school holiday projects and a weekly club. Numbers were reduced from 120 to 79 in 2021-22 due to the pandemic. However, since then numbers have returned to 191, including projects with external partners.

### **4.5 Welfare Benefits Service**

John MacNeely described the work of Welfare Benefits, which assists ill, disabled and Deaf H&F residents to gain means-tested and non-means-tested benefits. This includes help with form filling up to first tier tribunal representation.

In 2021-22, the section dealt with 380 cases, of which 72 were signposted. The work resulted in back payments of approximately £222,000 and an increase in weekly benefits of £20,500, adding up to more than £1 million over the year.

The volunteers, without whom the service could not operate, cannot be thanked. Sadly, we said goodbye to Linda Chapman, who passed away. She was a kind,

## **Action on Disability AGM for the year 2021-2022**

**On 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

generous and warm person who had volunteered for more than eight years and will be greatly missed by all at AoD.

### **4.6 Centre for Independent Living**

Ellen Barnes, Centre Co-ordinator explained that, after many delays due to Covid and Brexit, AoD has finally moved into our new centre. Along the way, there were many challenges and fights to ensure we got the accessible building we needed, with facilities such as a Changing Places room, accessible kitchens, automatic doors, large screens for hybrid meetings, etc.

Peer support groups moved on to Zoom during pandemic and AoD additionally ran a project helping people onto Zoom, so they could join peer support groups. An online peer production training course was launched on Zoom in 2021-22. This is now running as a hybrid course, with participants able to attend in person at our centre.

The newsletter continues to be developed with the aim to reach more members. Continuing work on the website aims to increase accessibility, membership and to enhance AoD's social media presence.

## **5. AoD Audited Accounts**

5.1 Peter Harden, the Honorary Treasurer, presented the accounts.

5.2 He explained that 2021-22 was a good year for AoD financially, with a 20.1% increase in income to £1,072,731 due to income from the new In Work Support Service and grants from the Wolfson Foundation and the Mayor of London to fund the new centre.

5.3 This led to a surplus of £165,301 at the end of the year. However, the Balance Sheet shows that this includes the capital reserve fund for the new Centre, which will be spent during 2022-23 as building work comes to an end.

5.4 General funds increased by £53,163 to £331,173. This means AoD now holds free reserves equivalent to 3.7 months of the total expenditure budget for 2022-23, just above our recommended 3 months' of operating costs. This is still a tight free-cash reserve but we are pleased to have gradually increased this over the past five years to attain this target.

## **6. Election of Trustees**

6.1 Victoria Brignell gave an update on elections to the Board, with Donna Fenner elected and Mike Gannon re-elected as Trustees, both for 3 years. This leaves one vacancy for a Disabled Trustee. Please contact Victoria or David Buxton about this.

6.2 Members showed agreement with the election of Trustees by a show of hands.

## Action on Disability AGM for the year 2021-2022

On 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023

### 7. Special Announcements

- 7.1 **New Centre for Independent Living:** David Buxton said he was very happy to welcome members to the new centre after four years of updates, and thanked LBH&F for making a permanent home for AoD after 44 years. The centre will showcase work by disabled artists, including a work-in-progress by Stephen Lee Hodgkins.
- 7.2 **Independent Living Strategy:** David described how important for AoD to start working with our Disabled members and residents in the next several months on developing new Independent Living Strategy that must be a strong, clear vision, as a result of co-production with disabled members and residents.
- 7.3 **Coproduction and Disability Equality:** He introduced Donna Fenner, AoD's new Trustee, who attended AoD's first co-production course. Donna said she highly recommends the training, which has resulted in her involvement in projects and now becoming a Trustee. She looks forward to supporting AoD to become bigger and better.
- 7.4 **New constitution:** Victoria Brignell briefly explained the proposed adjustments to the Constitution, which include updating and clarifying the statement of purpose as well as reducing the minimum age for Trustees and membership to 16. Once approved by the Charity Commission, there will be an Emergency General Meeting (EGM) for members to approve. This will likely be on the same day as the grand opening, and it will be a hybrid event.

### 8. Vote of Thanks

- 8.1 Victoria closed the AGM by asking members to support her in saying a big thank you to our staff and volunteers for their amazing dedication and support.
- 8.2 She also thanked the funders who continue to support AoD's work:

City Bridge Trust  
College of North West London  
Dr Edwards & Bishops King Fulham Fund  
Inclusion London  
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham  
London Community Response Fund  
London Youth  
John Lyons Charity  
Mayor of London's Fund  
West London College  
Wolfson Foundation