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Welcome to the **Disability** **Resource Centre.**

This is your Disability Resource Centre Handbook. It explains necessary rules and guidelines, and tells you something of the background of the Disability Resource Centre.

Over the page are the headings of the chapters. We hope you find this easy to understand and informative. If you have any questions or difficulties with this handbook, please see the back page.

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The history of the Disability Resource Centre

In 1985 several people with disabilities and other organisations got together with Social Services to seek to provide a place for people with physical and/or sensory disabilities to learn new skills, gain confidence and obtain information about disability rights, benefits, special housing and other vital and often inaccessible services.

Activities would be provided in areas not traditionally reserved for people with disabilities and give people access to areas such as computer literacy, languages and further education. This idea was for the users to become comfortable with the skill gaining process and to be able to move on to more conventional providers of education and employment.

The Old School Building at 1a Warner Road was scheduled for demolition and it was decided to base the newly conceived Disability Resource Centre in there for a few months to pilot the scheme. This was also the base for Disability Information Advice Line (DIAL) and Waltham Forest Association (of) Disabled People (WFAD), both organisations run for people with disabilities for people with disabilities.

WFAD moved to the Alpha Business Centre but after a change of name to Disability Action Waltham Forest in late 2001, it moved back to the Old School Building. DIAL moved to a new office at the Bakers Arms in 2002. The Disability Resource Centre still inhabits most of the old school.

The school was built in 1888 as Pretoria Avenue Board School, and was enlarged in 1903. It was reorganised into infants, junior boys and junior Girls and again for mixed juniors and infants in 1935. These schools closed down and for years the buildings were used as stores.

In 1955 the buildings were re-opened, as two special needs schools. The Margaret Brearley School for people with learning difficulties, which later became the Whitefield School and moved to Macdonald Road and the Joseph Clarke School for people with visual disabilities, which moved to its present site Vincent Road, Highams Park early in the 1970s.

Later, the school dinner services were based at the site during the 1970s. Meantime the girls' school building was demolished. The boys' school remained empty until 1983 when DIAL and later WFAD moved in, followed in 1988 by the Disability Resource Centre. Some legacy of the school remains, even today the administration office has a swimming pool hidden beneath its floor, and the sign over the entrance reads "Boys School"

When time had come for the Disability Resource Centre to look at other buildings to inhabit, none offered the space and friendly atmosphere of the Old School, so it became the permanent home of the Disability Resource Centre.

Introduction to the Disability Resource Centre

The Disability Resource Centre is funded to provide activities for people with physical and/or sensory disabilities who live in Waltham Forest and who are aged between 16 and 64. These age groups have been set by Social Services and have been imposed since 1996.

The DRC is a registered charity and is committed to all adults with physical disabilities. Therefore we offer a limited service to people over the age imposed by Social Services, and are committed to seek external funding to expand this in the future.

If you are reading this handbook, you will already have been through the referral and assessment processes. Referrals come from Social Services, Hospital services, General Practitioners, Occupational therapists, disability organisations, Schools, Colleges and self- referrals. The assessment will check whether the Disability Resource Centre is the correct venue for you and will cater for your needs. Users may be re-assessed at any time in the future, if their needs change

The Co-ordinator will discuss the activity programme and decide which ones will interest you. Some activities have waiting lists so may not be available immediately.

If you need an interpreter you will have access to one.

Membership

Three months after attending the DRC you will be eligible to become a full member of the DRC. This means you have the right to vote at the AGM. You will be issued with a membership number and card.

Being a member also makes you eligible to stand for the Management Committee These are elected users of the Centre who are responsible for the day to day running of the Centre, employing staff and handling the finances.

Users of the DRC are expected to attend at least one activity a week.

If you do not attend the DRC for more than six months, unless due to ill health or extenuating circumstances, your membership will lapse. However any lapsed member can re-join at a later date as long as they are still within the membership criteria.

The Constitution of the DRC was adopted by the membership at the initial meeting. It is amended as necessary at wishes of the members through a resolution

You will be issued with a copy of the Constitution at the same time as you are issued with your membership card.

All DRC papers can be offered in large print, in Braille, on tape in English, or in Urdu on request. Papers in written Urdu will soon be available.

The Management Committee

This comprises of users of the Centre, the majority who are elected at the AGM, although other people may be co-opted to fill gaps in representation under equal opportunities.

The elected committee chooses a Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Vice Treasurer, also a Volunteer Co-ordinator.

These committee members are in post for two years (although this can be subject to change).

The Management Committee has their photos displayed on the wall in the entrance hall.

The Management Committee meets monthly to discuss the Centre, look at finances, and listen to recommendations from users, via the sub-groups. They also have some special meetings to discuss other issues, e.g. negotiating contracts.

Sub Groups and Forums

A Management Committee member chairs each Sub-group, which meets to discuss and plan on various aspects of the centre, and put forward recommendations to the Management Committee

They are: -

Fundraising and Social
Finance.
Gardening.

There are also Forums, which are held several times a year where any interested party can voice their opinions.

They are on the subject of
Training
Equal Opportunities
Activities and Transport

The Staff of the Disability Resource Centre

The DRC has 6 permanent staff

Co-ordinator and Company Secretary of the Disability Resource Centre;
- is the person who interviews and registers new users: Also responsible for Health and Safety in all matters at the Centre. Another of their responsibilities is to liaise with Social Services on behalf of the Centre. The Co-ordinator monitors the complaint procedure and deals with the legal requirements of the Centre.

Deputy Co-ordinator: – is the person with responsibility for the major fundraising for the Centre. They also interview and register new users, organise and run the activity programmes and deal with complaints if the co-ordinator is not available.

Administrator: - is responsible for the admin office, managing the admin staff and reception. They make sure that information needed by the Centre is up to date and accurate, they also organise meetings and take minutes.

Accounts Assistant - is responsible for the day to day managing of financial accounts, for administering petty cash and issuing purchase orders.

Transport Manager: - is responsible for the day to day management of the buses, taking bookings from the centre users, and managing the driver support workers and support workers.

Driver: - is the senior driver of the transport staff, acting as a mentor to the trainee staff. Covers the Transport manager when necessary.

Also there are two full-time **Support workers** employed by Social Services who are permanently based here

Other employees are taken on for a minimum of 50 weeks, who are training or re-training have a career in the area the training provides. These include:

Support Workers: who assist users in activities, with hygiene matters and during breaks. They also escort on buses and help in the snack bar.

Driver/Support Workers: These people drive the buses and transport users. They also have support duties when not driving.

Reception and office staff: These people staff reception, type letters and assist the permanent staff and management committee.

The majority of our paid staff have physical and/or sensory disabilities.

Many of the staff are fluent in British Sign Language.

Some of the support workers and admin staff are provided by employment schemes, and some are volunteers. All staff regardless of employment status are trained, supported and work under the same rules and regulations as laid down in DRC policies.

DRC Activities

The DRC issues a diary four times a year, which lists all the activities.

Some activities are full and operate a waiting list.

There are regular surveys to see what new activities are requested and whether or not current activities are meeting the needs of the users.

Activities start each morning between 10.30 and 11 a.m. Afternoon activities start at 1.30 p.m.

If you use DRC transport, pick up times start at 9 a.m. for morning activities
11.00 a.m. for afternoon pick ups

Some activities have educational field trips. The spaces on these trips are limited and a priority scheme is in place. To be eligible for a field trip you must attend the three meetings before the trip.

Sometimes a space will become vacant on a trip. In this case it will be offered to those without eligibility, or anyone who can show an interest. The group tutor will allocate these spaces.

If you need a carer to accompany you on a trip you must make your own arrangements and book the seat on the bus for your carer.

Social Activities

There are social activities throughout the DRC year. These include on-site social events as well as trips to the theatre, shopping centres, museums, sports venues, and leisure centres, historical buildings and other such venues.

The availability of places on these trips is limited and sometimes there is a waiting list in place.

As these trips are not subsidised by the DRC's funders, there may be a charge involved. This will be the lowest charge the DRC can negotiate.

If you are unable to afford the cost of any DRC social trip, you can in confidence, speak to a member of staff or Management, who may be able to assist in this matter.

DRC Transport.

The DRC operates two minibuses, which are equipped with tail-lifts, and can carry a number of seated passengers and wheelchairs.

As the space on these buses is very limited, people without their own private means of transport, and who are unable to use any form of public transport, or are in receipt of the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance at high rate will be given priority.

If you are eligible to use DRC transport, you will need to book each journey with the Transport Manager. If you do not book transport, you will not be picked up or taken home. **You must book at least 24 hours before you wish to be picked up.**

If you have booked transport and cannot attend the Centre you must cancel before 9am on the day of the booking. If you do not cancel, and miss three bookings without explanation you will lose eligibility to the transport for three sessions.

If you are being picked up by DRC transport, please be ready to board the bus when it arrives. The driver can wait up to a maximum of 5 minutes if you have an unexpected problem that has delayed you being ready. This 5-minute waiting time is only for emergencies, if you regularly delay the bus the Transport Manager will talk to you and if there is no improvement it may mean that you will not be picked up. The time is extended for people who have complex needs, but only if arranged beforehand with the Transport Manager.

No person under 16 years old is allowed on DRC transport

Parking at the Centre.

To park in the Centre's car park you must have a valid Blue Badge. If you do not have one, you are reminded that the streets in the neighbourhood operate a resident parking permit scheme and you will need a permit for on-street parking.

Motorised scooters are not permitted in the DRC building, but can be parked outside, (undercover if arranged beforehand) and a wheelchair will be made available for transfer if necessary.

Electric wheelchairs are welcome at the Centre. Please remember to drive carefully.

DRC Snack Bar

The Snack bar is available for users to purchase hot and cold drinks, soup, toast, sweets and crisps

The prices are kept low and any profit is used to maintain and buy new equipment.

It is mainly Volunteers who staff the snack bar.

The snack bar is open from 10 am till 3.45 p.m. If there is a shortage of staff, these times may change without notice.

Please treat all staff serving in the snack bar with consideration.

Lunch

A sandwich service attends the centre usually at midday. This sells various salads, sandwiches including low fat, cakes, fruit and other items.

If you are not going to be at the centre when the van arrives, you can make an advanced order with the service.

Toileting and personal care

The Support staff and drivers are fully trained to assist users with personal care. They are not going to be embarrassed and will assist on request. You may request a specific worker, for example if you are female, you may request a female member of staff to assist you.

There is an alarm in every toilet, and each cubicle has a different form of door to suit a variety of needs.

There is a vending machine for personal items in the centre cubicle at the rear of the hall.

Incontinence items are kept in the first aid room and are available on request for unforeseen occasions.

Carers

The Centre provides Support workers to assist the people who use it. However it cannot provide one-to-one care. With people who are in need of such care, they will have to provide a Personal Assistant (PA) or carer to attend to them whilst using the DRC. Before such an arrangement can take place, proof that all relevant security checks have been made on the PA must be shown to the Co-ordinator.

When going on trips the DRC reserve the right to insist that all users undergo a risk assessment on health and safety grounds and if there is a perceived risk to the well being of the user, a suitable carer must attend with them. If there is a charge for admission, the centre will negotiate free access for carers whenever possible.

If there is not an easily identified person available, the DRC will seek to the best of its ability to find a suitable and safe individual to assist the person.

Unpaid carers can access the DRC Volunteer Expenses System if they are eligible.

Illness/ First Aid

It is in your interest to inform the DRC about your disability and any symptoms that may show up when you are unwell. This includes your G.P. details. This information will be stored subject to the Data Protection Act and accessed by senior staff only, who, with your approval, may inform other workers who deal with your needs whilst you use the centre

All support staff are training or have trained as First-Aiders.

There is a rest room if you feel ill whilst attending the Centre.

If you feel unwell and you wish to return home a member of staff will accompany you, or you can choose to remain at the DRC until a family member can collect you.

If you have an accident or are seriously unwell, you may be taken to the nearest hospital, if necessary by ambulance. A member of staff will accompany you and stay with you until a family member can attend.

All accidents, however minor, must be recorded into an accident book, which is kept in the administration office.

The DRC cannot hold or dispense any medication. If you need regular medication please insure you have the necessary medication with you, and administer it yourself. If you forget your medication you will be returned home.

If you have a condition, which requires dietary control, and you may feel you need to have food to prevent an episode, please inform the Co-ordinator, who will arrange with staff to provide food on your signal.

Childcare facilities

The DRC will provide childcare to facilitate the attendance to activities of any member who has pre-school children to whom they have parental responsibilities. These facilities may not necessarily be based at the DRC, but will be in line with LBWF childcare policy

Other rules and regulations

At the DRC we expect a high level of consideration for others and ourselves. We expect everyone to be disability aware, also we will not tolerate racism, sexism, or any other form of discrimination at the Centre or on DRC transport or DRC organised off centre activities.

Also the DRC will not tolerate bad language, spitting, violent behaviour, unnecessary touching and inappropriate or unsanitary clothing.

To address any of these issues we operate an Equal Opportunities Policy and a Complaints procedure. Both of these documents will be given to you when you receive this handbook.

If anyone fails to comply with warnings issued under the above procedures, their membership will be cancelled and they will no longer attend the centre.

The DRC does not normally allow animals in the building, but welcomes assistance dogs.

Notifiable diseases

There are certain illnesses or “notifiable diseases”. Should you contract or come into contact with any person suffering from a "notifiable disease" you should not attend the DRC unless cleared to do so by your doctor.

Notifiable diseases include:

Mumps	Measles	German measles
Chicken Pox	Cholera	Diphtheria
Typhoid	Dysentery	Glandular Fever
Poliomyelitis	Scarlet Fever	Smallpox
Tuberculosis	Paratyphoid Fever	Food Poisoning

Personal Property and theft

Users are at all times responsible for their own personal property. Do not leave your belongings unattended.

Any lost property will be kept in the admin office.

If anyone is caught stealing or attempting to steal personal or DRC property the police will be summoned to deal with the person instantly.

Smoking

There is no smoking allowed in the Centre.

Anyone who wishes to smoke must do so outside the building. There are bins provided at the front and back entrances. Please use these bins to dispose of your cigarettes, do not throw them on the floor.

Use of Illegal Drugs

If anyone attending the Centre is found to be using illegal drugs whilst on the centre's property the relevant authorities will be informed and use of the centre may be restricted.

Mobile Phones

Mobile Phones are not to be used in the Centre. If you wish to bring a mobile phone with you it must be switched off on DRC premises and on DRC buses. Some mobile phones have a detrimental effect on hearing aids and pacemakers.

The DRC has an environmental policy; please dispose of all forms of waste considerately

Please note - DRC policies and procedures are subject to regular review. These reviews all include extensive consultations with users.

And Finally...

The mission statement of the DRC is thus: -

TO HELP PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL AND/OR SENSORY DISABILITIES REALISE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AS INDIVIDUALS.

We hope this handbook will help you achieve this. If you have difficulty with written English, we are aiming to provide this document on tape in English and Urdu and as an easy to understand illustrated version, as well as Braille and large print.

If you are still unsure of anything in this handbook, don't be embarrassed. Any member of the Management Committee or Staff will be pleased to explain anything to you.

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