

Learning Disability User Voice Group

Date: Thursday 31st October 2024

Time: 10.00am – 12.00pm

Venue: Holiday Inn, Southend Airport

Attendees:

Neil Songer (Southend Council)

Nicky Riches (Southend Council)

Tara Marven (Southend Council)

Lucy Grant (Southend Council)

Angela Seibert (Arriva Buses)

Jade Crace (Stephenson's Buses)

Scott Dolling (Greater Anglia Trains)

Joe Carpenter (London Southend Airport)

Jade Weller (Southend Council)

Bus Passes – Neil led the conversation to hear what experiences group members have of bus passes

A few group members made comments about how it took a while to apply and receive their bus pass and there were difficulties providing evidence to support the application – especially the 'C-plus' card for those that require a carer to travel with them. For those who might not know, the C-plus is the bus pass that lets you get on the bus with your carer and they will not have to pay. It is important to note that the C-plus bus pass can only be used when your carer is with you and not when they are alone. It is also important that it is your carer and not just a family member or friend.

The group discussed that bus passes can only be used after 9am each morning.

Some group members do not know if they are eligible for a bus pass.

Guest Speaker – Angela from bus company Arriva

- Angela explained all the bus routes Arriva offers across Southend.
- She also spoke about how you should try to avoid school hours (8-9am and 3-4pm) because this is when the buses are very busy and some school children can sometimes be disrespectful and rude.
- A few group members raised points that they had experiences with the bus drivers being rude, or not helping them. Angela has given her email address (below), so if you ever feel like an Arriva bus driver is being rude towards you, email Angela with what happened and as many details as you can, such as the date, bus number and the time of day etc.

Angela's email address: seiberta@arriva.co.uk

Guest Speaker – Jade from bus company Stephenson's

Some group members raised points that the buses sometimes ignore them waiting at the bus stop, Jade said this is maybe because the bus is full, but in this case they should have the sign / banner up at the front of the bus where the route and number is letting people know that this bus is full, if not they should stop and make you aware of why you cannot get on, instead of ignoring you.

If this does happen, Jade has also left her email address (below), so again if you feel like a Stephenson's bus driver has been rude at any time in your journey, then send this to Jade as well as many details (if you can, it will be helpful for Jade to know the date, time, bus number etc).

Jade's email address: jade@stephensonsofessex.com

Guest Speaker – Scott Dolling from Greater Anglia Trains

- Scott spoke about how you can get railcards, which means you can get a 1/3 discount, you can find out all about this on the Greater Anglia website: <https://www.greateranglia.co.uk>
- Scott asked for feedback about “seamless travel” – thinking about the whole journey, not just the train part. A point raised by a few group members was that the trains are not easily accessible and even when they have booked assistance for ramps to get on and off the train, there has been no one at the station to help them.
- Scott showed all the train routes that Greater Anglia run across their network of train lines and also explained to the group that there has been lots of money spent on improving the service.
- The group did feedback some issues to Scott, including some disabled members of the group booking assistance ahead of travel and on the day, there had been no one available to help them at the station. It was also noted that Greater Anglia’s fares seem to be higher than the other primary local train company.

Joel’s Travel Presentation

- One of our group members, Joel, delivered an amazing presentation about his travels abroad, which he does on his own! Joel has autism and is neurodivergent, therefore was nervous about going abroad, but this didn’t stop him and now he loves it and feels confident whilst travelling.
- Joel shared how he travelled (trains, Eurostar and flights from Southend Airport). Joel also explained to the group the challenges he had around his learning disability and autism. Joel also explained the support he received to make it possible to make his travel arrangements and also during his trips away to various countries in Europe.
- We have attached the PowerPoint presentation that Joel made to the email, as this gives advice and encouragement if you would like to travel but you are nervous. Joel has some great tips!

- Joel has also given us his Instagram Username, which he puts all his travel pics on, if you wanted to see where he has been...

Joels Instagram account where you can view Joel's travel pictures: Joelsjournal_

London Southend Airport Train Station

- Joe, who works at Southend Airport, took some of the group to Southend Airport train station and spoke about the history and how the airport runs the station. We also got to see an EasyJet flight coming in from Alicante, Spain!
- Joe also spoke about RADAR keys which are keys that open over 10,000 disabled toilets across the UK. You can buy these online, for about £5 each.
- Neil also explained about the Airport's 'Passengers with Reduced Mobility' Group or PRM. The airport is looking for a representative for the group who has a learning disability. If you are interested, please let Neil know and he can pass on your details to Joe Carpenter at the Airport.

IMPORTANT

Next Meeting Date – we are organising one more group meeting before the end of the year. This will take place on Wednesday 11th December 2024 at Project 49 from 10:00am to 12:00pm. It is very close to Christmas so will have a festive theme– a chance to wear those Christmas Jumpers?! 😊 🎄

End.