

Disability and Carers Action Group Minutes

Wednesday 8th October 2025 11am @ Civic Centre

	<p>Those Present:</p> <p>Robert Mac Allister (RM) Chair, Hedley Brown (HB), Edna Phillips (EP), Barrie Andrews (BA), Angela Burrows (AB), Keith Ducker (KD) & Sarah Gallagher (SG) the Resident Engagement Team Leader of the SEH Support Services Team.</p>	
	<p>Apologies: Terry Swinney Harry Few</p>	
	<p>Previous Minutes can be downloaded and read on the following website strf.uk – click on Focus groups and Board – click Disability & Carers then scroll down to read the minutes you want.</p>	<p>Actions</p>
1.	<p>RM welcomed all those present and run through the September minutes. All agreed that they were a true record.</p>	
2.	<p>RM welcomed all to the meeting. He then asked SG to go though the Terms of Reference to see if any changes are needed. This is attached. RM then asked if all are ok to have the AGM next month on the 12th in room 2. All agreed.</p> <p>SG. Have you had any interest in other people joining the group? RM. Not immediately but I've got someone coming possibly next month and she is a carer.</p> <p>RM said that the Disability Pop-Up session that was held at Nicholson House was a success and they will be having another one next year. SG said that her department would support them with that. SG also said that you might get more people just saying, actually I didn't realise I was a carer, or actually I didn't realise I was disabled when you talked about it like that.</p> <p>RM then showed the new poster for the group and said "I want to get some of these pop-ups in every building."</p> <p>RM then showed the new poster/leaflet for the group. RB said "I think if you get a couple of small ones out, and then you get bigger ones to put in doctors, chemists, SEH buildings and so on, because I want to get some of these everywhere, because I don't think they're in any of the buildings at the moment.</p> <p>Sue Richard said she would print them all for us then all I have to do is come to the desk downstairs and pick them up then go round on the scooter and drop them all off to people who want them and in places.</p> <p>SG. They can actually go through to Careline. RM said "It's in Careline</p>	

interest and they could put them up for us." SG said that they may need them printed but we can do that.

But what we can say is, the more residents that are part of a group they have got a strong voice together, the better it is for Sheltered Careline in a way. You've got residents that are informed, residents that are meeting together residents that are not feeling isolated. That's really, really good for them, because then... They could hand them out as they go out and about. SG said she will speak to Careline about doing this for us.

RM said that on a Monday we have a lady come in to us but then we never know just who is in the office, or when they are coming and leaving.

SG explained. So, you should have an on-site housing support officer, which they call an HSO. They should be there on a Monday morning. So, what happens is, if you've got any issues. (They won't be able to deal with everything). But they will direct you to the right department. It could be around your tenancy, so you contact your tenancy officer. If it's around sort of benefits, they'll be able to give you the advice and guidance, support that you need. But you have the right to know the people that come and do the health and safety checks and alarms from Careline.

RM said I didn't realise. So, they know the building and the asset is the building. And the HSO is to deal?

SG explained. If you look at it this way, Sheltered Careline deal with the exterior of your flat, and maybe your pool cords and all of those. But you would call through on those anyway, wouldn't you? And then your HSO deals with the bits that you need to do getting on with your daily data living. RM asked, so who does your records? SG said, your medical records? Your medical records would be Careline. So, what I would do in a situation with Careline is that I wouldn't pull the red cord as much.

I would just go through to the 0800 number. But there's no harm in you going down on Monday morning and saying, to whoever's on site, actually, I need to update my information. Because what happens is if residents wait until they have their annual review.

A mobile number. We could be trying to contact you on that mobile number and you've changed it. So, if you tell them, they can put it straight into the process and then everyone knows that there's been a change.

RM. So, they are reviewed annually, are they? SG. They should be reviewed annually to see, how are you? How are you doing? Do you still need a... If you're having a welfare call, do you still need it? Or if you're not having one, you're not doing very well, would you like one? All of those sort of things. That they can discuss with you. How's your support going? If you've got a carer coming is there anything else that we can help you with? And those sort of things. RM. There could be a carer's section, which might do something.

Who makes the rules for the carers? Well, we've never had anything on carers before. It's always disability and disablement. Keith brought in the carer's side. SG. I think the carer's side is good. You have to have the carer's side. You can't have one without the other. SG. No, because I think that they sometimes don't realise that they are carers. RM. Yeah, but a lot of people who are carers don't class themselves as carers. You get the paid carers who claim a carer's allowance and you get the unpaid

	<p>carers, but they don't go and tell everybody, I'm a carer. So, nobody really knows and that is a very big amount of people.</p> <p>EP. Because a lot of people, i.e. a couple, care for each other and they don't class themselves as carers. KD. My wife's not a carer she says, she tells me she's not a carer. But she dresses me in the morning. She does everything for me. EP. They do it because they love that person. KD. Don't forget you are supposed to tell your doctor as well if you're a carer, because when it comes to any injections like flu jabs and if it's COVID and that, a carer gets the same as a disabled person because without them, the disabled persons are in trouble.</p> <p>EP. Especially when that carer looks after four or five family members. KD. But I think we need to get it out that there's carers, because there's no carers group in Southend now. They've all gone. So, it needs to get out there that we are here for carers.</p> <p>RM. The nearest we got to that is the ones that come here from Benfleet, wasn't it? It was a good talk too from them.</p> <p>RM. I hope to get in touch with SAVS in the next couple of weeks and go and see if I can see them to see if they can come here. If I can get advertised with them, so all their voluntary organisations that are registered with them, we can be registered as well, and then people know more about us as well. But then the idea is to get a notice in the libraries, the forum, all the colleges, all the schools, all of that because it's from A to B. They have a mailing list, so you can ask to join the mailing list.</p> <p>SG. I think it might be an idea for you to maybe put together a little action plan. So, what we could do is maybe send you something, help you with it. I just want to support you, because I think at the minute you're really moving forward. You're changing things, do you know what I mean? You want to get more residents involved, don't you? So, it might be an idea, what's the action for 2026? Because to be honest with you, we're in October now, and the weather's changing. It's coming very quickly. So, what can you do, like, next year? So, as Keith said, if you look at the pop-up session, you could maybe advertise in each of the, publications in Insight. So, have you done a story in Insight?</p> <p>KD. No, we haven't done one. We used to do one, I used to have two pages for the Federation. But we could ask to have a page for disability.</p> <p>SG. We could do a life in, a day in your life, for instance. It could be, you know, why you joined the group, why you continue, why you took on the chair, why you think it's really important. You could talk about the emphasis around carers. I think that would be a really good selling point as well. If you'd like to get involved, please contact, as you may not recognise, you're a carer, please come along to a meeting, la-ti-da-ti-da, don't worry about it. We'll get someone to interview you. So, we're very short for this one. So, as an action plan, disability and carers, we'll do a 60 seconds with Rob, yeah? When is the next one? Is it January, February? KD. Yes, something like that. This is just after Christmas, shut off is December I believe.</p> <p>SG. You can gauge how many people have got involved, you know, people have come along. Then you can say, Edna, would you like to, Edna first probably won't want to do it, but, you know, like in the</p>	<p>RB</p> <p>SG</p> <p>KD See below 7.2</p>
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magazine. But you might say somebody else. KD. We might have a new one. SG. You might have a new person turn up. KD. Why did you join the group? SG. Yes, exactly. And then you can do, you know, me attending the group, I really enjoy it or just something around what you're trying to do, But the action plan could be, January, February, you've already got one action. You're going to appear in the Insight magazine? Then you can look towards to March and Spring. Actually, you could do a pop-up session. I don't know where you're going to do it at the minute. Off the top of my head, you're going to do it somewhere, yeah? Then you can say, I'll tell you what, we could go along to the estate days. We have estate days. So, you could talk to residents about disability and carers group. So, there's things for you to attend there, where all members of staff go along.

EP. but where's all those people that went to that big meeting over at the airport place? That said they were going to turn up? KD. Lots of talk, but no do. SG. But the one thing you can do is to turn around and say, we're still here, and we're still wanting to increase the numbers. We think it's something you're really passionate about, and it's something that you want to continue to do. And I've got a good feeling I think 2026 is going to be your year. I really do. I think you've put a lot in. A new year, a new start. Exactly, I think you're going to do okay. KD. How are the sheltered units now? Are they clear? We stopped going to them because they had the bed bugs. SG. We've still got issues, but not in all of them. Only a few. KD. The whole group said that we'd go back once the bed bugs had finished and ask each sheltered unit if they would mind us coming along on a certain day. Hold our meetings there and let them come down and join us. SG. Do you want to revisit that? EP. Yeah, that's what we were doing before and we stopped because of the bed bug problem. But that's where we got people interested because the last one, we went to, we had Graham, the fire officer there, we had over a dozen people attending. That little one in... Down by the old white horse. SG. That's really good. So, I love coming to these meetings because you achieve quite a lot, actually. So, you're going to have the insight story. So, what I'll do is I'll put together an action plan for you. Like, January, you're going to do this. Then you're going to revisit, attend the shelter housing schemes. So, January, you're going to do your insight story by yourself, then shelter housing schemes. And then you're going to do, what was the other thing that we discussed? The pop-ups.

We've already got three items already and we're not even in 2026, so you just need to concentrate. SAVs, you're doing SAVs. So, promotion is a part of the action plan. So, your promotion will be... Promoting the disability and carers action group. Every possible place that you can. So, that would be SAVs, that would be with sheltered... GP surgeries. They can be sent to GP surgeries, And GP, social prescribers. RM. What, they can be sent to them? Of course it can, yeah. You don't have to go there and put it up. now, don't. KD. Anybody goes to the hospital, take one with you and give it to the information place. SG. So, there's a list of social prescribers. So, you can have access to it, so you just have to Google it. I know quite a few of them. So, if you could just say, Sarah, is it okay, can I send it? It's in a GP's practise to promote support groups, and that's what you are. Yeah, for mental health and well-being. So, it makes sense

for them to actually say, not only are they coming to the surgery, but they've also got support outside. The only thing I would say, I love this, the way you've done it, but I think they need to be in colour. Oh, they were printed in black and white. RM. That one's in colour. SG. That's fine. So, that's the way they are we should do them, so much better that's one I suggest. RM. Some of the words have to be changed. SG. Exactly, to make sure that, it reads really well. Lovely, isn't it? HB. I need a carer... RM. You need a cleaner? HB. No, a carer. Yes, two hours for two days, that's four hours a week. RM. That's a cleaner, to do cleaning for you, and shopping? HB. No shopping. RM. Just cleaning your house? HB. Yes, yeah. RM Oh, right, a cleaner. I can't recommend anyone with that. EP. I called into a place on Hamlet Court Road yesterday, because I was down that way, at the opticians and they've taken all my details, for just somebody to do the housework for me. That would be great for him as well. But I didn't take all the details, of the place itself. Is it, IN Hamlet Court Road, it used to be in the Old Haven. It's just down a little bit there from London Road end on the right and it's on that corner of the alleyway. They took all my details and said somebody would contact me. KD. My next-door neighbour's just got a cleaner. She's a lovely little girl. Started up her own cleaning little thing. So, I shall pass your details on to her if that's ok. EP & HB Yes thank you that would be brilliant. KD. If you don't mind me passing your phone number on, I'll do that when I get home. EP & HB. That would be really good. HB. She cleans your house. RM. A carer is someone who's going to come along and dress you, do your cooking. Sort out your tablets. Make sure you go to your hospital appointments, your doctor's appointments. Sometimes you can qualify for care if your health deteriorates as part of social care. But they come out and do an assessment, Headley. RM. So, they'll see exactly what you can do and what you need help with. Then there is some payment towards that. But then you can apply for benefits that help you. HB. That's through the council. RM. Yes, that's through the council. You have to pay for a cleaner as well. HB. Yeah, but a cleaner, I've got to pay. RM. But a cleaner, you have to pay for, Headley. RM. Would you like me to make sure that you have a benefits check? HB. OK, that's fine.

KD. Can I point out that the leaflet has got nothing on it about South Essex Homes. It says Southend Council. Southend City Council on matters affecting the disability community, but you also need South Essex Homes on it including the logo of SEH AND SCC. RM. Well, it was Angie and someone sorted the rest of this out and then it went to Sue. KD. Should be both of them, really. RM. Yeah, should be both. I agree with that. It Is the council who can advise them on different things. KD. Our Finance Department (rent department) can help as well. SG. Can I just ask that? You've got, guide Southend City Council on matters affecting the disabled community. Oh, so you're going to guide them in giving information? RM. Yeah, we've done that quite a lot. The group has done that a lot with the council. Like when they were putting the drainage guttering down in the town, they had wheelchair wheels dropping in them, walking sticks getting stuck, walker wheels stuck, so we told the council the gaps should be smaller; they listened and changed them so they are now safe. On the STRF.UK website, under

disability, it gives you the room, the time if it's changed and even if there's guests coming. So, it's all there. I need to ask for your help with something. We need to hold a register of reasonable adjustments that we make for residents based on their health and vulnerability and cultural factors. We're planning to build this into what we call Northgate, which is our systems that we use. Because it gives us information about our residents. So, the more we know about you, the better we're able to deal with it and understand. So, I need to have your input regarding this, so what we're going to do is we're going to send it to you all and ask for you to comment. We're going to be looking at alternative communication formats. So, people that need large print letters. I think everyone agrees with that, doesn't they? RM. And braille. SG. Even braille, Audio format, so that somebody is included. Easy-read documents, and what we mean by easy-read documents is that they're understandable. They're simple. That's about saying, you know, using the language that residents understand. Sometimes we have a tendency, I think, to maybe go off on a tangent, you know what I mean? A British Sign Language interpreter. So, if we would need that, we've got BSL, so someone would be able to do that, as you've got to cater, haven't you, for all eventualities and disabilities? A text relay service Because a lot of these disabilities are hidden. Plain English correspondence. I'm going to read through these because there's quite a lot. Some people prefer an email instead of a letter. Telephone instead of written communication. I know a lot of older people much prefer the telephone, yeah? And a lot prefer assistive contact advisory or an advocate or a support worker present for meetings. So, if you had to come along for a meeting, you felt a little bit, you know, I need to have somebody there to give me support, that would be possible. And then we've got permission to speak by a family member or carer. Longer appointment times allocated for people. So, you know, in the busy schedule that we have in life today, sometimes what seems half an hour to some people can take somebody else much longer to be able to put that across or whatever. I.e. the GPs? EP They give you 10 minutes. Sometimes you need a longer appointment to get over everything, you know, to do with what you went for. SG. Absolutely. I totally agree with that. Like I did a few months ago. Quiet or private meeting space, which I think is a really good idea. So that's around sort of if we're looking at the communication, appointments and access adjustments, home visits instead of office appointments. Somebody might find it easier if you come along to their own home. It might be, it's very difficult for them to get to the office at certain times of the week. They just might like it in the privacy of their own home. Priority early appointment slots. So, some people might have carers. So, I'd much rather if you come at 9 o'clock because my carer comes at half ten. So those sort of thinks Gender specific staff for visits. So, some women might prefer to have an officer that's female. Those sort of things. You should be able to request the gender you would like. I will send the document to you all the comment on. And then the next thing we have to do as well, maybe I'm jumping the gun, because Keith has to be away the last half hour, due to another meeting, is to sort out, at the end of a general meeting, do you want a speaker. So that's November. But your AGM is going to be so short. So, on January then, we need to book

	<p>in people. I'm going to try to get people booked in for January, February, March, April, May, for a guest speaker, two of them. KD. Do you want one for next month? Because the AGM is going to take ten minutes at that. SG. Well, that's what I was wondering. Do you want us to come and do your AGM? Are you all right to do it yourself? KD. I'm all right. How about Graeme the Fire Manager? You've always been asking for him to come round. EP. We've always been asking for Graem. For next month (November). RM. Yeah, that's fine. KD. I'll speak to Graham.</p> <p>KD. Would you like someone from Income Management to come along and give you a talk and some information. All agreed that they would and would like them for December</p> <p>KD had to leave the meeting to attend another meeting with SEH officers</p>	<p>KD</p> <p>See below 7. & 7.1</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Items for Future Meetings:</p> <p>Departments or organisations who have agreed to attend: Occupation Therapy SCC (June 25 Speaker) Adults and Communities Lead - jSCC Community Builders Age Concern Achieve, Thrive & Flourish Breathe Easy Everyone Health SEH Fire Manager Send the Right Message (Tricia Cowdrey) Dial (from SAVS) (May 25 Speaker)</p> <p>If you know of anyone who would be willing to attend and give us a talk on their organisation or department that could help the disabled or carers in Southend, please let us know and we will contact them on your behalf.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Date of the next meeting:</p> <p>12th November 2025 11am at the Civic Centre room 2</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>PLEASE REMEMBER THIS IS A DISABILITY AND CARERS GROUP AND ALL MEETINGS HAVE A SET AGENDA, YOU CAN BRING ANYTHING THAT HAS TO DO WITH DISABILITY OR CARING TO THE MEETING. WE WELCOME ANY CONCERNS OR IDEAS YOU HAVE AND WILL DISCUSS ANYTHING THAT IS OF CONCERN OR WORRY TO YOU AS A DISABLED RESIDENT OR CARER WITHIN THE CITY.</p> <p>ANY OTHER CONCERNS, COMPLAINTS OR HELP NOT RELATED TO THE MEETING SUBJECT, MUST BE AFTER THE MEETING.</p>	

	YOU WILL THEN HAVE TIME TO BRING TO THE ATTENTION OF THE CORRECT PERSON, ANYTHING THAT IS NOT DISABILITY OR CARER RELATED.	
6.	<p>Future Meeting Dates and Venues:</p> <p>All meeting will be held at the Civic Centre on the 2nd Wednesday of the month until 2026 then different venues maybe be advertised.</p>	
7.	<p><i>Graham Hart is not available for November. So, the Income Management team are booked to attend the meeting at 11:30am. They would like to know if there are any specific questions the group would like addressed, it would be helpful to have an overview in advance so they can prepare responses.</i></p> <p>Please email or telephone KD with any requirements, so he can pass them on to the Income Management Team.</p>	ALL
7.1	<p><i>Graham Hart the Fire Manager for SEH will attend on the 12th December at 11:30am. Again, he would like to know if there is anything specific you would like him to talk about?</i></p> <p>Please email or telephone KD with any requirements, so he can pass them on to Graham.</p>	ALL
7.2	<p><i>From Julia Pack Insight Editor: I love the sound of that article focussing both on a disabled person and from a carer's point of view, what a great idea! Would it make it easier for the group for us to write the articles for their approval? If they can identify the people who will be the subjects of those articles and let us know any info they want the article to cover, then Amber or I could meet with them and interview them, take photos and take things from there?</i></p> <p><i>We will start collecting story ideas in December before writing content for the winter issue of Insight when we return from the Christmas break in early 2026, and it will be delivered in mid-February. If we will be interviewing and writing the articles, we'd need to be meeting with the people during w/c 5th January – or if they'd rather write it and submit it in to us, we'd need to receive it by Friday 9th January please.</i></p> <p>Please email or telephone KD with your suggestions on how this should be written. By the communication team or yourselves?</p>	ALL