

## Co-Champion for the Disabled Mel Guilding

### Annual Report 2015/2016

I was elected as a Co-Champion for the Disabled in July 2015. My role started quite slowly but in the last few months my diary has become much busier.

One of my first roles was to attend a reception held at Lancaster Town Hall for Walking with the Wounded. This being a team of three men and one woman from Britain and America all of whom are disabled military people who walked 1,000 miles across Britain with the culmination of being met at Buckingham Palace by Prince Harry. This was a very interesting and enjoyable evening. They too were pleased that Lancaster City Council had Champions for the Disabled telling me that they were unaware of many councils having this post.

I have met with people who attend the Lancaster Deaf Club and hope to meet up with them again soon.

Having attended a partially sighted friend's funeral in September it occurred to me that the partially sighted couldn't read a small card issued to all councillors. I asked Demographic Services to find out if a larger card could be printed with Co-Champion for the Disabled instead of my ward printed on it. It was decided, in discussion with partially sighted friends, on the larger size. These cards have been fantastically well received and I shall soon have to order some more!

I have "networked" whilst out, especially when shopping or travelling on public transport. This having a very good response with people contacting me on a varied subjects such as removal of bus routes, changes to P.I.P/D.L.A. the latter having been overturned by Central Government. I have also met a lady whilst we were both travelling by train who is a mobility scooter user who used to work for The Leonard Cheshire Foundation. This has given me many leads that will help me to help other disabled people.

In December I happened to be in Morecambe Indoor Market where there was a "pop-up" stall hosted by a number of charities included Dogs for the Disabled and Guide Dogs for Blind. The Dogs for the Disabled don't have a local branch but again were interested that Lancaster City Council had Co-Champions for the Disabled. Guide Dogs for the Blind do have a local branch and I am hoping to attend one of their meetings in the near future. Also through Guide Dogs I have helped with a National Petition making people aware that 3 out of 4

Guide and Assistance Dogs are still being refused access to public buildings, shops, cafes and taxis.

I visited Galloways Society for the Blind in Morecambe in March and spoke to many service users. I also learned of the fabulous new centre that will be open later this year at the old Visitor newspaper office in Victoria Street, Morecambe. They are also very pleased with how they are having a good relationship with Lancaster City Council over the "Shared Places" in the Victoria Street vicinity. I was interviewed by a user that will be used to help others to become aware of the new centre. Whilst at Galloways someone came up to me and asked if what ages I worked with and she is going to organise a visit for me to talk to and visit The Loyne School. I am awaiting further developments on this.

Following my visit to Galloways I have been invited to attend the monthly meetings of Carnforth Group of the Macular Society and I shall be attending the April meeting.

I am also hoping to meet up with parents/carers of children with Autism again this is work in progress. I have contacted St. John's Hospice to see if I can help anyone there.

For the last couple of months I have attended a coffee and chat group for carers this is run by NCompass. This is something that I hope can be expanded on.

I am often asked as to what is my role and who do I support is as Champion. I feel that I am here to support ALL DISABLED people whatever age. I liken myself to being the hub of a wheel, with all my associations and who ever needs me as the spokes of that wheel.