

The Unusual Walk Around

In July 2014 I embarked on a very unusual walk around at the Royal Bolton Hospital. Jonathan Moores, Patient Experience Officer Estate and Carolyn Locke, Patient Experience Coordinator accompanied me on this walk around which proved to be an extremely amazing experience for all concerned.

I was asked if I would take part in this project via Healthwatch Bolton of which I am a member of and said yes because I could see an enormous potential for the need for this walk around to take place of which I was undertaking completely voluntarily.

I am a wheelchair user and the nature of this walk around was to visit as many areas situated within the hospital where access concerns or remit did not follow the disabled access regulations. I had never done anything like this before and found the whole exercise somewhat intimidating but after I soon realised that unless I voice my findings, change would not be forthcoming and after all, at the end of the day I was doing this for those people out there who do not have a voice or find it difficult to share their need.

We visited many wards and areas of the hospital such as PALS and the pharmacy, including discussing the parking facilities with respect to disabled drivers and or passengers. The lifts and including the levels of the sanitizer stations at each ward entrance was also discussed, the lift in respect of too much work traffic usage of the public lifts and the sanitizer repositioning.

I believe that the walk around was an eye opener for Jonathan as I remember on one of many inspections of a disabled accessible toilet, when I pointed out; the towels to dry one's hand were far to high for someone who had a disability, especially for those using a wheelchair.

Several other issues were raised during our walk around and each one was discussed and how the issue could be resolved. Jonathan and Carolyn were extremely patient with me as I explained what would be the best way forward to enable access to various areas of the hospital and it's facilities.

I found this project extremely worthwhile and a privilege to be involved in. I have since been back after the walk around and am glad to see that at the time I went, some of the changes had been implemented. Seeing these changes made, it gave me so much satisfaction to know that the knowledge I have as a person who is wheelchair user is being listened to.

Since this walk around I have now got myself into a bit of a habit of looking at the environment around me, whether that be a supermarket, museum, swimming pool or other such building and taking stock of whether their building is following the disabled access regulations. I follow this up by talking to the customer service or another bodies in charge. My input has always been received well by those in charge of the buildings that I have

entered and I have been thanked for providing my input. I have yet to find if those changes have been made.

Would I do this again? Yes definitely, as unfortunately what I have gleaned from this project, is that unless you are disabled and or are a wheelchair user, you can make those changes that will enhance not just your life but also other people who have a disability.

I would like to thank both Jonathan and Carolyn for putting up with me on the walk around and am eagerly awaiting my next project😊.

Miss Woods