



## Summary of 1st North West Regional Forum

1pm-4pm Wednesday 8th February 2017

### Chairman's Club, Etihad Stadium, Manchester City FC

The first North West Regional forum was held at Etihad Stadium, Manchester, on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> February.

This forum was organised by Level Playing Field (LPF) and Manchester City Disabled Supporters Association (MCDSA) with support from Manchester City FC.

**Objectives of the Forum:** The forum provides the opportunity for fans, clubs, Disabled Supporters Associations (DSAs) and other relevant stakeholders to network, share their experiences and share best practise.

#### Attendees

Name	Representing
Kieran Reynolds	LPF
Ruth Hopkins	LPF
Mark Barber	Manchester City DSA
Daniel Lovesey	Manchester <del>City</del> United FC
Paul Kelly	Manchester City Community Foundation
Jo McNicol	Tottenham DSA
Keith Graham	Liverpool DSA
Shirley Graham	Liverpool DSA
Steve Evans	Liverpool DSA
Ian Littlewood	Liverpool DSA
Tommy Hutchinson	Liverpool DSA
Chas Banks	Manchester United DSA (MUDSA)
Shirley Banks	Manchester United DSA (MUDSA)
Robert Heys	Macclesfield Town FC
Jackie Melia	Bury FC

Carrol Unsworth	Bury FC
Simon Thornton	Liverpool FC
Debbie Joynson	Liverpool FC
Steve Gilbert	Wrexham DSA
Mike Hughes	Wrexham DSA
Andy Pierce	Wrexham DSA
Peter Biddulph	Burnley DSA
Lynn Ashworth	Burnley DSA
Roy Williamson	FC United of Manchester
Damian Chadwick	FC United of Manchester
Michelle Kirk	Everton FC
Brendan Connolly	Everton FC
Stephen Parry	Bolton Wanderers
Morgan Parry	Bolton Wanderers
Jennifer Lewis	Blackburn DSA
John Lewis	Blackburn DSA
Bob Marsden	Chester FC
Mark Palmer	Chester FC
Alan Montgomery	Student

## Summary

Meeting commenced at 1pm

The meeting was opened at 13:00 by **Mark Barber** (Manchester City Disabled Supporters Association) and **Daniel Lovesey (Manchester City FC)**. Mark gave an overview of the day's agenda and the purpose of the forum.

The first presentation was given by Level Playing Field (LPF) General Manager, **Ruth Hopkins** who explained her role and gave an overview of LPF's history, objectives and current projects. She then handed over to **Kieran Reynolds** who gave an overview of the Working Together project and the benefits of establishing a DSAs and Regional Forums.

The next presentation was from **Daniel Lovesey (MCFC)** who introduced himself and gave an overview of his responsibilities as Manchester City's DAO. In this role he offers support and advice to all of the clubs disabled supporters. He is also ensuring that the club meet the Premier League pledge for accessible stadia.

Daniel gave examples of how MCFC and MCDSA have worked together to help disabled supporters and his work on match day. Dan highlighted many of the features incorporated in to the design of the Etihad Stadium and recent improvements added such as super risers and changing places facility.

The next presentation was from **Mark Barber (MCDSA)**. He spoke about Manchester City DSA and gave an overview of their history and current projects. He also spoke about their work with the club to improve accessible and inclusive facilities at the Etihad Stadium.

Mark also explained how MCDSA communicate with disabled supporters, the purpose of the association, partners they work with to either raise profile or provide added benefits to members. He presented images of MCDSA working together with MCFC to run social events aimed at getting disabled people with a common interest to meet together, celebrate recent success and meet with former and current players, local celebrities and club representatives.

The final presentation was from **Paul Kelly (City in the Community)** who gave a presentation about the One City Disability Project. Paul spoke about the success of the scheme and the positive experiences of participants.

After a short break, the second half of the forum was a **round table discussion**.

#### **Q1 Proof of disability: Should disabled supporters be expected to provide proof of disability to buy tickets.**

An example was given where one club is asking for proof of disability at every game and it was questioned should this happen.

**Mark** from MCDSA gave his view that proof of disability should be requested off all supporters requesting special access but that this should only be requested once a season. Mark stated MCDSA do not want disability to be seen as a competition so would prefer all disabled supporters to be asked for the same proof rather than limit requests to certain sections.

**Ruth** from LPF gave an overview of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission advice that proof is only requested where there is "reasonable doubt". It was agreed that where requested the proof could be securely stored with the disabled persons' permission for the season to avoid being requested repeatedly.

#### **Q2 Risk Assessments: A question was asked about implementing risk assessments**

**Ruth** from LPF went through support available through LPF.

**Dan** from MCFC spoke about his work with the clubs health and safety Manager

#### **Q3 Safety in football: A question was asked by Chas Banks (MUDSA) about the safety of wheelchair fans when allocated pitch side positions with no barrier behind them.**

Several delegates gave examples of grounds they have attended and not felt safe due to lack of barriers resulting in supporters surging forward during goal celebrations. This was noted as an ongoing issue and that the formation of regional forums would make it easier to discuss topics like this.

**Q4 Ticket pricing: Chas Banks (MUDSA) asked if ticket prices for disabled spectators should be discounted.**

Clubs in attendance explained their current ticket policies for disabled supporters. Some clubs offer a small discount while others charge full rate. A vote was held and the majority felt that disabled supporters should be charged the same rate as other supporters.

**Q5 Safe Standing: Alex Pandolfo (MCDSA) was unable to attend but forwarded a question about the impact of reintroducing standing sections in football stadia.**

There was agreement that any new standing sections must not impact the view of disabled spectators. Clubs must ensure that viewing areas are adapted accordingly to ensure disabled supporters have an unobstructed view.

**8: Discussion about the future of the North West forum.**

Kieran led a discussion about the future of the forum. Delegates unanimously agreed that they would be interested in attending a future event. Kieran highlighted the importance of the forum becoming self-sustainable to ensure that it effectively represents the DSAs and clubs involved. He then proposed that an organising committee is established to with the aim of running of future forums and suggested that anyone interested contacts him by phone or email.

**9: Close**

Kieran then brought the meeting to a close. He thanked those who helped organise the event and all delegates in attendance. Mark ensured the thanks were returned to Kieran. Group photos were taken to celebrate the day and a short tour of disabled facilities was arranged by MCFC. It was agreed that minutes of the forum would be circulated to all delegates who attended and published on the LPF Website.

**Meeting closed at 4pm.**

**Next forum to take place in Spring 2018, date and venue TBC.**