# Speaking Up for Disability in West Sussex

26/01/2011

Speaking up for Disability will be managed by the Worthing-based charity Voice for Disability. There are few records in existence that look at disability from the viewpoint of disabled people themselves because historical reports tend to have been written by hospitals, institutions and other care providers.

The hidden histories of disabled people will now be explored looking at how their experiences of early life, school, work, families, the views of health professionals, and relationships have altered since 1942 when Voice for Disability was founded under its former name of West Sussex Association for Disabled People.

Volunteer interviewers will give disabled people the opportunity to record their own views and in so doing will build up a unique archive of first-hand accounts. Working with the West Sussex Records Office, those taking part will create a lasting legacy for future researchers, professionals and the general public.

The resulting archive will have a fully searchable online catalogue as well as an online education pack for teachers. Information gathered through research, including Voice for Disability's own history, will be used to create a portable display that will be made available to other organisations throughout the county to help raise general awareness about disability.

Stuart McLeod, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund South East England, said: "This project helps to redress the balance by providing a personal insight into the experiences and opinions of disabled people in West Sussex. At last, their voices will be heard."

For Voice for Disability, Executive Officer Roland Higgins said: "Disabled people are the minority that gets overlooked whenever equality is spoken about. This means that there is very little archive material available for researchers to draw upon. The stories of how disabled people have come from being hidden in institutions to being part of everyday communities, within the past 50 years, is truly remarkable. This oral history project will capture those stories and make them accessible."

A second, smaller, grant has also been announced by the HLF for a project researching the history of disability over the past century in relation to the Treloar School and College, an institution for severely disabled young people at Alton in Hampshire. A grant of £7,700 has been made to Hampshire Record Office.

**Notes to editors**

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported more than 33,900 projects, allocating over £4.4billion across the UK, with over £428 million granted in the South East alone.

**Further information**

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