



Michael Solomons leaving Finchley Supermarket, East End Road.
Photo by Daphne Chamberlain

Getting beyond the door

By Daphne Chamberlain

"It makes me so mad not to get into a place." The words of Michael Solomons, a local wheelchair user. Many people assume that, from last October, the Disability Discrimination Act legally enforces public places to provide access for all. In fact, its requirement is for "reasonable provision". How far is East Finchley doing this?

A permanent ramp is what a Barnet Council officer considers the best option. Expense apart, though, on some sites, particularly where the High Road slopes down to the station and the pavement narrows, that may not be possible and several shops report that the Council has vetoed the idea.

The Highways Dept (Street Enforcement Section) has the final say about anything that intrudes on the pavement. The Planning Department, though, should be the first people contacted. They must advise the shop of its responsibility, and will discuss the best course of action with them. After that, responsibility is with the shop.

Permanent or portable

Quite a few have mobile ramps. The most basic must

be the board that the Finchley Supermarket, 123 East End Road, has been bringing out for 10 years. (The owners also deliver to disabled people in East End Road.) Michael Solomons uses this, but the step is shallow and Michael's wheelchair is light.

Tu Destino have made a more sophisticated portable ramp which withstands Sippy Azizollah's very heavy chair.

The Centre for Accessible Environment, though, stresses the importance of selecting the right mobiles and training staff to operate them, as well as getting insurance, as the occasional nasty accident has occurred elsewhere.

Don't leave us to wonder

Some shops consider their most reasonable provision is

to serve customers at the door. Animal Aid does this, and also displays a large notice welcoming disabled customers and explaining how they will be served.

Information like this is important if a disabled person is not to be left wondering. Most told us they would prefer ringing a bell to attract attention, rather than having to tap on the window, and the leading mobile ramp supplier provides accessory kits with bells and signs.

Access in Barnet is a group of disabled people who work closely with the Council. Anne Davies, their Chair, says, "People should do their best. Remember that not all disabled people are in wheelchairs, and think of the inside of a building too. Be positive for 2005."

Accessibility for disabled people

Useful contacts concerning disabled access

Barnet planning department - Barnet House, 1255 High Road N20 0EJ; 020 8359 3000.

Access in Barnet - 954 High Road N12 9RX; 020 8446 6935; textphone 020 8343 7632; www.dabb.org.uk; disability@dabb.org.uk.

Centre for Accessible Environment - 020 7840 0125; www.cae.org.uk.

Portaramp (portable ramp supplier, recommended by CAE) - 0871 200 2225; www.portaramp.co.uk.

Disabled Living Foundation - 020 7289 6111.

Disabled Access to Muswell Hill Odeon

Muswell Hill Odeon has a portable ramp for entry to the cinema. There is no lift inside, but films are often rotated between upper and lower screens. (They say they also offer a hearing service.) There is also a toilet suitable for people with disabilities.

Shaping up to the arts

By Daphne Chamberlain

Have you or anyone you know ever wanted to get to the theatre, a concert or an exhibition, but have been physically unable to do so? Perhaps deafness has prevented you from attending an event. Or maybe you would love to perform or to work with the public, but are prevented by disability.

Shape is an organisation that aims to overcome these obstacles, and to provide training in disability awareness. It has existed for nearly 30 years, but has recently been revamped, and received more investment. So *THE ARCHER* asked for up-to-date information.

Ticket scheme

This assists disabled, deaf and elderly people to attend London arts events. Registered members get discounted tickets, accessible seats, and a volunteer escort if needed. Signers are available too.

The 200-plus volunteers meet members at the venue, accompany them on public transport, or drive them from their own home. *Shape* pays for the volunteers' tickets and expenses.

There are other voluntary posts - for a few hours a week - in the office.

Opportunities for performers

Shape trains young disabled and deaf musicians and singers to record their own music, and to produce their own CDs. Its National Deaf Theatre Academy offers the only accredited course for deaf theatre practitioners taught entirely in British Sign. In partnership with the Tate and City Lit, deaf people are trained to be gallery guides, again using British Sign.

Disability awareness and access consultation are also on offer, all delivered by people who are disabled or deaf themselves. In addition, *Shape* works with schools and the NHS.

For more information, contact 020 7619 6160, info@shapearts.org.uk, or www.shapearts.org.uk.

Vacancy

THE ARCHER team is looking for someone used to working with a PC to take part in the processing of contributors' text to make it suitable for setting on pages.

The job would involve at least a few hours each month at regular intervals. Training will be provided.

For information please email the-archer@lineone.net, contact Tony on 8883 5954 or turn up at a Saturday meeting, 11.00am at Madden's Ale House, 130 High Road.

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Colour TV

A local hairdressing salon recently featured in Sky UK Living's Retail Therapy. In it a country girl who was not into using cosmetics, going clothes shopping and such-like, was given a complete makeover.

The section of the programme which entailed having her hair styled was filmed in the High Road's 202 salon where Ricardo, who emerged from Channel 4's *The Salon*, came to cut her hair. It was then coloured by 202's own colour technician and make-up advisor Soulla Georgiou.

Intrigued as to why their particular salon had been chosen, staff at 202 were told that the TV researchers had found it in the Good Salon Guide, noticed that staff were Sassoon trained and been impressed by their website.