

06 JULY 2006

Queen says ‘Thank You’ to MPs with Learning Difficulties.

The Cambridgeshire Parliament has been chosen as a winner of this year’s prestigious Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service, giving recognition to the unsung heroes in our communities that play an essential role in our daily lives.

The Cambridgeshire Parliament is a pioneering advocacy project funded by the Big Lottery Fund. The volunteers are people with learning difficulties who are elected to speak up for others service users. The Parliament has created a forum where people with learning difficulties can meet and challenge decision making professionals; politicians, chief executives and service providers.

The award recognises all the time and hard work that the MPs have volunteered. Wendy Lansdown, Project Manager for the Parliament said:

“I am so delighted for the MPs. They have worked incredibly hard over the last three years to improve life for people with learning difficulties in the county. Their work has highlighted so many important issues ranging from the difficulty people have opening bank accounts to the need for more truly accessible toilets in the county. All of our members are over the moon.”

The presentation of the award was made at the Parliament meeting on 13th July by Lord Lieutenant Hugh Duberly CBE. The MPs discussed transport issues for people with difficulties. County councillors, transport managers and access officers listened to their views. The MPs involved the guests in a ‘Have I got News for You?’ style quiz. This was an engaging way to highlight some of the issues which people with learning difficulties face. The Lord Lieutenant took part in the quiz before presenting the award. The MPs are joining the Cambridge Evening News campaign. They have put together their own easy to read petition which highlights the fact that people with

learning difficulties and physical disabilities also need free travel before 9.30am and across the district boundaries. They have collected over 120 signatures.

Two of the Members of the Cambridgeshire Parliament Susan Pryor and Peter Auckland went to a tea party at Buckingham Palace on Tuesday 11th July to celebrate the award. Peter Auckland was ecstatic about receiving the award:

“I’m so proud that the Parliament has got this award and that we went to Buckingham Palace. We work so hard and it’s brilliant that other people are seeing that.”

The Queen’s award recognises volunteers’ outstanding contribution to their community. Ed Miliband, Minister for the Third Sector said:

“I congratulate the winners of the Queen’s Award and pay tribute to the brilliant work they do. Throughout our country, in every walk of life, they make a huge contribution to social cohesion, community renewal and social justice.

“These groups show us how much can be achieved when people join together to make a difference. They bind communities, and help the most vulnerable people. They are an example to us all.”

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Picture: MP's Peter Auckland and Susan Prior collect the award from Buckingham Palace

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About Speaking Up

Speaking Up is a young, dynamic advocacy charity who started in 1994 driven by a powerful vision of an improved society for all. In the next 3 to 5 years, we aim to become the UK's largest and best charity provider of advocacy services for people who experience learning difficulties, mental ill health and other disabilities. This is our mission:

VOICE

We enable people who experience learning difficulties, mental ill health or other disabilities to find their voice and shape their own lives.

ACTION

We create positive choices for disabled people, by helping organisations to understand their needs and representing their views or supporting them to speak up for themselves.

CHANGE

We lead society towards recognising disabled people as equal and valued citizens with the same choices and opportunities as everyone else.

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