

Disability Writes @

www.disabilitywrites.org.uk

Using Direct Payments or Individual Budgets to access an online, highly accessible, interactive and specialist creative writing school for disabled people

Introduction

Over the last few years there have been several Government initiatives that aim to transform the services that disabled people, older people and people with learning disabilities/difficulties use. For people who need personal and domestic care, Direct Payments have increased the choices available. People have more control and are able to employ their own staff or engage agencies themselves to provide the service they need. The introduction of Individual Budgets has challenged service providers in both the community and voluntary sectors to offer a much greater range of services, imaginatively provided and organised, that people want to use. The emphasis is on “choice and control” through the Personalisation agenda. Just Services works with older people, people with learning

disabilities/difficulties and disabled people. It offers specialist services that are now available using Direct Payments or Individual Budgets.

Who are Just Services?

Just Services was established in 1999, with a view to supporting groups and communities to gain a stronger voice in society in a variety of ways including creative writing and being published as writers. Just Services has a small group of Advisor Directors who represent the groups and communities we work with. All Just Services' staff undergo Criminal Records Bureau checks before they can work with us and all are committed to addressing the inequalities faced by disadvantaged groups in our society. All our staff understand and follow Safeguarding Adults guidelines.

What is Disability Writes? www.disabilitywrites.org.uk

A highly accessible and interactive online creative writing school where people can learn and develop creative writing skills. As far as we know, this is the only online creative writing school in the world specifically set up to enable disabled people to learn and develop creative writing skills. This is what disabled people who have used the site say:

"The site encouraged me to write, not to give up in what is an increasingly difficult market to make any breakthrough."

"It helped me develop my writing. I developed as a person and as a writer."

"I liked the way it worked for me. I had time and support which I do not get normally and contact with other disabled people. I do not know any disabled writers locally."

When is it available?

24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Who is it for?

Disabled adults of all ages. When we talk about disabled people, we mean people who self-define as disabled, including people with

physical and sensory impairments, long term medical health conditions, learning disabilities/difficulties and mental health problems. We recognise that some people have impairments or illnesses that are 'hidden'.

How is the website organised?

The site is managed and moderated by Just Services' staff who have both creative writing expertise and an understanding of the barriers facing disabled people interested in creative writing. Some of our staff are disabled themselves. The site is fully accessible, has a peer forum and a place to submit 'work in progress' for feedback and guidance. The site also offers regular writing challenges and exercises for the development of skills. It is particularly beneficial to people unable to leave their homes easily. The site is suitable for people who are just starting out through to those who already have some experience of creative writing. Disabled people have to subscribe online to join Disability Writes.

How much does it cost?

£40 a month

How is the payment made?

As an annual subscription of £480 payable by cheque or through the Google buttons on the site, which can be accessed via www.disabilitywrites.org.uk or as a monthly subscription of £40 a month. This can be paid using Direct Payments or Individual Budgets – we can provide any receipts/invoices needed. If people are unable, for any reason, to pay using the Google buttons, we can accept cheques. We expect that disabled people who are eligible will be able to use Direct Payments/Individual Budgets to subscribe as this meets with the Personalisation Agenda laid out by the Government. We look forward to hearing, from disabled people, how they find this process where they live and will publish information about this on the website.

What does the service offer to disabled people who subscribe?

- A chance to learn and develop creative writing skills
- Opportunities for having work published on the website and in other publications

- Unlimited feedback on creative writing – poems, short stories, articles or longer works
- A recognition of the effect impairment has in entering the field of creative writing
- Unlimited access to a peer forum.
- Relief from social isolation
- Information about creative writing, writing opportunities and publishing
- Guest feedback sessions
- Ability to work at your own pace at home at any time
- Safeguarding of adults through a fully moderated website
- Specialist creative writing tutors
- A chance for writing to be published in an annual magazine with selected writing from subscribers
- The opportunity to earn money through writing by developing writing skills

Who do I contact for more information?

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