National Self-Advocacy Convention in Blackpool

Blog by Gary Bourlet

This was a big a conference in sunny Blackpool which was combined with the north west regional convention on self-advocacy. Over 300 people attend the whole event.

I enjoyed every minute of it, I get a buzz!! Of speaking in front of a big crowed. I met old friends and I met new ones. I did a lot of networking. There were some stalls mainly from North west, but if we are to this again have more from around the country.

The whole 3 day residential was great and I could only have dreamt of such occasion. This the kind of conferences we had in the 80’s and 90’s.

I recommend Self advocacy groups get in contact with other Self-advocacy groups and contact day centres and residential homes in their local area.

It was great to have the Gala, everyone dressed and as they were eating singing and waving their hands in the air to lots of different music. The meal was great and though the drinks were costly, but they were hotel prices.

Our workshops were great, the groups we had in ours which were part of the national self-advocacy convention, everyone written their ideas on large posted notes and then stuck on big sheet of white paper on the wall. Our workshops were to get people interactive.

I have learnt that we can bring people together wherever they are from and that there was interest to have another one of these national self-advocacy conventions, some people said they would like another day.

There were a lot said as people put their idea and suggestions, you can learn so much what people are thinking. I never stop learning and I don’t think I could do that.

I liked also to see other groups going to the stand and tell us what they have been up to.

There were good presentations, and we had a video presentation from one group and people speaking through the mike, all the tables contributed.

The ideas were taken away and will be written up they will not be forgotten.

It was also a good place to network. I really hope people contact one another. We will help at Learning Disability England

I have learnt that there is a lot of work that needs doing in self-advocacy movement and a lot of it can not wait until next year, some of the groups are either more financially sound and others are just surviving.

I also learnt that it would be great to do this again, but to give more time to plan so more people can attend especially people coming far and wide. I think it will be great if the next one was sponsored by other organisations.

One of LDE’s priorities is making Self-Advocacy Stronger. We are going to do our actions from the conference.

I was left thinking about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and barriers that face groups and how they can answer these questions

**Strengths,**

* What advantages does your organization have?
* What do you do better than anyone else?

**Weaknesses**

* + What could your self-advocacy group improve?
	+ What should your self-advocacy group avoid?

**Opportunities**

* + What good opportunities can you spot to help your self advocacy group?
	+ What interesting ideas are you aware of with other self-advocacy groups?

**Barriers**

* + What obstacles do you face?
	+ What do you now what other self-advocacy groups doing that you are not doing?