



## Reference group welcome pack

The Portway Lifestyle Centre reference group forum is open to people with disabilities, carers, patients and leisure users. It has been set up to help make the Portway Lifestyle Centre welcoming, accessible and inclusive and to develop activities and services.

### Ground rules

As reference group members we will:

- Treat each other with dignity and respect.
- Be aware and show understanding for each other and our different needs.
- Focus on supporting the Portway Lifestyle Centre. This means helping to promote awareness of the centre outside of reference group meetings, and making a positive contribution to the reference group meetings.

## Questions you may have

### **Who is the Portway Lifestyle Centre reference group for?**

The group is open to people of all ages. We particularly welcome people with disabilities as the Portway Lifestyle Centre will be a centre of excellence for everyone.

### **What will membership mean for me?**

Becoming part of the reference group is a way to have a say about accessibility issues that are important to you, and to advise the project team on what can be done to make the centre fully inclusive. Joining the group means you can have a direct influence on design changes and activity timetabling, and meet people with different experiences.

### **Will I get paid to take part?**

You will be entitled to claim reasonable travel costs to each meeting where you can provide a taxi receipt, or a ticket for public transport. We can also reimburse reasonable mileage if you travel to a meeting using your car. We will continue to do this while we have a supporting role in facilitating reference group meetings.

### **Can I bring my own PA, carer or interpreter to meetings?**

Yes. If you need additional support to participate in meetings fully, please contact us to discuss this further. We will book BSL interpreters upon request.

### **What will happen to the group after the centre is built?**

After the centre is built we hope the reference group will continue as a 'Friends of Portway group', to make sure accessibility and inclusiveness remains at the heart of the centre's ethos. We hope you continue to have a monitoring role and work with centre managers in an advisory role. The reference group will no longer be directly facilitated by the council after the centre is built, as we hope it will become an independent group.

## Taking part in other meetings

It is very important that representatives from the reference group take part in other meetings to make sure the views of the wider group are heard. A reference group member is invited to take part in the project's Communications and Engagement group and the Strategic Group, where important decisions are agreed.

## What support will you get?

If the reference group 'elects' you to represent them, a lead officer will meet with you before you attend your first meeting.

They will explain:

- Who everyone is.
- What the purpose of the group is.
- What your role is.
- How the meeting works, if you feel unsure. This includes the role of the chair and how to make your voice heard at the meeting.
- What to do if you have any concerns.

This meeting will also cover what others in the meeting should be aware of about your disability or needs, if anything, and if you want to tell people yourself or ask the chair to do it.

## Other activities

All reference group members have different interests, abilities and skills. The reference group's action plan is based on key dates in the project. We encourage people to get involved in activities that suit them, with support along the way.

Not everyone may be interested in taking part in a group for example. We make sure there are various activities, events and opportunities to choose to take part in throughout the year. We call this the reference group work plan.

Opportunities include:

- Promoting the Portway Lifestyle Centre at community events and open days.
- Taking part in meetings to focus on specific areas of interest, such as looking at transport to the centre, or induction materials.
- Inviting members of the Portway project team to attend your own group if you represent one, to raise awareness and answer people's questions.

You can find out more about activities you can get involved with by attending the Portway reference group meetings. You will also receive information after each meeting in your preferred format and a news bulletin from time to time.

## **Keeping up to date**

You can keep up to date with the Portway lifestyle Centre through the specific Portway pages on the Sandwell Leisure Trust website [www.slt-leisure.co.uk](http://www.slt-leisure.co.uk)

If you need this information another format or language, please call the People Communications Team on 0121 569 5729 or 5438.

By email: [people\\_comms@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:people_comms@sandwell.gov.uk)