



ARTHRITIS CARE

*Empowering
people with arthritis.*

Arthritis Care South England website report of MP Shadowing Day, Chatham, 13th March 2009

Jonathan Shaw MP met with Arthritis Care representatives in Chatham in March 2009. The aim of the activity was to give Jonathan Shaw MP, as Minister for Disabled People the chance to shadow people with arthritis for the morning. Arthritis Care wants to give key decision makers a direct experience of the impact that arthritis has on people's lives.

Arthritis Care representatives visited two GP surgeries, Chatham Train Station and some shops in the Pentagon Shopping Centre to find out how difficult it is to access these facilities for people with arthritis who have mobility difficulties.

We found the following difficulties and issues that affect people with arthritis:

- Disabled access ramps, narrow pathways and corridors caused problems.
- Doctor's waiting rooms with not enough chairs with arm rests provided.
- Disabled toilets with one handrail – not good if you can't lean on that side.
- The drop kerb outside Chatham Station was obstructed by waiting taxis.
- No chairs in Chatham Station main area
- Nowhere to hang a walking stick whilst buying a ticket.
- No passenger information signs to indicate where the external disabled access ramps were to avoid the need to use the steps to access platforms
- Distance between disabled parking and seats in shopping centre too long.
- Some 1st fl shops only had escalators up and stairs down to access them.
- Pentagon Shopping Centre toilets shut. The disabled loo has no door!

The feedback event at the Brook Theatre, Chatham was attended by 30 local people. Jonathan Shaw MP addressed the group, explaining about his ministerial role, his constituency role and the relevance of the morning's shadowing activities. Jonathan Shaw MP said it had been a very useful way to understand the issues that people with arthritis face on a daily basis.

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