

27c Clifton Road
Brighton, East Sussex
BN1 3HN

05/03/07

Witness statement by Emma Eriksson of 27c Clifton Rd, Brighton BN1 3HN

1. My name is Emma Eriksson and I am in my second year studying Psychology at The University of Sussex. I am 23 years old and have lived in Brighton for 4 years. I work part time for Colin Bennett and have done so for over a year. Through our work together, I have gained a good understanding of Mr Bennett's hearing and sight problems and have experienced first hand how they affect his life. For example, we attended a Santa Lucia ceremony at The All Saints Church in Hove on 10 December 2006. Mr Bennett made use of the induction loop system there and could hear perfectly whilst I on the other hand, heard nothing! This was very frustrating for me but a good insight into how it is to attend events that you very much want to hear but cannot for one reason or another.
2. I attended, with Mr Bennett, the talk by Jeremy Bowen on 20 November 2006 at the Old Market Arts Centre, HOVE. When we arrived we were greeted by staff of OMAC and instructed to go to the reception and obtain a neck loop for Mr Bennett. As he has little sight I tend to guide him towards where he needs to go and be an active part in his interactions. That evening was no exception.
3. When we got to the reception desk we were greeted by whom I now know to be Chris Seymour. Mr Bennett explained who he was and that he had been in contact with Mr Neiman to make sure that equipment would be available to facilitate his hearing talk. Mr Seymour was not aware of this but obtained a neck loop for Mr Bennett to use. It soon became clear that this loop was not functioning properly. Another loop was offered but this too, was not functioning. Mr Seymour seemed perplexed and said that he would need to ask for assistance and went off to do so.
4. Mr Seymour returned after a short while with another man whose name I do not know. He also seemed confused by the situation and could not explain why the loops were not functioning. Mr Bennett asked if the batteries had been charged. Both men were at first unsure but then said that this was most probably the problem. It appeared to me that they had little to no knowledge of the equipment. This was disappointing as I had expected at least some level of staff training on the matter.
5. We were also told that the stage that Mr Bowen was to stand on was not suitable for the infra-red system and that the curtains to the right hand side of the room interfered with the infra loop system. The situation felt disorganised and no one was able to give any clear advice on what would be the best course of action.
6. We were subsequently told that we would be placed at the front of the audience, as close to Mr Bowen as possible. Mr Bennett also had a chance to talk with Mr Bowen and explain that he would be having trouble hearing him. Mr Bowen agreed to take this into consideration.
7. Of course, I could hear the talk perfectly well but was worried throughout that Mr Bennett would not be able to hear what was being said on a subject that I know is of great interest to him. It is a shame that due to the non-functioning induction loop an evening that we had paid for and were both looking forward to was tainted by problems.



Emma Eriksson - 5 March 2007

This is a statement of truth