



Impact Report 2017/18

We deliver services for disabled people in Cheshire East including Information and Advice, IT lessons, Employment Support and Shopmobility Services. Below shows some the impact we have made. Thank you to all Staff and Volunteers who have contributed to this success over the year!

**Over 2000
people
supported with
information and
advice**

**Close to
£1 million
financial gains for
disabled people
and carers**

**90
qualifications
achieved by
our learners**

**24353
Website
Hits
22% increase!**

**Over 2151
Shopmobility
journeys**

**98% clients
rate us as
Excellent**

What difference do we make ?

We ask people we help what difference are service has made—this is what they told us

78 % Feel less isolated and lonely

90 % More confident and able to deal with their issue

58 % Improved Health and Wellbeing

88% Are more aware of their rights

2017/18 t has been an increasingly busy year for our charity, we have seen an increase in disabled people needing support and assistance with welfare rights, and a sharp increase in helping people with appeals and reconsiderations. We have also seen other organisations cut this assistance, resulting in a greater demand for our service. We continue to receive no funding for this.

We continue to strive to improve the lives of disabled people in Cheshire East, offering services to help empower them such as training, employment support, information and advice and volunteering opportunities.

We are proud to have once again achieved the Advice Quality Mark (AQS) for offering outstanding Information and Advice, and we continue to be Investors in People accredited.

As always, we strive to develop our staff and volunteers and continuously improve our service. 98% of our service users rate us as excellent, and as our impact headlines illustrate, we are clearly helping people make positive improvements to their lives in times of need

A. The following is a detailed review of our services, written by our dedicated team of staff and volunteers.



Volunteering Service

We have 48 volunteers who have given in excess of 9000 hours annually, advocating the needs of some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

Our volunteers work in reception roles, admin roles, attend events and fairs on our behalf, provide information, and help to fill in welfare benefits forms.

All are trained to assist with the delivery of our services and are instrumental in the day to day operations of the organisation.

We are pleased to provide ongoing opportunities for volunteering and take great pride in improving the skills and qualifications of those we work with, guiding many on to employment.



Information Service



We have been delivering our Information and Advice service (in partnership with the CABs, Age UK and Deafness Support Network), as part of Information Advice Cheshire East since 2016. Unfortunately this service has now closed as Cheshire East Council withdrew their funding.

Top 10 Types of Enquiries

1. Accessing social support/activities
2. Accessing Care/Support (Including Needs Assessment)
3. Wheelchair Loan
4. RADAR keys
5. Travel and Transport (Inc. Blue Badge Information)
6. Discrimination/Access
7. Food Bank referrals
8. OT Assessments
9. Other aids adaptations (where to purchase, extra grants and funding)
10. IT Support/Training/employment support

Overall number of visits to our website (in the last 12 months) was 24353

Top ten web hits on Information pages.

1. What to do if you are turned down for ESA or PIP
2. Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services
3. Wheelchair Loan
4. Getting a Social Care Assessment
5. Blue Badge Application
6. Driving for disabled people
7. Accessible Taxis in Cheshire East
8. Radar Keys

- 9. Accessible Dentists
- 10. Cinema Card

Feedback from people we have helped with the Information and Advice Service:

'Thank you for the excellent advice'

'Delightful experience, understanding lady who I saw. She was very calm and kind to me and I felt enabled by meeting her'

'Great service giving peace of mind'

'Keeping doing what they are already doing, don't stop. They are excellent and very much needed'

'Depression has improved since being supported'

'Thank you for taking time and listening to me'

Welfare Rights Service

The objective of our Welfare Rights Service is to help as many local disabled people as possible by providing professional, realistic and objective advice about the welfare benefits system, advising which benefits to apply for and guiding them through the whole process in order to achieve the level of benefit they are entitled to.

We dealt with 834 benefits cases in 2017/18, including nearly 400 claim forms, over 150 benefit checks, over 150 reconsiderations and over 30 appeals. Alongside this, we dealt with 16 applications to charity for extra funding for equipment, provided training and information sessions to 42 people, and advised 246 on assistive technology to improve their quality of life. Over the course of the year we raised £927,244 in successful applications.

All these outcomes have been achieved with 3 staff members, sharing one full time equivalent post, and 7 volunteers plus one administration volunteer.

In addition to this the efficiency of our appointments system is high, often surpassing our aim to contact people within 10 days of application. Most clients are scheduled promptly, and appointments are processed to a conclusion efficiently.

All our staff and volunteers are committed to providing a friendly and professional service. Many are disabled themselves and have first-hand experience of the welfare rights system.

Due to lack of funding we have had to cease delivery at our Crewe and Alsager outreaches, however we still offer appointments in Congleton and Macclesfield and remain as flexible as we can with home visits.

The benefits system is complex and difficult to understand for many of our clients, the aim of our service is to simplify it for them, providing a pathway for maximising their entitlement with the least possible strain. We continue to see the trend of more people needing the service and an increase in the amount of people being turned down in their application and requesting support with reconsiderations and appeals. This is an area where we have a limited capacity to offer assistance, but we recognise the importance for disabled people in Cheshire East.

Other challenges to be aware of include the expected wholesale introduction of Universal Credit into the Cheshire East area in 18/19, for which we are preparing ourselves and our volunteers.

Feedback from clients:

'The advisor was empathic and I did not feel pressure or rushed to answer questions. She explained fully what I did not understand and I felt listened to and understood'

'I have always found the DIB to be helpful and supportive'

'We would be lost without their help'

'Without DIB I could not have coped'

'I do not know where I would have gone to fill in forms, get advice and after the support received here I feel so much more confident with my claims and not alone'

'Great people, great service. Patient and considerate to my needs and changed my life for the better many thanks'

Specialist Employment Support Services

This service is aimed at individuals who want to improve skills, confidence, and ultimately find sustainable employment, but struggle to achieve this due to certain barriers.

We support and mentor individuals who fall within the following categories.

- Long Term Unemployed with Low Basic Skills

- Mental Health Condition
- Learning Disabilities/Difficulties

After 6 months we have 22 people engaged with the program, of which 6 have started volunteering and 4 have gone into employment.

We utilise an evaluation tool called the Work STAR to measure the progress and journey of everyone who participates in the programme.

To date, the service is proving successful with more people moving forward to gain voluntary experience, improved skills and confidence, accreditation, and ultimately finding sustainable employment.

Feedback for Customers:

Customer with Asperger's Syndrome managed to find employment in Edinburgh, where she wanted to Live and Work:

'Thank you so much for believing in me, for being such a good listener, and for all the practical help and support over the past 3 months, you have been a fab mentor

Thanks also to the everyone else at DIB and the friendly reception staff – you have all contributed to my positive experience and I will not forget you'

New Leaf Programme

The programme started in October 2016 thanks to Building Better Opportunities funding. This Big Lottery Fund and European Social Fund (ESF) initiative (2014 – 2020), aims to provide joint investment in local projects to tackle poverty and promote social inclusion. The New leaf service is managed by Golden Gates Housing Trust, and incorporates various partner organisations across Cheshire and Warrington.

What we offer?

Every participant is given a Mentor to support them to improve their lives and wellbeing. The mentoring relationship concentrates on learning new skills, financial literacy and assistance finding work. We aim to make a tangible difference to the lives of our participants, breaking down barriers to social inclusion and working towards self-efficacy.

To date our team have been working with 68 participants, engaging them in IT training courses, confidence building, financial support, volunteering opportunities and work placements, alongside providing support with interview techniques, back-to-work preparation and effective job searching. We are pleased to report that New Leaf has supported 13 participants into work, further training / education and job searching activities. Going forward the New Leaf Mentor will be able to refer participants onto new partnership interventions, for example Making Space CBT 1-2-1 sessions, which will enhance the programme and provide many participants with the additional support they need to progress.

Feedback from Participants:

'One to one support really helped me to achieve'

'This IT course has totally improved my life in every way, I wasn't expecting it to be so useful! I would recommend it to anyone struggling like I was'

'New leaf has given me the confidence and the skills to secure a job!'

IT Services

The summer 2017 term saw 20 accredited units achieved. For the 2018-2019 academic year a further 47 units have been achieved by our learners, with many of these targets achieved before the end of the academic year. This year's units include, Using a Computer Keyboard, Word Processing Level 1 & 2, Using the Internet, and Using Email.

Over 50 Initial Assessments have been carried out, where learner ability and need were evaluated. Needs presented by learners this year have been comparable to previous years, with many describing themselves as having some form of disability.

The number of participants accessing one-to-one learning has declined this year and we are running more classes. There are some return-learners that would like to come back when there is availability.

It is worth noting that "Using Email" has been a popular unit this year, with many learners describing at Initial Assessment stage that they would like to learn how to send emails and attachments.

Many learners have described verbally the positive impacts the courses have had on their lives and how this has benefited their wellbeing and employability skills.

Feedback from Learners:

‘Very impressed, excellent standard of teaching!’ ‘

Enjoyed finding information on the internet, I never thought I would be able to do that!

‘The teachers are excellent’

Hate Crime

Crimes committed against someone because of their disability, gender-identity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation are hate crimes and should be reported to the police.

Hate crimes can include:

- Threatening behaviour
- Assault
- Robbery
- Damage to property
- Inciting others to commit hate crimes
- Harassment

We are a hate crime reporting centre and actively promote this in the community and to people using our services, this includes awareness and education of what constitutes a hate crime and how to report one.

We have attended many events, disseminating information about Hate Crime and reaching people that local police may not normally be able to reach. Learning from our work has highlighted that many disabled people are fearful to report a potential hate crime.

Information about our Hate Crime reporting service is included in our handbook, which is distributed on an annual basis to 5000 people and organisations throughout Cheshire East.

We are exploring organising a pan-disability awareness day in conjunction with local partners, where we hope to find out what we can do to make people more confident with reporting hate crimes.

Shopmobility

2151 Journeys over the year

Our service has a range of class 2 electric scooters, electric powered wheelchairs and manual wheelchairs. These provide our customers with essential access to the shops and services in the town centre, which would otherwise be impossible for them.

We have 123 registered users, of whom 75 are members that pay an annual membership fee to use the service regularly. Registered users which use the service as visitors pay an initial hire charge and generally use the service infrequently, often because they are visiting the local area.

Our central location means that we are ideally based for people accessing the town centre. This means that we are often used as an access point for the town by people relying on taxis or the D&G buses, as they can wait in a safe and comfortable environment. For some of our customers this environment ensures their independence is not compromised, as without it they would struggle to use the D+G bus or taxis and remain safe. For those using Shopmobility (as service users or as a hub) we offer tea/coffee facilities and a seating area which helps create a community space essential for social interactions, which in some cases may be the only opportunity many of our service users get.. It is also important to note that within the building we have one of the few remaining disabled toilets in the town.

Feedback from Customers:

“This is a fabulous service. To get out of the house and feel some degree of independence is unbelievably good for my mental health”

“Without this Shopmobility, me and many others would be stuck indoors, it’s a pleasure to come and see the staff who go out of their way to help. You can have a chat and tea which is great, especially when you live on your own.”

“Thank you for giving me back my independence. Lovely staff, great service.”

Accessibility

We continue to support individuals and groups with any access issues they have, ranging from guidance on appropriate ramps and signage, through to applying for dropped kerbs. We have also completed access appraisals for local organisations to

help them understand how they can improve their facilities and to assist them with funding.

Macclesfield Town Access Guide

We continue to distribute our accessibility guide to eateries in Macclesfield Town Centre, this has become a valued resource for local disabled people.

Styal Mill

2 members of the group have been working with Styal Mill to help them improve their accessibility. This has led to real change including making parking more accessible for disabled visitors.