



## Impact Report 2016/17

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

**Over £1 million  
financial gains for  
disabled people  
and carers**

**61  
qualifications  
delivered to  
local people**

**19976  
Website  
Hits**

**Over 2100  
Shopmobility  
journeys**

**96% 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

**71 % Feel less isolated and lonely**

**72 % Feel more independent**

**74% Improved Health and Wellbeing**

**59 % Have more of a Voice to have their views heard**

### Our Volunteers

**59% gained a  
qualification  
with us**

**55% gained  
employment  
thanks to  
volunteering**

**70% feel more  
part of their  
community**

**66% have  
improved  
mental health and  
wellbeing**

2016/17 has continued has been an increasingly busy year for our charity, in particular 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 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 have once again achieved the Investors in People accreditation and continue to hold the Advice Quality Mark for offering outstanding Information and Advice. We are a member of the Living Wage Foundation and strive to continue to develop our staff and volunteers to continuously improve our service.

Our main focus however is our clients/customers where 96% rate us as Excellent.

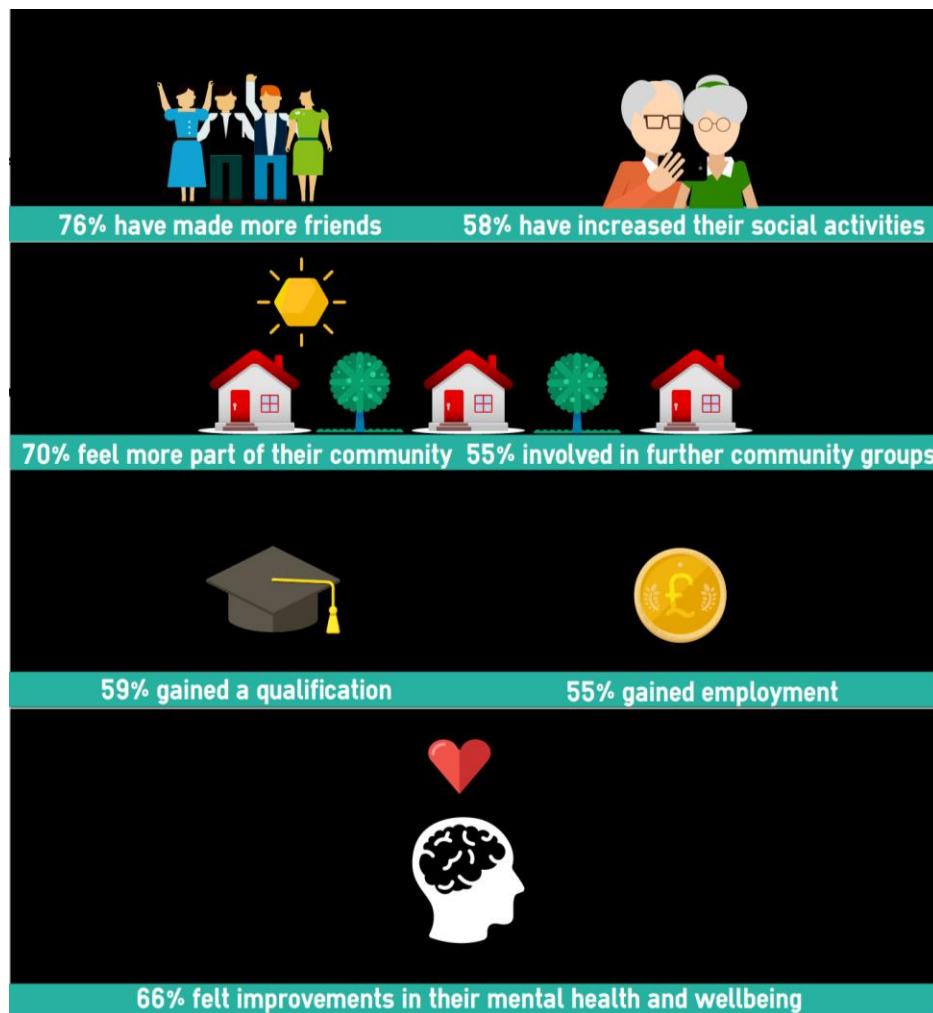
And as you can see from our Headline impact above – we really are helping people improve their lives in a time of need.

Over the next few pages is a detailed review of our services written by our staff and volunteers



# Volunteering Service

We have 42 volunteers who have given in excess of 8500 hours annually, helping many of the most vulnerable members of our community. We asked our Volunteers if their volunteering experience



We asked them to describe their experience volunteering with the Disability Information Bureau in 3 words and we are overwhelmed with some of the words recorded:

<b>Positive</b>	<b>Believe</b>	<b>Enjoyable</b>	<b>Supported</b>
<b>Life Changing</b>	<b>Achieve</b>	<b>Respectful</b>	<b>Trusted</b>
<b>Saved my life</b>	<b>Friendly</b>	<b>Helpful</b>	<b>Fantastic</b>
<b>Dream</b>	<b>Flexible</b>	<b>Busy</b>	<b>Relaxed</b>
<b>Educational</b>	<b>Committed</b>	<b>Team Players</b>	<b>Valuable</b>
<b>Purposeful</b>	<b>Enriching</b>	<b>Enjoyable</b>	<b>Rewarding</b>

# Information Service

1956 Enquiries answered over the year.

From September 2016, we have been delivering our Information and Advice service in partnership with Information Advice Cheshire East or (iAce) and report our figures directly to a Central Response Coordinator at Citizens Advice in the Congleton branch. We also offer wheelchair loans and sell RADAR keys for accessible toilets.

## 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. Other aids adaptations (where to purchase, extra grants and funding)
8. IT Support/Training/employment support
9. OT Assessments
10. Food Bank referrals

Overall, we are over achieving all targets set by Citizens Advice for the iAce contract.

Trends we have seen:

- There has been an increase in the need for people to access some form of mental health advocacy/support and there is a continued need for counselling. Talking Therapies (which replaced IAPT) already has a 12-week waiting list for support.
- We have made more referrals for food banks than ever as people are struggling to make ends meet.

Overall number of visits to our website (in the last 12 months) was 19976.

Top ten web hits

1. What to do if you are turned down for ESA or PIP
2. Accessible Taxis in Cheshire East
3. Blue Badge Application
4. Wheelchair Loan
5. Non Emergency Patient Transport Services
6. Accessible Dentists
7. Driving for disabled people
8. Cinema Card
9. Holiday Information for People with a Disability
10. Getting a Social Care Assessment

## Feedback from people we have helped:

“I prefer to come to DIB as you have more experience with disability benefits”



“DIB offers a warm touch which is hard to find in other services”

“I don’t know what I would do without DIB”

“I have been coming to DIB for support for years and have never thought of using the CAB”

“I really appreciate your help and support; I feel like you have really listened instead of turning me away”

“The volunteers are really understanding, knowledgeable and professional”

“ I have learnt more information from you in 20 minutes, that I have in 2 years from other sources”



# Welfare Rights Service

The objective of the 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. To this end we dealt with 953 benefits cases in 2016/17 including nearly 500 claim forms, over 100 reconsiderations and over 50 appeals. We dealt with 15 applications to charity for extra funding for equipment, provided training and information sessions to 56 people and advised 187 on assistive technology to improve their quality of life. Over the year we raised £1,112,110 in successful applications. 100% of our clients tell us they could not have managed the forms, assessments or appeals without us.

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

Added 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 quickly and appointments are processed to a conclusion efficiently. Our staff and volunteers are all experienced and friendly but also professional. Many are disabled people themselves and have first-hand experience of the welfare rights system

We have started to limit the number of benefits we cover and to try to reduce home visits in the last service year. This has had some effect on reducing the caseload, although the nature of the interwoven benefits system means this is not always easy to achieve. The benefits system is complex and difficult to understand for many of our clients, however, our aim is for the service to simplify it for them, providing a pathway for maximising their entitlement with the least possible strain. The last year has proved to be another successful year in doing this. Challenges to be aware of include the expected wholesale introduction of Universal Credit in to the Cheshire East area in 18/19 for which we are preparing ourselves and our volunteers.

We have seen an increase overall in the amount of people needing the service and the amount of people being turned down in their application and needing support with reconsiderations and appeals. The housing association have cut their in-house support resulting in a large amount of tenants being referred to our service for assistance. "What to do if turned down for PIP or ESA" web page resulted in a huge 12008 page views, 60% of all visits to our website. We currently have a grant which covers a part of this service which ends in December.

## **Feedback for the service:**

"I was desperate and you helped me when no others would"

"I don't know what I would have done without your help"

"I have been living in poverty, thank you for helping me"

# Specialist Employment Support Services

## **Lloyds TSB**

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 25 people in program of which 7 have started volunteering and 2 have gone into employment.

## **3SC in Partnership with RNIB**

Similarly; this contract also works alongside people with disabilities and referrals come from Job Centre Plus, but we can also accept self-referrals.

## **Support Provided**

The employment mentor will work support individuals using a variety of activities and some of these include:

- CV Review
- Support to complete cover letters / applications
- Support to gain accredited qualifications in ICT
- Better off Calculations
- Employer Engagement
- In Work Support

An Evaluation Tool called the Work STAR is used to measure the progress and journey of everyone who participates in either programme.

To date, the service provided is proving successful and more people are moving forward by either gaining voluntary work, improved skills and confidence through participation in accredited courses and ultimately finding sustainable employment.

## **Feedback for Customers:**

'Before working with Leanne, my confidence was low – she has helped me to find employment and I am also doing a computer course – I feel great'

'I was worried my Son would not get a job due to his disability, with the support from the DIB he has now been offered a job – I am so happy for my son'

# New Leaf Programme

The programme started in October with the funding coming from the Building Better Opportunities, where the Big Lottery Fund has matched funds from European Social Fund (ESF) 2014 – 2020, to provide joint investment in local projects that tackle poverty and promote social inclusion. The New leaf service is managed by Gold 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 including learning new skills, getting money advice or help with finding work. We aim to make a real difference to the lives of our participants, looking at barriers to social inclusion and working towards solutions including training and volunteering opportunities and help with financial situations such as debt.

At the six month stage we are on target with 31 people on programme and 2 have successfully gained employment.

## Success Story:

Craig had been made redundant from a position in 2012 and was finding it extremely difficult to even get an interview. Craig came to the Disability Information Bureau and started volunteering and enrolled on the New Leaf Programme.

We updated Craig's CV and within a short timescale he was then being offered interviews which immediately made him feel more optimistic. The volunteering boosted his confidence and gave him a purpose whilst helping others at the DIB. The New Leaf tutor worked with Craig on a 1-2-1 basis to enable him to achieve Excel Level 1 which he successfully completed and gained an accredited certificate.

Craig was given interview advice and support from his mentor and after a telephone interview with the agency, a selection open day event and two interviews with the employer Craig was offered a full-time position at Fourth Limited as a 'Service Hero'. We are very proud of Craig's success.





# IT Services

## **Cosy Computers (Drop In)**

Cosy Computers is the successor to the IT Drop In service, but with more focus on accessible computing. As the IT Drop In service was used by many jobseekers, the Cosy Computers has also had a large portion of users utilising the service to look for jobs or to practice their skills.

The usage of the service to the end of April is 87 hours by comparison to 2016's Drop In service usage of 148 hours. It is worth noting that the IT Drop In service for 2016 was open Monday to Friday, 12PM to 4PM, whereas Cosy Computers is only open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1PM to 4PM, so the usage is expected to be lower.

When appropriate, if the learner struggles to use the computer or the internet, they are shown how to zoom in on their webpage and shown what technology is available for a variety of needs. This is then used as an opportunity to lead the learner to other DIB services.

From an outreach perspective, there will be days when the computers will be pre-set to make use of the XL-keyboards, trackball mice, web settings and so on to demonstrate, raise awareness and to consider the needs and problems of some learners.

## **IT Lessons**

This academic year so far, we have achieved 31 accredited units for learners over a variety of courses and over 50 Initial Assessments carried out. Accredited courses include Using a Computer Keyboard, Word Processing Software, Using Email and Using the Internet.

When a learner is not eligible for accredited courses, they are placed into non-accredited courses if possible. For non-accredited courses, some learners have expressed interest in courses where they can reinforce their skills and we consider how best to work it out. For learners that wanted help with CVs and employability a "Skills, CVs and Cover Letters" course was run and received good feedback, therefore it will run again.

There are also instances where one to one learning is more appropriate, however, as there are limited number of volunteers able to deliver we manage a waiting list..

In terms of the DIB's core vision and purpose, many learners describe themselves as having some form of disability. Our learners have developed confidence in using computers and to be able to find out information for themselves by attending the IT lessons.

### **Feedback from Learners:**

“Kwok was supportive throughout the course, if there was any problems he was there to talk to”

“I have enjoyed the course and meeting other people”

“Much more challenging than I expected, kept me alert and interested”



# 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 in the community and to people using our services awareness of what a hate crime is and how to report one. We have attended many events, handing out information and talking to people about Hate Crime- reaching people that local police may not normally be able to reach. We have found 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 collated and distributed yearly to 5000 people and organisations throughout Cheshire East. We are organising a pan-disability awareness day in conjunction with local partners. We hope to find out what we can do to make people more confident with reporting hate crimes.



# Shopmobility

## 2110 Journeys over the year

Our service has a range of class 2 electric scooters, electric powered wheelchairs and manual wheelchairs. These allow our customers the freedom to access the shops and services in the town centre that would otherwise be inaccessible to them. We have 136 registered users, either as members, who pay a membership fee and use the service regularly, or visitors, who pay a higher initial hire charge and use the service infrequently. Our visitors come from as far afield as the USA.

Due to our location we act as a hub for the D&G buses which bring people who can't use, or have no access to the regular bus services to the town. We provide tea/coffee for our users allowing additional social interactions for people in a safe and comfortable environment, which in some cases is the only social occasion they have. We are also one of the few remaining disabled toilets in the town.

Some examples of our customer feedback this year;

"Shopmobility are a great help, if this service wasn't available I wouldn't have the social, leisure and friendships that I have and couldn't be without. Also all staff members are professional helpful and kind, Thank you for all your help"

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





# Accessibility Group

## **Access Appraisals**

The access group have completed one access appraisal in 2017, this was for Audlem Public Hall who are having an annex built to be used as a gym and larger community hub.

## **Macclesfield Town Access Guide**

We have been visiting cafes in Macclesfield Town Centre to check out their accessibility and are in the process of producing a guide for the public which will be available from July 17

## **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.