



Disability Information Bureau

Impact Report 2016



What do we do?

At the Disability Information Bureau we are constantly working to deliver demonstrable improvements to the lives of disabled people, their families and carers. This means offering a range of services that local disabled people want, to help them become more knowledgeable or independent or healthier, in fact whatever outcomes they choose!

Why we do it?

We were established over 25 years ago by a group of disabled volunteers who set up an Information, Advice and Welfare Rights service to assist disabled people like themselves and Carers become more knowledgeable and empowered. In 2008 we updated our charitable aims to include education – because that was what our service users wanted.

Our aims are very clear

- To provide information, support and associated services so that disabled people may lead active and fulfilling lives and participate fully in society
- To advance education by enabling people with disabilities to become more involved in the process of working towards positive change in the provision of services for disabled people
- To advance education amongst organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors in order to raise awareness, share best practice and increase understanding of the needs of people with disabilities

We have grown significantly over the years, with paid staff and more volunteers and we have extended our reach to cover the whole of Cheshire East, with head office in Macclesfield and outreach venues in Crewe, Congleton and Alsager. Importantly we still provide the services wanted and needed by local disabled people.

How do we know what disabled people want?

Simple – we ask them! Surveys, focus groups and conversations anyway they want to give us suggestions, ideas and feedback. Plus disabled people work in our organisation at all levels, volunteer, staff and board, providing knowledge and empathy.



How many people do we help?

- We helped **1677** people with information and advice answering **2063** enquires
- **177** people used our learning facilities, **125** accredited qualifications
- We helped **935** people with our welfare rights service filling in forms and other documents gaining **£612,647.02** in annualised income.
- We have raised **£2959** by contacting charitable organisations to fund items for 15 individuals e.g. wheelchairs, car hoists and special glasses
- We have helped over **100** people with a Social Prescription to take up activities to improve their health and wellbeing
- **216** wheelchairs hired, **2244** Shopmobility scooter hires
- **123** RADAR keys for accessible locks on toilets and countryside gates sold
- Held **12** information and awareness sessions for other local organisations
- Over **3000** enquiries dealt with by the Care Act helpline (provided in partnership with CAB)



What Impact do we have?

- **87%** of service users record they have more choice and control
- **91%** of service users record they are better informed
- **88%** of service users feel more independent
- **92 %** of service users more aware of rights
- **72%** reduced isolation

Over **50** active volunteers giving over **7000** volunteer hours. Even costed at minimum wage this equals over **£50,000**. **84%** of our volunteers have recorded an improvement in their wellbeing since they have been at the Disability Information Bureau. **10** have gone into employment.

Case Studies – lives we've changed

As a team we have positively impacted on the lives of my local people, below are case studies which highlight some of this impact.

Volunteering

Becky has been a Volunteer at the DIB for 17 years! She started to volunteer as she had become a virtual recluse, stuck in her home. Although the first steps were nerve-wracking over the years Becky has helped local disabled people by delivering our services. Becky has completed teaching courses and is a qualified tutor and assessor of IT. She tutors groups of people, helping them to use a computer and gain skills and independence. She also works on reception, answers enquires and helps mentor other volunteers. She is a Jacqueline of all trades!

Becky's own confidence and skills have grown over the years, and she is now set to join the Disability Information Bureau board of Trustees to give valuable input.

Becky also won a national volunteer of the year award in 2015 from the League of Mercy and was nominated for Cheshire Woman of the year.



Becky Nixon

"When the pilot scheme was introduced I was placed at the DIB and wanted to continue attending in the capacity of volunteer which I really enjoy"

Grace initially came to the DIB with her job coach from Macclesfield College in April 2013. The aim was for Grace to have training from the Branch Manager and assistance from the Job Coach for 4 hours a week over a six week period, this was a pilot scheme with Macclesfield College. Grace was trained on the Access Database and given enquiry forms to input on to the database. Grace soon became efficient and she took to the role like a duck to water. After the agreed six week work experience came to the end, it was apparent that Grace was more than capable of attending our office to continue inputting onto the database but now the remit changed for Grace

to become a valuable member of our Volunteer team without the support from Macclesfield College.

Grace is so proficient in her role that the Branch Manager will pass over new volunteers and staff members for training which outlines how confident Grace has become.

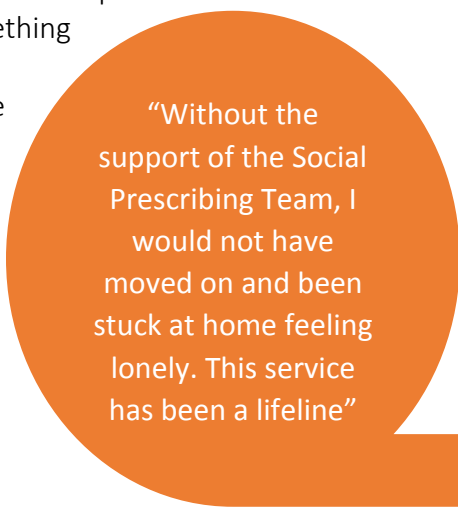


Grace Stockdale

Social Prescribing

Julie was referred to our Social Prescribing service by her nurse at Grosvenor Medical Centre in Crewe. She has a chronic long term lung condition, and was starting to feel low in mood and losing motivation to do things, resulting in isolation and depression. We helped Julie to find activities within the community that she may enjoy, giving her something to do and reduce her loneliness. With lots of chats and some encouragement Julie attended a local craft group. 5 months on Julie loves attending the craft group and has made lots of new friends. She no longer feels isolated and depressed. She says she has got her sparkle back and even her family have noticed this too!

Julie feels that the Social Prescribing service has been a lifeline, as she would otherwise be sitting at home feeling sorry for herself. Julie said that she is glad she was encouraged to take a social prescription than rely on medication. Julie's nurse advised that when she attended the surgery her health had improved and she blew a significantly improved lung function test.



"Without the support of the Social Prescribing Team, I would not have moved on and been stuck at home feeling lonely. This service has been a lifeline"

Information and Advice – Care Act Support Services

The Care Act 2014 brought in new regulations relating to care across the country. We set up the Care Act Helpline with CAB to help people with questions, including Care Act Advocacy, choosing care, Safeguarding, local services, finding a Carer and paying for care.

We helped a lady to borrow a wheelchair so that she could take her husband out to stop him becoming isolated, however it was apparent that she was struggling to care for her husband due to her age and a debilitating back condition. Our Care Act Support worker Emma, got in touch and gave the Carer information on what extra support she may be entitled to and how to request a Carer Needs Assessment. She helped her book an assessment and what to expect.



"The support we receive has changed our lives, I feel so much better and my husband is getting out and about more. We would never have known what help we could get without the Disability Information Bureau"

The outcome of the Carer Needs Assessment was that the lady was given a support worker to help them access the community, preventing further isolation and further damaging of the health of the Carer. She was also given £350 from the Carers Wellbeing Fund, which supported her to get out of the house so she could improve her wellbeing and recharge. The information provided to the clients regarding the assessment process, their rights and what to expect made them feel more in control and has meant that they can spend more quality time together.

Accessibility – RADAR Keys



A lady came in as she wanted a RADAR key so she could use accessible toilets with the RADAR lock. She purchased a key and was also given list of all the accessible toilets in Macclesfield Town Centre with a RADAR lock. The lady herself volunteers with older people at a befriending and luncheon club and was off to spread the word. RADAR locks on accessible toilets ensure that toilets are not misused or treated as cupboards and are available to disabled people, ensuring their independence and accessibility.

“I was offered a wealth of information and advice and the staff were very welcoming and understanding. Not only to receive the key but a list of accessible toilets, I can use my key places in the town that I never knew about”

Gaining New Skills

Dawn’s working knowledge for 15 years was as a care assistant but since having an injury at work and damaging a nerve in her right hand she was unable to continue within this occupational sector but had no experience or qualifications to transfer to another role. Dawn was referred onto an IT ESF Contract the DIB were running for Employability which incorporated mentoring alongside gaining an accredited IT Basic Level 1 qualification. Dawn was encouraged to volunteer on reception which would give her some valuable customer service experience and then she would be able to incorporate the additional skills on her curriculum vitae.

Dawn had no confidence in answering the telephone but through encouragement from staff members

and other volunteers within three months of spending time on reception she started to complete enquiries both face-to-face and answering the telephone which has increased her knowledge and definitely her confidence.

Dawn has progressed on several IT courses and has confidently achieved Level 1 and 2 in Word, Access and Spreadsheets Level 1 and now working towards Access and Spreadsheets Level 2.

Dawn secured full time employment at Peaks & Plains as a Customer Service Advisor where her main role is call handling — the one thing Dawn was totally scared of. The DIB are happy that Dawn still volunteers on reception.



Dawn Pickles

“I know that since coming to the DIB my confidence has grown and through the patience and understanding of the staff and other volunteers I have been able to gain the experience and qualifications to secure full time employment”

Welfare Rights

A Gentleman sought help with a Disability Living Allowance Claim and also a reassessment for Employment and Support Allowance. He had severe mobility issues in his legs but also wanted a manual wheelchair to help him get out of the house, he was becoming housebound and isolated due to his difficulties. He needed help completing the forms and help for sourcing funds for the wheelchair.

The Disabled Living Allowance form was completed and the award obtained and the Employment and Support Allowance was reassessed and successful. By the clients own admission he would have never been able to complete the forms himself.

With regard to the wheelchair, we did research with the client for a suitable model and then sought funds by writing to various charities to donate. We were able to successfully gain the funds for the wheelchair.

The outcome for the client was relief in terms of completing and being successfully awarded DLA and ESA. We are also optimistic that the wheelchair has led to a significant improvement in his quality of life and increase his levels of independence and wellbeing.



Information and Advice – Equipment

A lady phoned up, worried and stressed about her mother, who kept forgetting to take some of her medication while she was at work. We talked through different options including equipment that may help. We assisted the lady to search online for a piece of equipment that would hold her mother's medication and then sound an alarm when she was due to take the medication.

The lady purchased one for her mother so she could set it up and then check it when she got in from work. By helping the lady to search online we were able to get her the best price. We helped the lady set up the equipment and she took it home to her mother. After a few hiccups the mother is now able to take the medicine dispensed when the alarm goes off. The daughter is no longer stressed at work about this and the mother is able to continue to be independent.

"Thank you for the help, that piece of simple equipment has made life a lot easier and less stressful"

Often adaptive equipment can provide simple solutions.