

2018/
2019



Disability North
Summary
Annual
Report



About Disability North

(Registered Charity No. 514733)



Disability North is a registered charity promoting inclusion, independence and choice for disabled people, carers, and their families by providing information, advice and support on any aspect of disability. We also provide information and training to students and professionals working in the statutory, voluntary, and public sector.

Disability North is a user-led charity with a majority of disabled people on our executive committee. The needs of disabled people, older adults and their families are at the heart of our services. Our free, impartial advice empowers people to make informed decisions, maximising the control they have over their own lives.

Our Mission

To promote inclusion, independence and choice for disabled people and their families.

Our Vision

To be the best resource for disability in the North.

Executive Committee 2018 - 2019

Jamie Cairns (Chair)

David Wynne Jenkins

David Pritchard

Sandra Wheatley (Vice Chair)

Joe Ayton

Alison Blackburn

Stuart Knox (Treasurer)

Olav Christiaan Veldhuizen

Maria Hood

Toby Brandon

Tim Williams

Lucy Reynolds

Malcolm Macourt

Beth Williams

Rhys Thomas

Introduction from the Chair, Jamie Cairns



This past year Disability North and the board of trustees have had to make some significant and important decisions. Which on reflection, I'm confident we have made the right ones.

We go into the new year in a very strong position, securing funding through the Henry Smith Foundation, the welcoming of new members of staff, and a continuing growing board of trustees.

Our focus for this coming year is to explore our options in relation to the Dene Centre. Due to our history and the love for our home, this is going to be a tough but strategic decision.

Staff have worked tirelessly to help our beneficiaries and it is fantastic to see and hear about all the positive work they carry out. Victoria and the team will continue to grow our existing services to ensure more disabled people can access them.

As Disability North continues to grow and evolve, we sadly say goodbye to two trustees that have been with us for a number of years. I would like to personally thank Sandra and Alison for their continued support and commitment over the years.

Jamie Cairns, Chair, Disability North.

Message from the Chief Executive, Dr Victoria Armstrong



In 2018 Disability North launched its 5-year strategic direction and plan. I am pleased to report that we successfully achieved all that we set out to in terms of service delivery, whilst continuing to consolidate the organisation in order to secure the foundations for our future. The board is significantly stronger, our payroll service continues to go from strength to strength, and we are now able to take our new initiatives forward.

There are challenges ahead which many voluntary sector organisations share such as funding concerns and meeting the increased demand for our services. That said, Disability North are now in a strong position to pilot new areas of work and generate new sources of income over the coming months and years. We look forward to continuing our partnership work, developing opportunities, and serving the needs of our communities over this next year and beyond.

**Dr Victoria Armstrong, Chief Executive
Officer, Disability North.**

Financial Summary

April 2018—March 2019

Disability North has operated largely within budget for the year ending March 2019 with the exception of the anomalous expenses incurred as a result of the closure of Disability North Events Ltd, with all winding up costs and charges being incorporated into this financial period. Theprecedented fall in income from the closure has been offset by a matching fall in expenditure and accounts recorded only a small, manageable deficit. Moving forward, the trustees are confident that the budget set for 2019-20 will be met and the position of the charity will improve and be in a more stable and coherent structure to build on, in line with the Strategic Direction 2018-23.

Payroll Services continue to be a major source of revenue for the charity, with income up by 7.5% against the previous period. Similar increases are expected year on year as the client base continues to grow. Workloads are being monitored to ensure adequate resources are available to manage additional duties associated with pension auto-enrolment for payroll clients.

The future still holds uncertainties in relation to the traditional funding from Clinical Commissioning Groups and Local Authorities but much of the funding for these streams, in line with expectations, has been confirmed for the forthcoming year (2019-2020). Political changes and delays in exiting the EU make long term planning for these income streams difficult though current indications are that they will remain at around current levels over the short to medium term.



The management team and staff within the organisation remain committed to the provision of core services within budget. The restructuring and consolidation within Disability North will provide an even more stable footing on which to move forward and enable closer control over fundraising and expenditure.

Direct Payment Support Service

Disability North have been empowering disabled people through the delivery of Newcastle City Council's Direct Payments Support Service for over 17 years. We provide one-to-one support on managing Direct Payment and Personal Health Budgets. The support we offer includes recruiting personal assistants and all aspects of employment support.

During the 2018-2019 financial year we supported 360 adults and the parents of 132 disabled children to access and manage Direct Payments. We also work with local Clinical Commissioning Groups to support service users in receipt of Personal Health Budgets.

Independent Living

The varied advice Disability North offers on Independent Living is an important service for the region's disabled people. In the 2018-2019 financial year Disability North responded to 1,459 requests for advice covering a wide range of equipment and services including: personal care, household items, wheelchairs, scooters, grants and accessible holidays.

The service is also one which is valued by its users with 93% stating they were happy with the advice they received.

"The service I received could not be improved on, every expectation was exceeded. Thank you very much for your help, I will recommend you to anyone I come across in a similar situation."

Benefits Advice

Disability North's Benefits advice provides an essential service for disabled people, their families, and carers in the North East. During the 2018-2019 financial year we provided information and advice on Welfare Benefits to 3146 people and helped them to gain £4,013,776 worth of benefits allowing greater opportunities in relation to inclusion and independence.

Over 70% of service users stated that their financial situation improved and 61% stated that their quality of life had improved.



Room Hire

The Dene Centre, the home of Disability North, has a selection of different sized, fully equipped, accessible meeting rooms and demonstration areas available for hire. A diverse range of organisations regularly hire our facilities including Silverline Memories, Whizz-Kidz, N-Lighten North East, Newcastle Myeloma Support Group and The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.



Training, Talks and Workshops

During the last 12 months Disability North delivered a range of training courses, talks and workshops drawing on the knowledge and experience of our own staff and experts from external organisations. Topics covered include; Benefits Workshops, Understanding Universal Credit and Introducing the role of a Personal Assistant in Health and Social Care. In addition, bespoke training is delivered to organisations in both the voluntary and commercial sector. Our training takes place at Disability North and outreach sessions are delivered across the region.

DNEX Directory

Disability North have been supporting disabled people, carers, older people and healthcare professionals through the DNEX brand and exhibition for over 25 years. However, the way individuals search for information and guidance has changed radically with the increasing day to day usage of the internet amongst disabled and older people.

To embrace this change, in 2020, we are launching The DNEX: Independence Directory. This will be a free to access directory, hosted on the Disability North website, providing disabled people, carers, older people and healthcare professionals the opportunity to view specially commissioned videos showing the use of disability equipment. Check our website for news on the DNEX: Independence Directory.

“I received excellent support. Everything has been fully explained. I feel that I was supported throughout. The advisors are always available on the end of the phone to resolve problems and support me.”



“Fantastic advice and help given. Brilliant advisor, don’t know what I would have done without their help and advice. Big thank you for your help in navigating the chaotic, dreaded rocky road of the benefit system.”

Payroll Services

Disability North currently provides two Payroll services – Standard Payroll and Payroll Plus. This service is dedicated to meeting all the payroll needs for Direct Payment and Personal Health Budget service users. We currently have over 500 users of the service and year on year the number of clients using the service continues to grow.

FundED

FundED is an ethical fundraising scheme that enables Disability North to build mutually beneficial, enduring relationships with local schools and the communities they



serve, whilst generating a sustainable income for the charity. The fundraising element of the programme provides a fun context in which pupils can build CV-enhancing project management skills, acquire business acumen and learn to work collaboratively and inclusively.

In turn, the awareness-raising sessions delivered provide primary, secondary and sixth form pupils with an age-appropriate, positive understating of contemporary disability issues in society, whilst promoting active inclusion and responsible citizenship amongst the adults of tomorrow. In 2019/2020 our Service Development Manager will oversee the expansion of the programme to grow and reap rewards for all stakeholders.



Thank you!

Disability North would like to say a huge thank you to the following organisations who enable us to keep working towards our mission of being the best resource for disability in the North.

Alchemy Foundation (The)
Community Foundation (The)
Hadrian Trust
Joicey Trust (The)
Joseph Strong Frazer Trust (The)
Newcastle City Council
NHS Durham Dales Easington & Sedgefield Clinical Commissioning Group
NHS Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group
NHS North Durham Clinical Commissioning Group
NHS North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group
NHS South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group
NHS Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group
Percy Hedley Foundation (The)
Skipton Building Society
William Leech Charity (The)

Finally, thank you to our service users, staff, and volunteers, who are shaping and supporting our services every day.



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