

We are

disability
positive

Staff & Volunteer's Newsletter January 2024

CEO's Update

January has mainly been back-office items with supervisions and starting the epic budget process ready for the new financial year.

I met with a senior member of the Cheshire East Council to discuss how I can take on a greater role of leadership within the local adults safeguarding board. We started conversations about accommodation coproduction planning which is awaiting approval from the council. There was a lot of work on the short turnaround for the Shropshire advocacy tender, which has now been submitted. 🙌

Trustees Update

Welcome to 2024 and a new addition to the newsletter. Get to know our trustees and what work the board has been involved in.

The Board of Trustees are well rested after the Christmas break and have had a break from the EA asking them all to complete their mandatory training, reviewing policies and workplans. Currently we have 11 trustees, and over the next few months we will get to know some more about each of them and the work of the board of trustees and each of our 4 committees. Each of the trustees are members of at least one committee, each committee has a delegated chairperson. We hold 4 quarterly board meetings per year. To find out more about the trustees you can read their [bios on the website](#).

Board	Name	Committee
Chairperson/Chair of the HR Committee	Randal Smith	HR
Trustee/Chair of NWCC	Sue Tebb	HR and Governance
Treasurer/Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee	Alan Scott	Finance and Audit
Trustee/Chair of the Strategy and Risk Committee	Judy Ford	Strategy and Risk Committee



Board	Name	Committee
Trustee	Chris Warren	Strategy and Risk Committee
Trustee	Miro Griffiths	Strategy and Risk Committee
Trustee	Andy Galbraith	Strategy and Risk, Finance and Audit
Trustee	Anne Toone	Governance
Trustee/Chair of the Governance Committee	Paula Gilbert	Governance
Trustee	Amie Bridson	Strategy and Risk Committee
Trustee	Mike Morrison	HR and Finance

There were no committee meetings for January, all meetings are due to start back up in February.

As we progress through 2024, let us maintain our momentum, fortified by the understanding that each effort contributes to our vision for 2030. The ambitious and positive developments and invaluable contributions and commitments by the incredible workforce will continue to sculpt the future of Disability Positive.

Appraisals & Supervisions

Appraisals are fast approaching and are due to be completed with your Line Managers by the end of the financial year (March). Once completed and signed off they need to be uploaded to the HR System, under the 'Performance' tab. 😊

HR

In addition, all staff should have a minimum of quarterly one-to-one supervision meetings with a yearly minimum of 4 sessions. For further information and guidance for completing Appraisals & Supervisions, you can refer to the 'Supervision Policy' which is available on the HR System.

Recruitment/New Starters

Congratulations again to Joan Quinn who is now our new Payroll Team Leader. We are also pleased to congratulate Sam Lomas, who will become our new ACSS Manager with effect from 1st March. Annette will be stepping back from her Manager position and be the Team Leader for ACSS. Annette has done a fantastic job in leading and supporting ACSS for the past year. Good luck to all in your new roles! 🙌

Spotlight On...

An interview with...
Paula - Chair of the Governance Committee



Things which sum me up.

My garden. My mother and grandparents are and were committed gardeners of flowers and vegetables and market gardening. But my garden is my own, my gym, my larder, my adventure playground and my carbon footprint. I love to feed friends and family with my vegetables and flowers and even dandelions! Notice my hands. They are never perfectly clean from Spring to Autumn.



I am retired. This has changed the pattern and content of my life from my former existence as a lawyer, working all hours of the day for others. Now I can refocus on what matters to me. This sounds selfish. I have had to learn that it's not and to explore how to live in a new way. This is an exciting journey. This includes my vegetables. If I had a coat of arms, it would be a parsnip! 😂

My favourite books /series/films

Books

- Beloved by Toni Morrison
- The one-hundred-year-old man who climbed out of the window and disappeared
- Children of the New Forest - Captain Maryatt

Series

- Silent Witness - Sooo good
- The Wire
- The Killing

Films

- Dark Waters
- Untouchables
- Babette's Feast

Plans for 2024 and wise words

When asked for these, I realised that I can do no better than to recommend you watch Tim Minchin's Nine Lessons of Life when he accepted an honorary degree, on Youtube. Love him.

Recommendations in life

1. Make sourdough bread. My recipe takes two days. The house smells delicious, It's good for you.
2. Chat with a stranger. I can't remember the study but they have found that this is refreshing and good for your mental health. People generally like to be included in a conversation.
3. Go to the top of the tallest hill you can and breathe. Walk, drive, run, watch on Youtube, any way you can. All problems look smaller up there.
4. Laugh, at the world, at life, at ourselves. Why not?
5. Make a mistake. Best way to learn. None of us are perfect, and then laugh.

Throughout January Supported Banking have:

- Completed 73 external audits.
- Processed 2122 payments to Personal Assistants and care agencies.
- Completed 538 bank reconciliations.
- Opened 16 new accounts.

**Supported
Banking**

Payroll

The Payroll Department are still busy migrating all our clients from Sage to BrightPay software. However, we are on track to be finished by mid-year. All Payroll Clerks should be fully trained on BrightPay and the Connect service by April. The Connect service allows the Personal Assistants who are employed by the client to view their payslips and P60's in real time.

This will reduce unnecessary phone calls asking for duplicate payslips if they've been lost or misplaced.

Payroll have also had a big push on reducing postage/printing, trying to reduce costs to the department and also our carbon footprint.

Lastly, we have opened up 27 new accounts for January.



We have started 2024 with the return of our weekly activity groups and are delivering some exciting new sessions including a Chinese New year celebration, a Valentine Disco, some Spring planting, a visit to the Pub and we have started to support young people to complete their 'learn a new skill' module towards their Duke of Edinburgh Award programme.

We have secured a donation of £10,000 which will be used to deliver additional activities during school holiday times and will be planning our first activity session for the Easter break.



We have completed our quarterly review of services for children and young people and are very proud that 100% of respondents rated the services as Excellent, 100% stated they would recommend the service to a friend and all young people have achieved their personal outcomes.

We have joined the Cheshire West children and young people's alliance forum and will ensure the voice of young people with lived experience of disability is heard and recognised.

We continue to work with the Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) in Cheshire West and have noted their new application process for 2024 now states that provision should be inclusive for all young people and there is support for providers to understand how to make reasonable adjustments. We are pleased to see this development after our delivery of a training workshop about the Equality Act for the HAF commissioning team. We hope all young people are now able to attend these free sessions during school holidays.

We have attended the parent carer provider forum and have continued to highlight the lack of accessible afterschool and wrap around childcare for young people with lived experience of disability.

We have been approached by Active Cheshire who have a small pot of funding to work with providers to ensure accessible provision in the sports and physical activity sector. We are meeting with them in February to talk about the project in more detail.

We have been approached by a number of local providers recently asking if we are interested in partnership working and will be meeting these providers in the next few weeks to explore any possible joint working.

Community Connections (funding, 1-1 support and information/signposting)

The service continues to provide funding to enable young people to purchase activities of their choice within their local and wider community and to enable parents to have a short break. Young people are attending lots of different community-based activities, and we are currently working with 406 families.

The team continue to support a number of young people to attend community based activities of their choice and are working with the providers to make reasonable adjustments to their provision in order to meet their statutory responsibility under the Equality Act.



We have contacted all providers who attended our inclusive training programme in 2023 to review how the training has impacted their service delivery. We are pending their responses and will hopefully be arranging some review meetings in the not-too-distant future.

The Information and Signposting service continues to support families to research activities available in their local area. Adam (Volunteer) has developed a fantastic database of activity providers in the local and wider area which will assist the service to effectively and quickly respond to enquiries.

We have completed our annual satisfaction survey and are very pleased that today we have received 56% more replies than last year and are proud that 97% of respondents have rated the service as good or excellent.

Volunteers

Cate continues to attend community networking events to promote our volunteer opportunities and we are currently looking to redevelop our volunteer policies and procedures to ensure they are fully accessible.

We are reviewing the volunteer roles across the organisation to ensure they are interesting and attractive to potential volunteers.

We will be organising quarterly coffee and cake sessions for volunteers with the first one being held on 31.1.24. This is a chance for volunteers to meet each other, have a chat, ask us any questions about volunteering and/or provide us with some feedback.

Goodbye

Charlie has now left Disability Positive for pastures new, and we wish her all the very best for the future.

Firstly we would like to congratulate Sam Lomas 🙌 who will be taking over as Manager of the Arrangement of Care and Support Service from the 1st March. Annette Gallagher will remain in post as Team Leader and covering Wirral as Advisor. Ellie Burns is doing incredibly well delivering the S117 project which is highlighting some issues. We have received excellent feedback from our funders at Active Cheshire.

Caitlan Pollard and Chris continue to keep Bolton going while we are trying to recruit.

Jackie continues to administrate the learning service and we received great feedback from Skills for Care for our work.

The whole team is working incredibly hard and referrals keep coming in, so much so that we have had to create a waiting list for our service.

We have bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience to our team.

A day in the life of working in Disability Positive's various services

I started working for Disability Positive in May 2016 as a member of the reception team. From there I decided to volunteer in the Advocacy Team which gave me the knowledge, experience and confidence to apply for an advocate role, I was successful and enjoyed working as an advocate. After we lost the advocacy contract in 2022 I took a role in supported banking, and when the opportunity arose I moved into the ACSS team.

Having worked in a variety of roles has helped me to understand more about the services that Disability Positive provide. It has given me an insight into how the services link together such as payroll, supported banking, community connections and the North West Care Cooperative (NWCC).

I understand more about how a package of care begins following a referral and what is involved in setting it up. This role has taught me a great deal especially about the complexities of social care and the care system in general. I am able to give clients information and sign post to other providers and agencies when they ring or email Triage asking what support we can offer. We also go into more detail about care and support on initial home visits.

The ACSS advisor role is challenging especially in the current care crisis. We are promoting the training of PAs and employers via our learning service with a view to improving the status, skills and qualifications of care workers. It can be very difficult to recruit in this sector however we are working on improving the perception of care work to encourage more people to consider this as a career.

ACSS



As at our last pay day (24th January) we provided 6210 support hours (up from 6091 last month), to 43 Principal Members (down 1 from last month) and 65 Personal Assistants (the same as last month). We retain a healthy list of new applicants looking to join us, but as explained in our last newsletter we are close to or at our 'Dunbar's

Law' number and currently only adding new members when capacity becomes available.

Work on our 'After We Are Gone' service continues, and we have created a page on our website (<https://nwcarecoop.co.uk/after-were-gone>) where you can follow our progress. Some of our early learning points to a rebranding of the service to something like 'Planning for an Independent Future' as this better captures the idea that - we are all someone's child, and all need to face at some point the challenge of living independently without parents - and that this is not just a 'disabled persons issue'.

Looking ahead we are beginning to focus on our Members Conference to be held in the Garret Theatre at the 'Story house' in Chester on 19th April 2024. The purpose of the conference is to allow our Principal Members (those that receive support) a voice to share with our Personal Assistant Members (those that provide support) what 'living life well' means for them generally, and how collectively we can help to deliver that.

It will follow on from the 'No Limits' event in March and hopefully together with that event, will encourage members to step beyond an expression of their individual day to day person centred needs, to sharing more widely how social care can be delivered to enable people to 'live life well'. This is part of a longer-term objective within our seven-year business plan to share the learning and success of delivering support within the social care market, in a way that might help shape that market in the future. Whilst the 'delivery of care and support' could be seen as an issue for 'disabled people' - how to 'live life well' is an issue for all of us. The world is full of non-disabled people who struggle to 'live life well' and disabled people who can, despite their impairments, are well placed to offer advice on how to do so.

You can keep up to date with this journey and more in our weekly You Tube update posted every Friday on the website at: <https://nwcarecoop.co.uk/>

Customer Experience Audits – We Need Your Help!

The range of services we offer for businesses continues to grow, supporting organisations to understand the challenges, needs and rights of disabled people and helping them to promote a more inclusive working culture. As such, demand for our Disability Equality Training courses and Customer Experience Audits has increased massively over the past 12 months.

A customer experience audit highlights how someone with lived experience of disability experiences an organisation. We carry out audits in a variety of different sectors such as sport and leisure, hospitality and retail.

We are currently looking for members of our team who have lived experience of disability to carry out audits for a national hotel chain which will include an overnight stay. We also need volunteers to carry out audits at local sports venues such as leisure centres.

Guidance and training will be provided and the audits for local leisure centres can be carried out in work time. We will of course reimburse any costs you incur carrying out the audit, such as mileage, any refreshments/meals purchased and the cost to book any activities etc. You will also receive a gift voucher with our thanks for your time and support.

Availability is limited so if you have lived experience of disability and would like to find out more about carrying out a customer experience audit, please get in touch at communications@disabilitypositive.org

**Business
Development**



No Limits – 2nd March 12-4pm

Only three weeks to go! **'EEK**

Don't forget that No Limits is taking place on Saturday 2nd March, from 12 noon at Brio Leisure, Northwich Memorial Court. With over 30 exhibitors attending, the line up for this year also includes:

- Danielle Brown MBE, Paralympian Archer and world record holder
- Comedian Pete Selwood
- Deesign BSL Choir
- Dogs for Good's Linda Montgomery with assistance dog Poppy
- The SEND Specialist, podcaster and author Georgina Durrant
- Down Syndrome Cheshire's Dance and Drama Group
- Sensory space by Ruby's Fund
- Arts and Crafts activities for children, and a face paint station

No Limits is a fantastic chance for people living with disability in Cheshire to learn more about the opportunities and support available in the region.

For more information speak to Steve, Di or Lisa, grab a leaflet from reception, or check out our social media.

See you there!

Policy and Communications

In January we responded to a couple of consultations. Firstly, we submitted a response to the Cheshire East Council Adult Social Care Charging Consultation. Secondly, we gave feedback to the Cheshire West & Chester Transport Policy Consultation. In addition to this, we continue to be involved in various forums, ensuring the voice of local disabled people is heard and listened to.

Communications

Social Media wise, Diane has noted the top three posts in order of interest (reach and engagement) for this month (January):


-  No Limits
-  Bolton Job
-  Co-op Local Community Fund reminder


The Learning Service needs your help!


Could those of you who use social media please help raise the profile of our Learning Service, most importantly their FREE training sessions. Although all the details are on the website under the event section, we need to get the word out there to our local PA/carers and individual employers.


Currently we get funding for the training from Skills For Care - which was this year reduced. We sadly have to cancel some sessions due to no interest, but if we don't use all the funds then we could potentially receive even less in the next financial year.

If you're not on social media, but speak to our clients through your work, if you feel able to bring PA training up in your conversation - please do. 🙏

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