

# Gateshead Access Panel

**Gateshead Access Panel** (GAP) is a registered charity and a pan disability organisation. We are one of few, User Led Organisation's (ULO's) in the Country and are proud to be pioneers of the concept of 'User Led'. We are the only ULO organisation for Gateshead modelled on a Centre for Independent Living (CIL) as recognised by the Department of Health.

"A ULO is an organisation that is run and controlled by disabled people who use support services including mental health service users, people with learning difficulties, older people, and their families and carers."  
(SCIE, 2009).

CIL's are not impairment specific; they are open to all disabled people. Department of Health researchers did not regard networks set up by major national charities for disabled people, or those local authority established as Independent Living Centre's as constituting a user-lead organisation.

Disabled People choose to be supported by GAP because we are User Led and trustworthy – people know we understand, can emphasis with their needs and are therefore not judgmental.

## Volunteering with GAP 2010/2011

This report is part of Gateshead Access Panel's regular monitoring and evaluation processes. Normally 3 monthly reports are prepared for Board of Trustees but this forms part of the feedback and evaluation to our funders for the last year: Lloyds TSB Foundation.

In three parts, this report will first evaluate the Volunteer Project funded for the year 2010/2011 by Lloyds TSB and as part of this consider Social Return on Investment. Second, highlight other work that has been carried out throughout the year and, third and finally give a brief explanation of the work that we would like to carry out in the near future as a result of our successful year....

## Gateshead Access Panel - Volunteer Project 2010/2011

These days volunteering is a key strand of the government's vision for achieving a 'Big Society', where people are working together to take action on local issues. We feel at GAP that this has always been our ethos as User Led Centre of Independent Living where disabled people (including those with mental health issues; people with learning difficulties; sensory impaired people; physically disabled people and those with complex needs; and people with long term limiting conditions) parent/ carers have worked together to take action with a collective voice on issues that affect them on a daily basis in their locality. We have always published that volunteers are invaluable and are the core essence of Gateshead Access Panel (GAP) and they are, in the main, responsible for what the Panel is today. All volunteers are an integral part of each project within GAP and it is our wish that they remain so. . **Our concept of volunteering reflects the Community Development theory of NEF2010:**

### **Community Development**

The established definition for community development is:

“a long-term value-based process which aims to address imbalances in power and bring about change founded on social justice, equality and inclusion.”

The process enables people to organise and work together to:

- Identify their own needs and aspirations
- To take action to exert influence on the decisions which affect their lives
- Improve the quality of their own lives, the communities in which they live, and societies of which they are a part.' (NEF 2010)

### **The Volunteer Project. May 2010-2011**

We were awarded £20,000 from Lloyds TSB over the period from 26th of May 2010 till 26<sup>th</sup> May 2011. The funding from Lloyds TSB allowed us to keep a long standing experienced member of our team. This grant enabled us to continue with our successful volunteer project, it funded a part time post and retention of the volunteers that we already had here at Gateshead Access Panel (GAP) and recruit others.

## **The Aim of the Volunteer Project funded By Lloyds TSB Foundation.**

The overall aim of the project is to generate an environment where disabled residents of Gateshead will wish to become involved as volunteers, they will be trained in the work of GAP and where their knowledge, skills and experience will assist them and GAP, to work towards a fully inclusive society, give advice and information on disability issues and legislation to all stakeholders, whilst developing the individual volunteers confidence and skills, and informing them of the Human Rights to assist them in meeting their needs.

Disabled People choose to be supported by GAP because we are User Led and trustworthy – people know we understand, can empathise with their needs and are therefore not judgmental.

Our volunteers are drawn from the people who use our services (our constituents) so many can support others with a real empathy of their circumstances. Others are drawn from our general constituency while some come via other organisations or through work placements.

### **Specific Aims:**

- To expand the number of volunteers who wish to be involved in GAP and gain a full understanding of their skills, knowledge, ability and needs.
- To provide a progressive programme of volunteering opportunities that will enable disabled people, parents and carers to improve their confidence, skills and independence as well as any ambitions for education or employment.
- Identify and encourage volunteers to take up any training that will help them in their chosen volunteer placement.
- To network and liaise with outside organisations in order to broaden the scope of volunteering opportunities to disabled people.
- Work closely with the project workers and volunteers to identify volunteer opportunities that may be most suitable for meeting the needs of the individual volunteer.
- A work experience in Finance, admin, advice information and support, advocacy and training.

## Gateshead Access Panel - Volunteer Project 2010/2011

- Volunteers attend various meetings/committees throughout the borough, with a brief to advise that group of the issues affecting disabled people and parents and carers. They will provide awareness of the issues surrounding varying impairments and not just their own, although they will also have the opportunity to give first hand experience of receiving services as a disabled person and parent and carer. They will report back to the Access Panel meetings with any issues raised for discussion, and take these views back to their group

### **Expected Outcomes**

- Volunteers will have a direct influence on the policies and practices of a wide range of service providers, making the services more accessible and better at meeting the needs of disabled people across the Borough. This process will happen after the volunteer reports back to the Access Panel meetings where any issues for consideration are raised for discussion. The views of the Panel are then taken back to the group or a higher level either by writing e mails, reports, letters, papers or arranging meetings with head of services or/and the chief executive, that seems to be most effective.
- Volunteers attend various meetings/committees with service providers throughout the borough, with a brief to advise that group of the issues affecting disabled people and parents and carers. They will provide awareness of the issues around varying impairment groups and not just their own, although they will also have the opportunity to give first hand experience of receiving services as a disabled person.
- Staff of service providers becoming pan disability-aware, enabling them to develop policies and services which recognise the needs of the disabled people in the community
- The volunteers will become more confident, skilled and have increased knowledge, which, will help them to become more involved and included in society, as well as the possibility of pursuing further education and /or employment.
- Experience and understanding of office procedures.

## The Value of Volunteering

The Third Sector Statistical Resource 2011 (WCVA 2011) says that 'the Citizenship survey indicates that, 147 million hours of voluntary effort is given in a year, which is worth £1.6 billion.

Whilst we acknowledge there is a monetary value on volunteering, (WCVA, 2011) here at GAP we have always 'measured what we think matters' (Mitchell, 2010) not just looking at the financial effects, but personal outcomes for the individual volunteer and impact for disabled people and parents and carers in Gateshead and surrounding areas.

This way of working is not unique to GAP, however it is not always the way a lot of organisations have worked in the past. But increasingly due to the recession, and the competition for funding increasing, most organisations are keen to demonstrate their worth and the impact they have on their chosen area of work. We have also been encouraged by Government with its ambitions for the 'Big Society' and funders who increasingly look to invest in projects that not only identify, support and nurture volunteers but improve the lives of people in the wider local communities, to analyse our organisational worth and evidence any social investment in return (SROI). (Seabrooke 2010)

- Social Investment is defined as investment in, and commitment to, adult social roles. The primary adult social roles that define social investment are centred in work, family, and community. Social Investment in community can manifest in several ways, one of which is volunteer work. (Lodi-Smith Roberts 2008) Volunteer work reflects a direct attempt to improve one's society and therefore is a core indicator of social investment.
- SROI is a methodology used to understand the social value created by community development work, using a common outcomes framework. (NEF 2010)

To evaluate the Volunteer Project at GAP we have used an outcome focus methodology using questionnaires, some statistical analysis, and some testimonies from stakeholders of GAP mainly volunteers and people whom have directly benefited from our work.

## Gateshead Access Panel - Volunteer Project 2010/2011

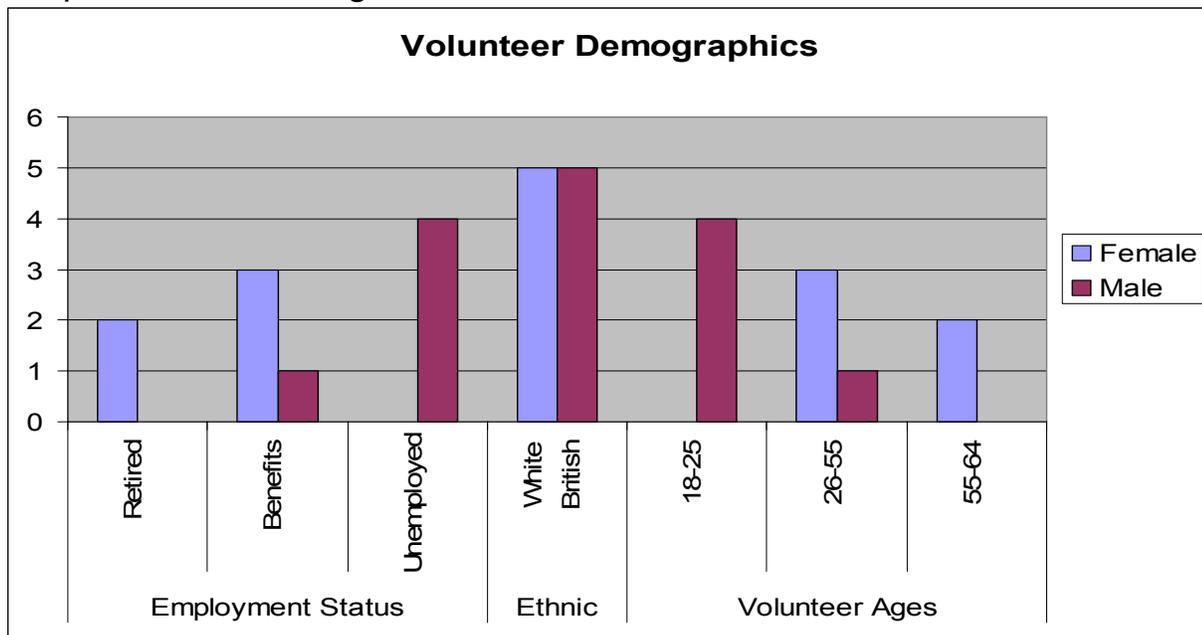
The Volunteer Investment and Value Audit (VIVA) gives us a self-help guide to evidence and highlight the value of volunteering by calculating the notional wages of volunteers then deducting how much it costs to host a volunteer project.

We have included in our figures regular volunteers who work week on week, and non-regular volunteers such as management committee members, those volunteers who attend meetings and staff who also volunteer.

The approximate total number of hours of volunteering for the full year is **8,554 hours**. This gives us a notional wage bill of **£143,223** deducted from this is the cost of hosting the volunteer project, we have based this on the full cost recovery of six part time workers who helped manage and mentor the volunteers that is **£24,025.64**. This gives us a ratio of **5.96**, which means for every pound spent on volunteers we/Gateshead gets back **£5.96**.

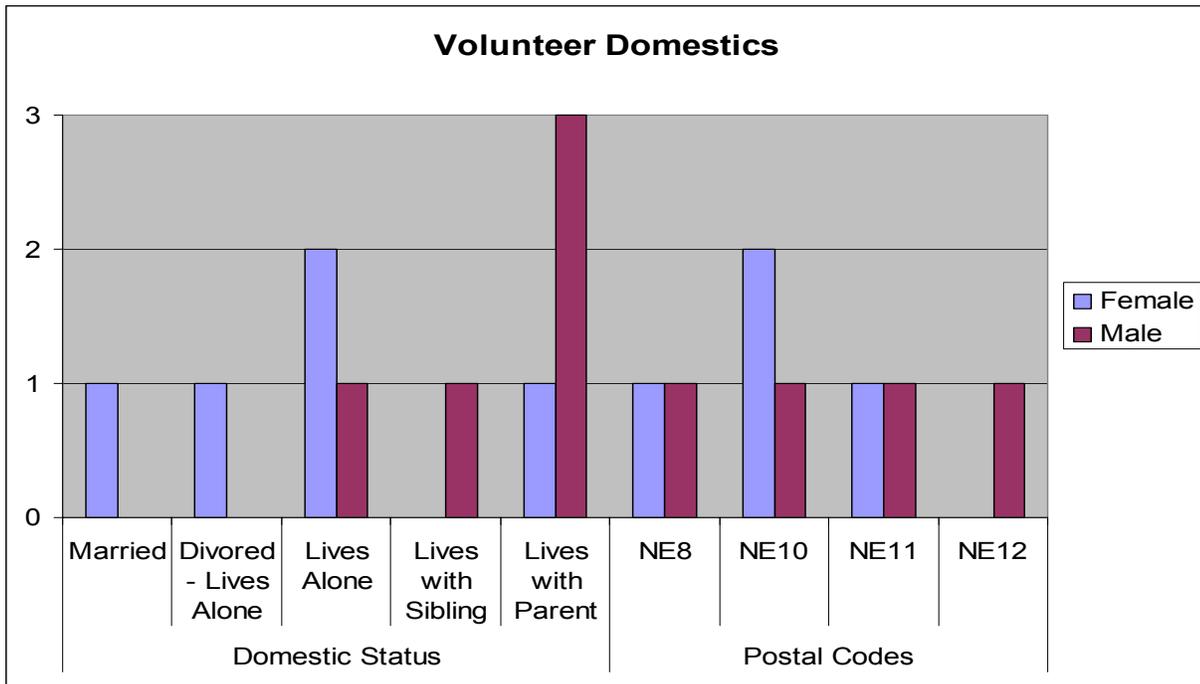
We had ten core, office based volunteers throughout the year of the Lloyds TSB grant who carried out varied roles within the office. All staff volunteer extra hours on a weekly basis as well as other disabled people and parents and carers who volunteer as part of the Disability Equality Service User Involvement Forum (DESUIF) (report available), they have not been added to the figures below however.

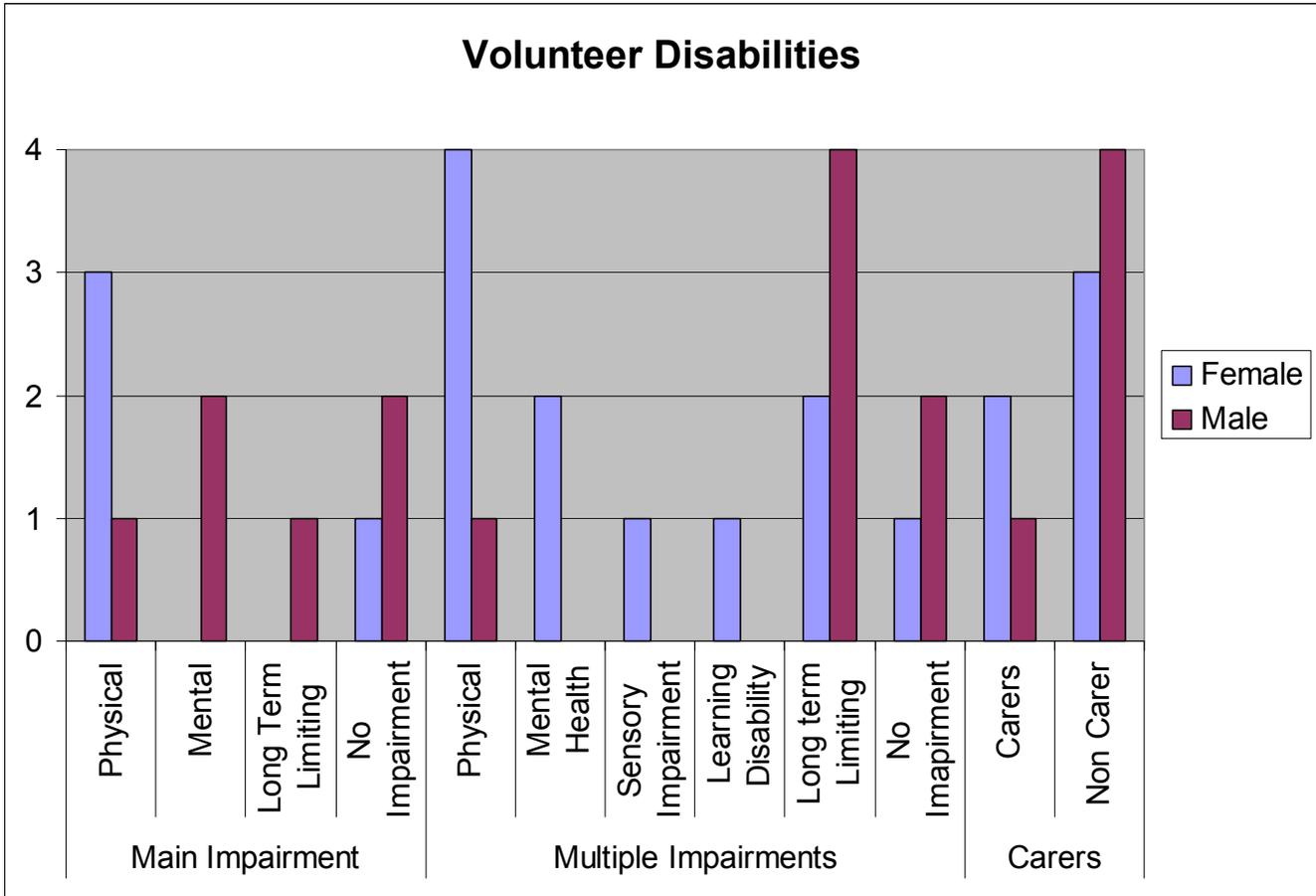
### Graphs demonstrating Volunteer Statistics



## Gateshead Access Panel - Volunteer Project 2010/2011

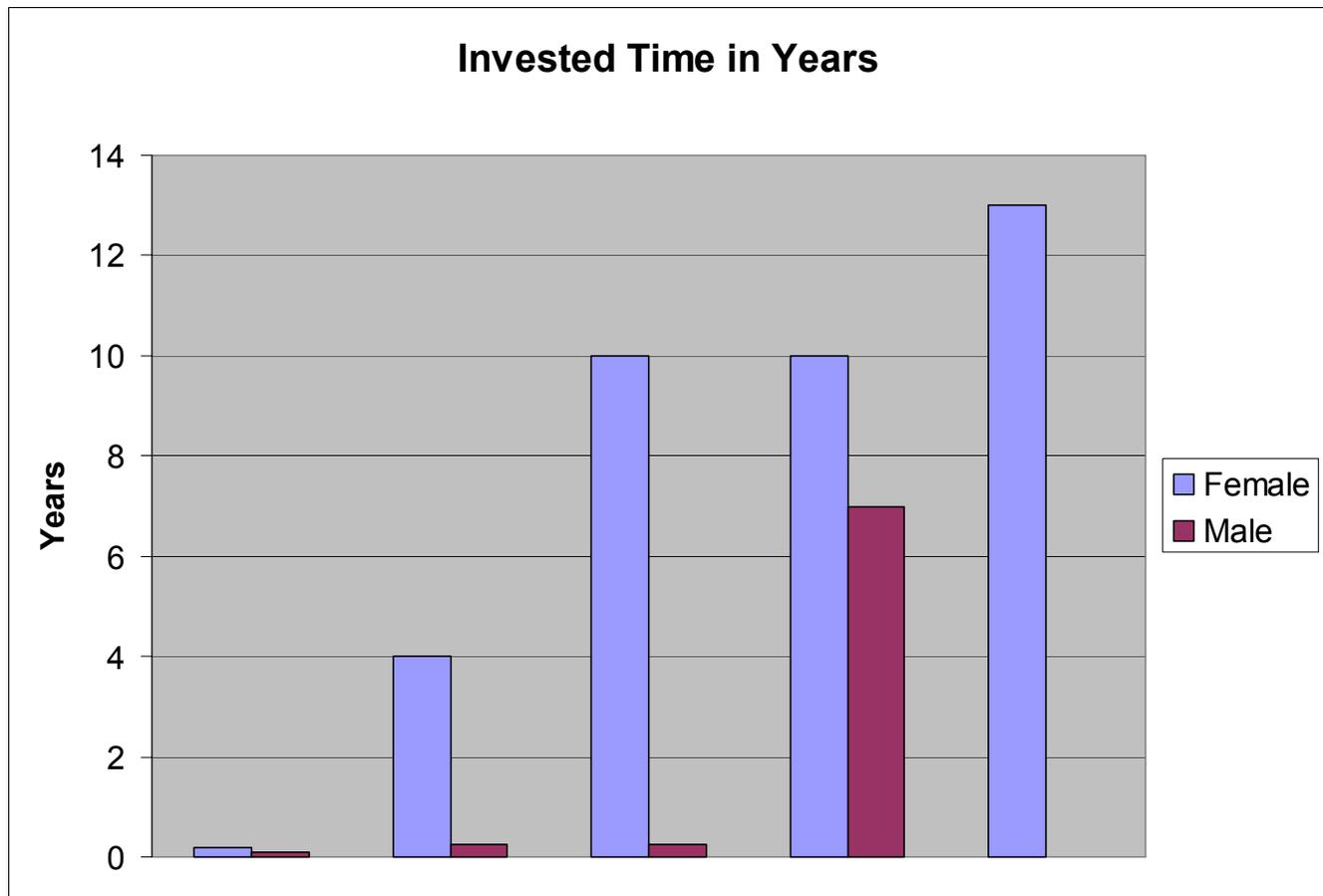
GAP is totally committed to Equality and Diversity and this for example, is reflected and always has been in our staff team. At present we have representation from all equality strands ie. young, older, gay, race, faith, gender and naturally disability with varying impairment groups. Our core volunteers represent most of these strands currently apart from Ethnic Minority. Although in the past we have had people of different ethnic backgrounds we did not have for the year 2010/11. In our non regular volunteer numbers ethnic minority is represented but still not to the extent we would like. This has to be a target for us to consider for the future. We have good links with lead organisations for each equality strand through partnership working and this has increased our user base for advocacy and advice services over the last 2 years. As it is usual for GAP as a User Led Organisation to draw volunteers and staff members from our user base we hope that the increased numbers of people from ethnic minority groups using our services will be reflected in future volunteering statistics.





The breakdown of impairments groups as shown in the table is divided into three parts. The main impairment: this is probably the way impairment groups are seen/broken down for most statutory bodies. Then we have multiple impairments: demonstrating that disabled people impairments are complex - Sandra for example is assessed as have a physical disability but in actual fact sometimes her issues stem from her ill health due to a long term progressive and painful condition, mental health, sensory impairment and/or her role as carer. Some are seen for example as 'wheelchair users' or 'ambulant disabled' however just because someone is ambulant disabled does not mean that they do not have as well for example learning disabilities and /or mental health problems. Someone being a wheelchair user does not make them necessarily disabled in our office but having a learning disability may disable them. The issue is why the individual perceives themselves to be disabled – are they being discriminated against or excluded because of mental health issues, learning disability or physical impairments? Therefore they do not necessarily fit into a particular 'category' and statistics may not reflect the true picture of complex needs and

multiple impairments. Then there is the category of 'carers' many of our volunteers are disabled people and carers.



Our recruitment of volunteers has been through a combination of advertising, exhibitions and word of mouth. Once volunteers are recruited they are placed within the whole project in areas they are interested in. Their choices at the moment are:

- Advocacy
- Training
- Representatives at Partnership meetings
- Office Work
- Self Advocacy Groups
- Consult tees in Responses Papers
- Research
- Access Issues
- Advice Information and Support

- Newsletter
- IT
- Exhibitions

## **Volunteer Development (Progression Routes) and Well Being**

The Volunteer Project supports the workers within the other projects established within GAP. In order to ensure that the contribution of volunteers is of the highest standard, it is essential that they are well trained and properly equipped and that they are effectively managed. All volunteers have a recorded progression route written so that progress can be easily monitored and visualised by the volunteer and the co-ordinator on their 'distance travelled'. Each volunteer is met with on a regular basis so that trouble shooting, support, supervision, guidance, direction, target setting and evaluation of their work can take place. A review sheet is used to assist this process of recording the volunteers' experience. This allows amalgamation of the formal constraints of work with the informal chat; that is necessary to put individuals at ease and establish a rapport. The outcomes of these reviews are firmly rooted in the field of 'well being' which is emerging as an ever-more prominent role in government initiatives and other key public policy objectives. (NEF 2010)The review includes:

### **Personal Development**

- Confidence.
- Self- esteem.
- Making a useful contribution to society.
- The volunteers sense of motivation.
- A willingness to try new things.
- A sense of things to look forward to.

All volunteers have benefited/progressed in these areas. Here is the testimony of one of our volunteers Sam:

**“Volunteering has given me more confidence. I can speak up more and it has given me new skills. Volunteering gives me something to look forward to, it gave me something else to think about when I was ill recently”**

## **Skills Development**

- Improvement in ability to communicate with people.
- Work as part of a team.
- To make decisions
- Improvement in social and communication skills
- Organising time.
- Ability to lead or encourage
- Technical skills such as office work or IT skills.

Here Steven tells how his skills have developed through his time here at GAP.

**“Through my voluntary work at GAP I have enjoyed acquiring new skills and building upon my existing abilities across the spectrum of IT work in particular. Having previously studied in University, and completed a degree in Illustration, I had never really considered the possibility of studying again. However, inspired and encouraged by my time at GAP, I have recently begun studying for a Computing degree through the Open University. Obviously of great personal interest to myself I hope that this new area of study will both complement and further my work within the organisation and give me practical experience with the new skills and knowledge I hope to gain.”**

## **Their sense of Cultural Identity**

- The understanding of different cultures
- Sense of belonging to the community
- Opportunities to express their own identity.

Equality and Diversity Training ensures that volunteers understand different cultures not only from black and ethnic minority issues but also from within impairment groups such as learning disabilities and mental health issues.

At Gateshead Access Panel we have always worked towards social inclusion which reflects community development. ‘Community Development’ is a way of working with local communities, to achieve change within communities to problems that they themselves identify. It is a collective process, not a one-off intervention, co-produced with, not doing to communities. We of course work with the disabled community in this way, harnessing the potential, the energy and the

unique knowledge and skills of local disabled people, parents and carers to address challenges faced by themselves and their community.

Being involved in volunteering and attendance of self advocacy groups, partnership meetings (citizenship), events and conferences encourages disabled people, parents and carers to feel more connected to community through knowledge and input into local issues and helping to build their community from the onset has the potential to be more sustainable, effective, and less burdensome on the public purse. (NEF 2010)

### **Social Capital**

Community Development can be regarded as a process of building social capital and / or social assets. The process of building Social Capital in GAP (ie. social resources, friends, colleagues, mutual care, belonging and partnerships) contribute to well-being (social, economic and health)

For example, being a member of GAP can help disabled people and carers to develop friendships and local contacts, which when needed can provide anything from a shoulder to cry on / support to cope to help to move on with confidence towards further community participation, education, training and employment.

At Gateshead Access Panel we strive to seek and build sustainable partnerships whereby the disabled community can bond and form social networks linking and bridging with others for example, working with governmental and statutory agencies identify the needs, and contribute where appropriate. We have a long history of partnership working with Gateshead Council, particularly with the former Department of Architectural Services. This partnership has increased over the last few years and GAP now has a close working relationship with all the services within Gateshead Council's Development and Enterprise Group.

The Disability Equality Service User Forum (DESUIF) was established in January 2009. The Forum is facilitated by Gateshead Access Panel and contains members of various service user groups. The Forum meets on a monthly basis to discuss issues relating to disability equality and inclusive design that impacts upon Development and Enterprise projects and procedures.

There are two types of DESUIF meeting; technical and focus group. The technical meetings provide access consultancy to officers and design teams about inclusive design issues and disability equality considerations. The Focus Group meetings are for more general discussions to obtain first-hand service

user feedback on issues such as; adaptations, inclusive play, open spaces etc. The information obtained from these discussions is used to inform technical discussions on projects, reviews and strategies. The Focus Group meetings also involve site visits so that officers and service users can experience facilities first hand eg: Heworth Pool and a proposed visit to Saltwell Park.

Darren Ramshaw of Gateshead Council's Development and Enterprise Group says **“We greatly values it's partnership with Gateshead Access Panel and the DESUIF meetings. The forum provides both consultancy and service user feedback which assists the Council to deliver inclusive projects, policies and procedures. The meetings are seen as an essential part of Development and Enterprise meeting its disability equality obligations. Partnership working with Gateshead Access Panel and the Disability Equality Service User Forum is very important. The partnership's advice and feedback has informed many projects, policies and procedures to help make Gateshead as inclusive as possible. I look forward to building on this partnership into the future”**.

### **Access to Training Courses and or /Certificates**

- Whether it is important for the volunteer to obtain accreditation or qualifications.
- Understanding that the organisation supplies access to free training.

People volunteer for all sorts of different reasons, so not all volunteers felt that it was important to them to accrue qualifications or accreditation within their volunteer placement. But all volunteers understood the reasons for training, whether that training was around disability or if it was based around a specific task the volunteer was working on within the office. They all understood that any training offered was only around the role undertaken within their volunteer placement and would be free of charge.

All volunteers receive:

- Disability Equality Training
- Equality & Diversity Training
- Policies Practices and Procedures
- Visual Awareness
- Deaf Awareness

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Some volunteers have been assisted on to courses, others have been supported and encouraged to look for courses and enrol themselves. Examples of some of these training and development opportunities volunteers attended are:

- NVQ level 3 Advice Information and Guidance
- Single Equality Act.
- Beginning work to a IT degree with Open University
- Foundation degree in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations
- Charity Log
- Advocacy Diploma and general training
- Fund raising Skills
- Level 3 N.C.F.E Counselling Circles of Support and Guidance Training.
- Health and Safety
- Personal Safety and Awareness
- HEFC Toolbox
- HEFC Quantative Method
- HEFC Psychology & HEFC Human Biology

When he left to explore new avenues John said:

**“The volunteering experience at GAP was very interesting and educational. I found your staff to be friendly, helpful and patient. I’m sure that I will use all of the valuable skills I developed at your organisation in the future”**

Below are areas of training that volunteers have contributed to or helped deliver:

- Disability Equality and Awareness Training
- Disability Empowerment.
- Single Equality Act

### **Support and management of the Volunteer Project**

- Do you feel that your skills are well utilised
- Are you aware of what is expected of them most of the time
- Are you aware of that the organisation expects from the volunteer
- Do they feel you get the support you need whenever you need it?
- Do you feel the volunteering must be better organised

- Do you feel that your contribution is valued within the organisation?

In this part of the assessment process, I have to answer to the volunteer, if they feel there are areas that need to be addressed within the volunteer project this is the time to talk about it. So far all the volunteers are satisfied with the quality of support and the management they receive whilst with GAP.

Here **Nat** talks about how he feels he has developed with the support and guidance he has received here at GAP.

**“Personally my time at GAP has been extremely beneficial to me. I have gained a wealth of experience and knowledge as well as making some good friends with my colleagues. I have been guided/encouraged to do things I would not have normally considered doing and have found that I have an aptitude for advocacy work which I did not know I had. I have done more in my last 9 months with GAP than I had in the previous 12 beforehand and I am deeply thankful to everyone at GAP for the support they have given me to go further, do more and push myself. Had I not come to GAP I feel I would not have done so much in so little time.”**

### **Employability/increased earning power**

- Has volunteering increased your ability to get paid work
- Has the organisation helped me look for paid work.

As stated previously people volunteer for all sorts of different reasons. Not all people are looking for work, those who are, feel they have enhanced their skills and confidence significantly, thus improving their chances of finding paid work. Although it is not within the brief of this project to find volunteers employment. Some volunteers have been proactively supported in their quest for employment.

Three of our volunteers have gone on to gain employment, one in finance, one in a factory in Wales and another has gained part time work here at GAP as a personal assistant.

One of our volunteers who has just left us for a full time post in finance had this to say about volunteering:

**“Volunteering with GAP was a great way to improve my skills and develop skills I already possessed. During my time at GAP I was able to carry out duties that will stand me in good stead for the rest of my life.**

**Skills aside, I found time volunteering to give me great confidence, improve my self esteem and improve on my self worth. I was fortunate enough to volunteer in a sector that I have a passion for and I am very grateful for the opportunity to show what I can do.**

**Volunteering is an enjoyable experience that keeps me busy and gave me an opportunity to enjoy myself and meet great people. I found the experience thoroughly enjoyable and I would strongly recommend volunteering to anyone”**

Wider Benefit to the Community of Volunteering: **Disabled People and carers**

We have supported 300 disabled people and carers/families through our Advocacy, Advice and Information work and have been able to demonstrate that our support has meant our main beneficiaries have found they are in more control of their lives, feel more independent, their health and well being increased and some more economically safe.

### **Numbers of Beneficiaries**

We had ten formal volunteers over the funded period plus **nineteen** who have attended partnership meetings to ensure disabled peoples and carers issues are considered in policy development.

The core team of volunteers helped handle 300 enquiries from our main beneficiaries, some of which were advice, information and support and some of which were advocacy cases. These were often on a peer support basis. Disabled people (eg. those with mental health/learning/physical/sensory disabilities); their carers and families, and those with limiting long term health needs have been assisted with adaptations, housing, personal budgets and complaints to authorities and ombudsman.

We have received comments like:

- Our life has improved 100%
- I am always telling people about GAP
- They helped me get myself back into the world after having a bad illness

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- I was grateful for the help. They understood your trouble they did a lot of good work to help me they were great.
- I got a shower to keep me clean for life
- I don't think you could be better. You listened to us and got things moving, you got through the doors that had been closed to us.
- Your volunteer turned my life around.

Gateshead Access Panel's volunteers have been represented at consultation events. Partnership meetings and in training we provide (for example with Sunderland and New College Durham Universities) to ensure disabled peoples and carers needs are influencing developments. There have been 76 such occasions.

Our work has impacted locally through participation in Gateshead Strategic Partnership and its sub groups, regional universities, Health Trust and through the Disability Equality and Service User Involvement Forum where the local authorities new projects and strategies are impact assessed by our volunteers and beneficiaries (many of whom become involved through the advocacy support we provide to them).

Nationally we have worked with Disability Lib the results of which are being used to influence National debate and policy.

### **Personal Development**

I have attended/completed the following training:

- Weekend in Bristol (Human Rights Convention)
- Leading on Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Level 2
- Training from Michael Mandelstam ( Neglect and abuse in our health services : practical and legal implications for patients and professionals and organisations)
- Foundation degree in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations
- ACAS Restructuring and Redundancy
- Dignity in Care
- ACAS Management Performance and Appraisals
- ACAS Essential Skills for frontline Managers
- ACAS Difficult Conversations
- Identifying and Responding to Child Abuse.
- Attachment Theory

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- The Impact of Parental Mental Health
- Personalisation/ Risk and Safeguarding Adults

Worked with Gateshead Adult Learning funded by NIACE in encouraging Community Champions. Presentation at Dryden Centre and also participated in a video this is to be posted on our website [www.access-gateshead.co.uk](http://www.access-gateshead.co.uk) and also on You Tube.

I have attended various meetings/Conferences representing GAP:

- Fair Access To Care Partnership on the Brokerage
- Tender, Personalisation Board,
- Gain Steering group,
- Financial Inclusion Conference,
- ULO Conference (working with LINKS) ,

### **HR/Office Management**

The human resources role has been a natural progression from managing volunteers and I have carried out this role with GAP staff, individuals who were on work experience through the Future Job Fund Initiative and students.

### **Future Job Funders**

Over the last year we have worked on the Future Job Fund Initiative with Gateshead Council. This came to an end in May 2011. We worked with twelve individuals who were disadvantaged in the workplace, either by lack of skills, education and work experience. We had six individuals from the first round and six from the second.

With some individuals we had success, one or two proved to be rather difficult. Four have since gone on to employment as a direct result of working with us.

Here two people give their account of their placement:

**“I was able to get a foot in the door to gain invaluable experience which I could take with me to future employers. I was able to demonstrate my work ethic as well as progression over the course of 6 months. It developed a window of opportunities for me to consider other areas of work and how to develop my career.”**

**“I felt GAP gave me the confidence to be a stronger person and helped me work out what I wanted in life. You pointed me in the right direction and got me where I am today. If it wasn't for GAP I wouldn't have the confidence I have now so thank you to everyone”**

### **Student Social Workers**

We have had eleven social work students (first and second years) on placement. Recently we worked with five first year social work students. Two of the students were from Northumbria they were with us for twenty days and three students from Sunderland University. This was a very successful placement for all concerned. The students all said that their placement here had proved extremely valuable in their learning and had been a real eye opener. One said whilst discussing the case she was working on for us “I never knew things like this could be happening in this country, with all the legislation and policies, with social workers and health workers why is a person living like this why is nobody helping her. What would happen to people like this without organisations like yourselves”. Students have weekly sessions to discuss any issues and reflect and to relate their practice to the standards they need to work to. We would have two visits from a support worker from the University to make sure all was well and again discuss what they were doing. We work with students on their work handbook which was evidence based to make comments on their placements also. With Northumbria they also had a electronic version to sign off and also a visit from an external monitoring worker to validate the work.

These are some of the comments we received from those students on their experience at GAP:

**“I have enjoyed my placement, and feel I have gained insight to the service users prospective of the services they receive, and the people who deliver them. I did observe how the service user can be oppressed by an organisation and their family”**

**“I enjoyed my placement and feel I have gained a valuable and thorough learning opportunity”**

**“Everyone at GAP were very supportive. I have been provided with a range of learning opportunities of which will be an asset for my future career.”**

### **PA Support Work.**

As an organisation we support many people who take up Direct payments. I help with this support at the moment with four of these people. My role is to help them recruit and interview PA's then assist them with the management through out the PA's employment. This includes home visits, staff reviews and disciplinary meetings.

I also helped one particular man understand his needs around his employment, A manual wheelchair user, he had recently undergone surgery and was going to give up his job as he was physically exhausted by the tasks at work and also embarrassed about continually asking his colleagues to assist him. I introduced him to the social model of disability, and encouraged him to request from Access to Work some support ie: a personal assistant. I then went on negotiate with his management and Access to Work on the need for PA support. They agreed, it has been very successful and the full time employment of this disabled man has been saved.

These comments were sent to GAP regarding the support we give to a disabled woman who has taken the option of direct payments:

**“ My daughter was delighted to find that Julie from GAP visited her at her home and, most importantly, listened without comment. Julie treat my daughter with respect and understanding and was able to give practical information on the support GAP could offer. Julie's experience in recognising my daughters frustrations had been exacerbated in the past, by people keen to give their interpretations of her needs without consulting her, meant my daughter trusted Julie and was keen to work with her.**

**Julie supported my daughter through the transition from a care company who did not fully acknowledge my daughters needs to a more supportive company and finally to a full team of P.A.s who all seem to be happy to work with her. They take her to college, shopping and to social activities, but also encourage her to go out for fresh air and a change of scenery.**

**My husband and I have some medical problems and some due to age and I know this worried my daughter. We now have peace of mind knowing that my daughter has excellent on-going support and her dreams of independence, making her own decisions about where to live and what to do with her life are coming to fruition. She is more relaxed and keen to welcome us for holidays”**

## Quality Systems

GAP has attained the SAFEadult Adult Safeguarding Award it is valid till May 2012 [www.safeadult.co.uk/SAFE/verify](http://www.safeadult.co.uk/SAFE/verify)

## Conclusion

The evidence presented in this report proves that the Volunteer Project has successfully fulfilled all of its aims and objectives and expected outcomes presented in its original funding bid to Volunteer England and now funded by Lloyds TSB. The funding for the last year has helped us consolidate our volunteer project once again however we are seeking funds for continuation which is obviously more difficult in the current economic and political climate.

Although Volunteering is a goal of Big Society the funding sources appear to have been shifted towards encouraging Volunteering whereas we have never had trouble attracting volunteers but as demonstrated throughout this report there is a cost to good quality supported volunteering where the volunteer is valued for the work they carry out demonstrated by progression routes. Having been able to keep our volunteer coordinator in post has enabled us to tap into capacity building funds and we are at present receiving some support around business management and tendering opportunities. We have been able to develop a new business plan to carry our work forward in a changing economic, political and cultural society.

Despite only funding a part time post there can be little doubt that the funding from LloydsTSB Foundation has helped to sustain our very successful Volunteer Project. However this has meant we have been limited in our recruitment. In the past we would take on any disabled person who showed an interest in volunteering with us, regardless of their ability. But due to the necessary restructure of GAP including redundancies and lack of resources we have had to be – and have been expected to be “more business like” – with subsequent tendering processes to sustain our social investment. This means we have interviewed for particular volunteer positions rather than having an open house policy which totally supported the disabled person to be able to ‘join in’. Only people who had the potential skills and in effect therefore would not need long term on going support were invited to volunteer. We hope that this is only a temporary measure and that in the future we can find resources to be able to once again accommodate those disabled people who have more complex

ongoing support needs especially through role shaping. This is especially important for people with learning difficulties in Gateshead as the Council are currently consulting on the re-provision of day services/day centres. see <http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/Council%20and%20Democracy/news/News%20Articles/HaveYourSayAboutDisabilityDayServices.aspx> This may mean that those people affected by change including those with learning disabilities and others with complex needs may be expected to be involved in their communities and from experience we know that voluntary organisations are a natural magnet for this.. This means that those with learning disabilities many with low level and moderate needs plus those with severe impairments will be expected to be involved in their communities and organisations like GAP are a natural magnet for this. There is a big question around whether disabled people will use Direct Payments to pay to participate in their Voluntary Sector Communities but the tendering processes are actually restricting facilities.

Future Job Funding (FJF) GAP saw this as an opportunity to support more young disabled people. However, few disabled young people applied for positions (we did query this but did not receive any concrete reasons why not). Working with the young people however proved to be similar to providing support for disabled people and a few of the young people we found to have hidden disabilities which they had not been recognised and which they were wary of voicing. We were able to use our disability related knowledge to assist the young people in a similar way to our disabled volunteers. As shown above three of the people participating in the FJF went on to volunteer with us and four people gained employment.

We feel we have demonstrated our investment in the disabled community of Gateshead and consequently and purposefully in Carers. We are concerned that because of current economic and political environments; without further funding to sustain what GAP has fulfilled over the last 14 years disabled people and carers will pay the cost of lower levels of well-being and will back slide into an unvoiced, inactive community through disempowerment. These circumstances of course affect the most deprived communities of disabled people.

### **Next step:**

- Work to start with updating peer accredited PQASSO. Each member of staff will contribute to this and also the Board of Trustees will carry out to be involved in the Governance section. This work will then feed in to applying

for the update on Investing in Volunteers, Investing in People and also Matrix standards. This is also to assist in winning tenders.

- Monies need to be raised to accredit these standards (£10,000) in all.
- All staff appraisals are to be carried out in the next fortnight, also update risk assessments and CRB's.

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