

# Welcome to our annual report

Welcome to the 2017/18 annual report of DIAL Solihull. In this report you will find information on the charity and what we do for our clients. I wish to extend my gratitude to all the members of staff who continue to work so hard to support our clients. The dedication and knowledge that they show is outstanding. In addition, I would like to thank our volunteers. The small but very committed team ensure that our service can run efficiently and effectively. Our service would struggle to deliver the outcomes it does without their very valued support.

**Alvin Follows** Chair



## About DIAL Solihull

DIAL Solihull provides information, advice and advocacy for disabled adults, children and their carers. Our services are free, impartial and confidential and can be accessed by adults and families who live in Solihull.

Since 1987 we have worked for disabled people to have more choice and control, feel more connected with their local community and be less isolated.

**Advice and information** - We provide all kinds of support and assistance on every-day practicalities to more complex issues. We advise on benefits, blue badges, disabled parking spaces, disabled facilities grants, local support groups, wills and trusts for disabled people, concessionary travel passes, aids and adaptations, social care assessments, short term equipment loan, and grants and trusts for disabled people.

**Advocacy** - We help people to get their voice heard, supporting them to understand and be involved in assessments, planning and decisions about their future needs and care packages.

**Aspirations** - We also advise people with disabilities and long-term conditions on finding and retaining paid employment and self-employment. For those people who are not 'work ready' we can support them to take steps towards employment through volunteering, education or training. We also work with employers to help them consider reasonable adjustments for employees who need extra support.

We are proud to support over 2,000 people each year to live more independent and active lives.

## Our services

- Disability-related benefits advice for adults and children, and a form filling service
- Support to access social care
- Care Act advocacy and representation
- Local welfare provision
- Employment, education and training support
- Wheelchair and equipment loan
- Advance Credit Union local access point

# Our year at a glance



## We continue to deliver commissioned services to disabled people and their families in Solihull and achieve outstanding outcomes in many areas.

One such example is our welfare benefits service, which has seen the majority of clients moving from Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independence Payments, finding they are better off financially.

We are particularly skilled at ensuring our clients receive their benefits without having to go through an assessment if at all possible. In addition we have supported many clients to successfully challenge for back-pay this year – the largest amount awarded was £20,000 to one vulnerable client. The roll out of Universal Credit in the borough has put enormous strain on the delivery of our service. For many of our clients, the process is simply not accessible.

Our Facebook reviews are all five star and our customer satisfaction survey findings reflect the support that we give. Clients report that our new website makes it easier for them to contact our service when it is convenient for them.

We work closely with Solihull Council's Appointee Team supporting some of the most vulnerable members of our community to access the correct level of benefits.

Our children's adviser continued to be extremely busy, however, this is an area that we have to work harder to achieve outcomes.

I am delighted to report that our tribunal success is over 90%. We consistently offer a 'right first time' approach, rarely having to attend tribunal for our own clients.

As reported last year, we have had significant cuts in funding which has resulted in a reduction in our drop-in opening hours. We expect further reductions in funding during the next financial year also.

The future of Kingshurst Parade remains in doubt and the proposed redevelopment appears to have lost momentum. We face a particularly challenging future, however I am confident that our organisation will continue to deliver an exceptional service to disabled people in Solihull.

Many thanks to Angela Williams who joined us on a temporary basis to support with an increase in caseload. Also, goodbye to Linda Nasreisfahany who left us following several years as a benefits adviser. Thanks also to Samar Mohammed who volunteered regularly until she moved away from the area.

My sincerest thanks go to our volunteers, staff and board of trustees for the hard work they have all over the last challenging year. I look forward to working with you all in the coming year.

**Alice Singleton** Chief Executive Officer

## New website: a year on

Last year DIAL Solihull launched a new website to make it easier for clients and referral partners to understand what we offer and how to access our services. On average we receive **140 unique visitors per month** and around 80% of those are first-time users of the site. The most popular pages are Benefits Advice; Find us; and Disability Information & Advice.

[www.dialsolihull.org.uk](http://www.dialsolihull.org.uk)

## Another successful year for DIAL's welfare benefit service



**450**  
450 clients were supported with benefits forms



**£3.95m**  
Successful benefits claims total £76,000 per week – that's £3.95m this year



**£250k**  
Benefits back-pay of £250,000 confirmed

These figures are confirmed with the clients themselves; unfortunately some clients don't inform us of the outcome for various reasons so totals are more than likely much higher.

## Volunteer profile



Jackie O'Kelly, Children's Benefits Specialist (left) with Nikki Dodwell, DIAL Volunteer (right)

“ I have worked as a volunteer for DIAL for the past two years whilst taking a career break to care for my disabled son. Being able to volunteer has allowed me to enhance my skills as well as maintain my confidence in readiness to go back into paid employment. I feel privileged to work with such amazing people who show genuine care for their clients and always go above and beyond in all that they do. ”

**Nikki Dodwell** Volunteer

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“ To all the staff at DIAL I would like to thank you all for all your help. You are all so kind and helpful. ”

“ Thanks to all the staff for your invaluable advice and support. ”

“ A big massive thank you to all the wonderful staff at DIAL. Thank you for helping us all at a difficult time in our lives. ”

“ I don't know what we would have done without your support. Thank you so much. ”

“ Just thought you all should know what an amazing team you are. Even with the work load you have on you always still found the time to help me out. I couldn't have done any of this without you. I really do appreciate everything you have done for my family. ”

“ A big massive thank you to all you wonderful staff at DIAL. Thank you for helping us at a difficult time in our lives. ”

“ I would like to thank you all for your help. You are all so kind and helpful. ”

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## Customer satisfaction survey 2018

**100%** of clients who completed our annual customer satisfaction survey\* rated the overall quality of our services as 'Excellent' ... testament to the hard work, knowledge and experience of our staff and volunteers at DIAL Solihull.

\* 40 surveys completed in total

We actively encourage and welcome customer feedback. Clients can share their views on our service, anonymously if they wish, via our website at: [www.dialsolihull.org.uk/customer-feedback](http://www.dialsolihull.org.uk/customer-feedback)



## Success stories

### £20,000 back payment secured

A client who was supported with a benefit application was identified as not being in receipt of a severe disability premium due to them living alone. The client received £20,000 in back pay and an additional £64.30 per week in benefits.

After being supported with a benefit appeal our advisor realised that the client had been receiving an incorrect benefit for several years resulting in a payment to him of £18,000.

### Urgent support for basic needs

A client was referred to our service for support with a benefit application. We identified that the client was struggling financially.

One of our colleagues delivered a food parcel to the client within hours of us receiving the referral and she also made a successful grant application that has enabled the client to purchase a carpet. Another colleague from a partner organisation was able to provide a mattress as the client had been sleeping on the floor.

### Help for parent with disabled child

Our children's adviser supported a parent with a disability living allowance claim for her young son.

The claim was successful which has meant that the parent has been able to claim Carers Allowance and additional Child Tax Credit. She is now planning to take a leave of absence from a stressful job to devote her more time to her son.

# Financial report

DIAL Solihull continued to receive the majority of its funding from Solihull Council in 2017/18. Management controlled the financial affairs of the charity very carefully, balancing the books with a very small surplus for the year of £2.6k whilst continuing to deliver an excellent service to its clients. Compared to the previous year, income fell by 4% whilst costs were reduced by 14%. DIAL Solihull had a closing balance of £151k. The charity is thus in a financially stable position to continue its activities in 2018/19.

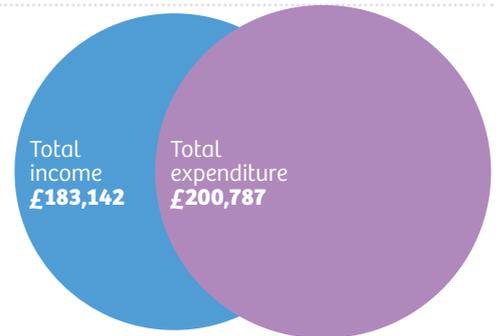
**Paul Wilkinson** Treasurer

## Summary of income and expenditure

Year ending 31 March 2018



Year ending 31 March 2017



Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2018 were independently examined by West Business Consultants who on the 12 December 2018 reported that the accounts present a 'true and fair view' with no matters identified.

We have a positive working relationship with our local authority, Solihull Council, who commission us to deliver several advice and advocacy services for Solihull residents.

We also raise funds through applications to grant making trusts and other bodies so that we can provide a service that is free at the point of access for our service users.

## Trustees 2016-17

Alvin Follows (Chair), Paul Wilkinson (Treasurer), Beverley Follows, Susan Munbodh

## Thank you

Our work would not be possible without the help and support of so many people and organisations.

We would like to thank our funders and partners at Solihull Council, Age UK Solihull, the Community Enterprise for Success Programme, Development in Social Enterprise CIC, Dynamic Marketing & The WED Trust.

Thanks to our dedicated staff team, board members and also to our volunteers.