



Passionate
about
possibilities.

Annual Report 2024



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A Message From Our Chief Executive Officer

As I reflect on this past year, I am immensely proud of DIAL's achievements and the profound impact we've made together. In 2024, we have grown, innovated, and supported disabled people, their families, and carers in overcoming challenges, building confidence, and fostering inclusivity.

We secured over £7.3 million in unclaimed benefits for 9,202 residents, while projects like Warm Connections and Foodbank Advice Sessions provided vital lifelines. Innovative initiatives such as the Pension Credit Take-Up Campaign addressed fuel poverty for local older people, and we began developing a mobile app to simplify benefit applications, aiming for national impact.

The success of our work is a testament to the dedication of our staff, the tireless efforts of our incredible volunteers, and the unwavering commitment of our partners and funders. Together, we have not only met immediate needs but also empowered individuals to take steps toward brighter futures. Stories like Xena's journey from receiving support to becoming a Trustee, or Jane's newfound connections through Stronger Together, remind us why we do what we do.

Looking forward, our mission remains clear. We will continue to champion inclusivity, tackle poverty, and reduce social isolation. We will expand our reach, foster deeper collaboration, and ensure that the voices of disabled people are at the heart of everything we do.



Sharon Brown



Thank you for walking this journey with us. Your support fuels our vision of a truly inclusive community, and I am excited about what we can achieve together in the years ahead.



A Message From Our Chair of Trustees

I'm proud to welcome you to our Annual Report for 2024. DIAL continues to look for new ways to support disabled people, their carers and families. We're particularly proud to have retained the Advice Quality Standard, reflecting the confidence of funders like Barnsley Council and the Trussell Trust.

Barnsley people continue to face challenges in the current economic climate and I'm pleased to see that DIAL is there for them. The partnership with Barnsley Council to make sure that as many people as possible receive pension credit, in light of changes to eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments, is a good example. DIAL's work to reduce social isolation is also important in this context, as people know they're not alone in facing these challenges.

DIAL would be nothing without its staff and volunteers, and their skills, diligence and commitment to providing advice and support. Our volunteer numbers remain strong, and it's a credit to our staff that DIAL provides such a supportive environment where volunteers can gain confidence and develop new skills. As many use DIAL services themselves, volunteers also provide an important insight about how we should develop our services.

The trustees continue to work well together, bringing their experience to provide new ideas. I should particularly mention Glen Haigh, who stepped down as a trustee at the end of 2024; we will miss his contributions at our meetings, but I hope he will carry on as a DIAL volunteer.



Ian Turner







Thanks to all the volunteers, staff and trustees that make DIAL the great organisation that it is. DIAL's achievements belong to all of you!



About DIAL

Our Aims

-  To improve access to information, advice and guidance so disabled people, their families and carers have increased understanding and are better informed to make choices
-  To increase access to opportunities for disabled people, their families and carers to achieve their potential
-  To reduce social isolation of disabled people, their families and carers
-  To increase the opportunities for disabled people, their families and carers to have a healthy lifestyle

Our Mission

To support and empower disabled people, their families and carers to address poverty and social exclusion and improve their health and wellbeing.

Our Vision

A community that is truly inclusive.



Our 2024 Achievements

- ✓ Our Advice Team were re-awarded the Advice Quality Standard for delivering excellence in advice.
- ✓ We continued to receive funding to deliver our outreach services from: Penistone Area Council, Dearne Area Council, Central Area Council, North Area Council, North East Ward Alliance, Cudworth Ward Alliance and Royston Ward Alliance.
- ✓ We successfully secured new funding from Monk Bretton Ward Alliance to deliver outreach services to their residents.
- ✓ We secured a further two years of funding from the Trussell Trust to continue delivering welfare advice sessions in foodbanks across Barnsley, as well as additional funding to offer over the phone advice to Doncaster foodbank clients.
- ✓ Our Small Measures project continued, providing £8,403 worth of energy saving items, including 138 free duvets as part of our Sleep Warm, Sleep Well initiative, to 248 clients. This is an average of £34 per person.
- ✓ We supported 9,202 residents with advice and generated over £7.3 million in previously unclaimed benefits.



Thank you for all your help in making our lives less stressful and free from worry. We could not have done it without you. You do a wonderful service to the community. We do appreciate you. Thank you and we won't forget you.



I was worried about my energy debt... with the help of DIAL's Warm Connections, I am now paying a regular affordable amount which includes something towards my debt. This is a big relief to me. It was affecting my health.





Central Outreach Case Study



Before DIAL

Mr and Mrs S, a couple in their late 70s, were struggling financially. Their state pensions slightly exceeded the Pension Credit (PC) threshold, leaving them worried about coping with the rising cost of living. With minimal savings and their income stretched by full rent and council tax payments, making ends meet was becoming increasingly difficult.

Advice Provided by DIAL

During a benefit check, one of our Peer Advisors identified that both Mr and Mrs S were eligible for Attendance Allowance (AA). They attended an appointment at our Central Area outreach, where we helped them complete their applications. Both claims were successful. With their increased income, we reassessed their entitlement to Pension Credit and supported their successful application. We also helped them apply for Carer's Allowance (CA), qualifying them for the Pension Credit Carer Premium, and guided them through applications for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support.

After DIAL

Mr and Mrs S were awarded £217.10 per week in Attendance Allowance and £163 per week in Pension Credit, along with the Carer Premium. Their housing costs and council tax are now fully covered. This financial support has given them peace of mind, allowing them to comfortably afford essentials like food and heating. The assistance from DIAL has not only eased their financial strain but also greatly improved their mental well-being during a difficult time.



Throughout the whole process, we were put at ease. Everything was explained to us, and the information was clear and concise. We will not hesitate to recommend DIAL's services to others.



Our 2024 Achievements

- ✓ This year, 53 Volunteers helped deliver our services. They helped on our Advice Line, supported our Advisors at outreach and foodbanks, and volunteered at events and our social inclusion groups.
- ✓ Our Apprentices, Kathy and Joe successfully completed their Apprenticeships and joined the DIAL team as Welfare Advice Support Workers.
- ✓ Our Volunteers contributed 4,876 hours to DIAL.
- ✓ The value of Volunteer work is estimated at £66,801.
- ✓ A long-standing volunteer, Zoe Metcalfe, joined the Board of Trustees - we are thrilled to have her on the team!

“

DIAL opened a door that I thought never existed on my journey. Thank you for believing in me, you always had confidence in me and always encouraged me. Without gaining the experience at DIAL, I would not have been able to get the jobs I'm working on now.

”





Volunteering Case Study



Before DIAL

Xena was an unpaid carer for her mum while managing her own physical disabilities. She first contacted DIAL for help with her Personal Independence Payment (PIP) form and was very grateful for the support. After her mum's passing, Xena struggled with depression and, during a Covid-19 lockdown, enquired about volunteering. Once volunteering safely resumed, she joined DIAL in February 2022.

Advice Provided by DIAL

Xena supported our First Contact role on the telephone Advice Line and at external events. She engaged in training and regular one-to-ones with our Volunteer Training and Support Officer. Being part of a team has given Xena a renewed sense of purpose. The flexibility of her role has allowed her to balance volunteering with personal challenges and caring responsibilities.

After DIAL

Volunteering has greatly improved Xena's well-being, confidence, and social connections. She has contributed an incredible 608 volunteer hours and now serves on our Board of Trustees, reflecting her dedication and growth within DIAL.



My decision to volunteer at DIAL was driven by my desire to repay the support I received from them. My journey at DIAL has had a huge impact on my personal growth and mental health. My role supporting First Contact has given me insight into how an office works, and I have learned several new skills that are helpful both in and out of the office. I have made friendships with colleagues which makes the working environment much more enjoyable and supportive. My progression is a testament to the support I receive and my dedication and commitment to DIAL's ethos. It's a joy and privilege to volunteer at DIAL.



Our 2024 Achievements

- ✓ We had 82 people attend various Connect Together weekly groups or events. We held 90 Connect Together events and groups in total, including regular Bingo and social groups, gift swap and book swap events, and a trip to Bridlington! We held giveaway events, where attendees received free 'Grow Your Own Veg' kits, summer essentials packs, space heaters and winter warm packs.
- ✓ We had 62 people attend Together at the Table 65 sessions, enjoying a home-cooked lunch or breakfast and activities.
- ✓ We had 26 regular attendees to our Stronger Together Hub and Carer's Group. 84 Stronger Together sessions and events, including the Stronger Together Carer's Group which launched in June; attendees enjoyed crafting, painting, quizzes, creative writing, mindfulness, 'meet an advisor' and a trip to the Maurice Dobson Museum & Heritage Centre.
- ✓ We had 11 regular attendees to our Time Together timebank project, swapping and sharing skills. We held 31 Time Together groups held from June to December, including a regular Women's Group.



Our little ladies group is one of my favourite ways to spend time together with friends. We enjoy a good laugh talking about everyday life and seeing if we can help one another out. We also love playing games. Aimi is good fun and is also very helpful to us; she lets us know where we can go to get help if needed. I love our Tuesdays together.





Stronger Together Case Study



Before DIAL

Jane lives in Barnsley without close family nearby, as her relatives are based in the northeast. Although involved in other local groups, she wanted to expand her social circle and strengthen her support network.

Advice Provided by DIAL

Jane discovered DIAL's borough-wide Stronger Together group through a friend and decided to join. Over the past three months, she has become a regular attendee. As a wheelchair user relying on public transport, Jane's consistent participation shows her determination to stay connected. She enjoys sharing her craft skills during sessions at The Hub, contributing to the group's inclusive and creative atmosphere.

After DIAL

Since joining Stronger Together, Jane has formed meaningful friendships and regularly meets up with group members outside of sessions. She feels more connected to her community and takes pride in helping create a welcoming, vibrant space where everyone feels included.




Spotlight

Foodbank Advice Sessions

In partnership with Barnsley Foodbank Partnership and the Trussell Trust, we provide crucial face-to-face welfare advice and energy advice at 7 foodbanks across Barnsley.

We supported 301 people in total with information and advice about a variety of issues including Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Carers Allowance, Pension Credit, Blue Badges, as well as offering benefit checks.

 **91% of clients said that their health and wellbeing had improved since using the service***

 **100% of clients said they are happy with the advice they received and they would use our service again***

“

When I spoke to the person for a food parcel I never thought I would be helped so much. My wife had Attendance Allowance but I thought I couldn't get it as I care for her. Now we get Pension Credit as well, and I don't pay any rent or council tax". People just don't know what they're entitled to do they, and there is support to get it sorted out. Thank you so much.

”

**We earned clients
£158,975 in previously
unclaimed benefit amount**

*Based on our Foodbank Evaluation Form which was sent out to clients who saw one of our advisors at a foodbank between 1st April 2024 and 31st August 2024.

Spotlight

Pension Credit Take-Up Campaign

The government's decision in the Autumn Budget to restrict Winter Fuel Payments to those receiving Pension Credit will significantly impact many older people in Barnsley.

In response, we have partnered with Barnsley Council to provide free, expert support for pension-age residents applying for Pension Credit. Thanks to additional funding from the National Lottery, we will also launch Pension Credit Roadshows across Barnsley in 2025 to further expand this support.

This partnership with the Council began in October, led by our experienced advisor, Nigel Brown. So far, Nigel has helped over 70 people successfully access Pension Credit.

Since October 2024, we have earned clients £109,991 in previously unclaimed Pension Credit benefit amount.

Spotlight Innovation at DIAL

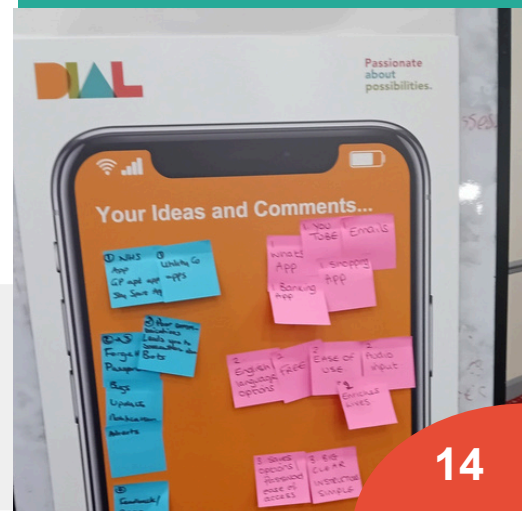
In last year's Annual Report, we shared that we had secured £9,000 in funding from the University of Sheffield's Building Stronger Communities programme to explore the feasibility of developing a mobile app designed to help disabled people and their families complete Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application forms.

We have now completed our focus groups, and our final Feasibility Report is almost complete. Key recommendations from the report include further development of the app prototype, securing funding for a full-scale launch, and maintaining ongoing user involvement throughout the design process. Our findings reveal strong support for the app and highlight its potential to significantly improve how people apply for PIP, both within our service areas and on a national scale.

In 2025, we will begin implementing these recommendations, with progress to be shared in our next Annual Report.



I think it's a great idea and will give more access to help for those finding form filling hard.



Making a Difference *Feedback and Outcomes*

- ✓ 98% Stronger Together members feel more confident and that their health and well-being has improved since attending the hub
- ✓ 96% of Connect Together members feel more connected to their community and less isolated
- ✓ 70% of clients who attended one of our outreaches said their health and well-being has improved



I would not have known where to turn if I had not found you. You have changed my life and I can sleep at night. You are brilliant, so understanding... thank you. I don't know what to say but thank you to you all, you are angels.



The group is a magical place for me. For a couple of hours I can forget my troubles and be with friends, have a chat or do some art. It's my magical place.



Financial Position

We brought forward: **Unrestricted funds of £148,144**
Restricted funds of £78,875
Designated funds of £167,121

Final balance to carry forward on the 30th April 2024: **£394,140**

Total Income for 2023-2024: **£507,339**

Total expenditure for 2023-2024: **£455,547**

Total Reserves: £167,121

(Reserves help to cover future running costs in the event of a lack of funding; including £58,766 as Infrastructure Development Fund).

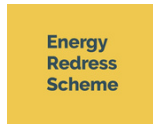
The Board has reserved £78,280 in unrestricted funds to meet 3 months salary and running costs in the event of a winding up of the charity, and a contingency of £25,075 in the event of an emergency event.



*We received £8,717
in public donations!*

Thank You!

To all our 2024 funders...



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