



**Annual Review
2006/2007**

Disability Advice Centre

(Formerly DIAL Shropshire Telford & Wrekin)

has moved to

**Louise House, Roman Road, Meole Brace,
Shrewsbury SY3 9JN**



Disabled people serving disabled people

**Tel No. 0845 602 5561 Fax No. 01743 251521
E-mail. advice@a4u.org.uk**



MISSION STATEMENT

To provide free, confidential and impartial information, advice and support to people with disabilities and/or long term medical conditions their families and carers

VALUES

- **Empowerment of people with disabilities and/or long term medical conditions to maximise choice and control over their lives**
- **Equal opportunities and challenging discrimination**
- **Commitment to the social model of disability**
- **Learning, Training, Volunteer and Employment opportunities for people with disabilities and/or long term medical conditions**
- **High service standards that meet national accreditation**
- **Commitment to service across the urban and rural areas of Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin**
- **Enable disabled people to serve disabled people**

What we offer

We provide free, confidential and impartial information, advice and advocacy on all aspects of disability, to people with disabilities, their families and carers as well as health and social care professionals. Our services include:

- Access to an extensive library of information on all aspects of disability, including local and national support groups.
- Help with form filling
- Advice on benefits and claims
- Advice on community care issues
- Advice on appealing against Blue Badge decisions
- Signposting clients to local and national agencies for specific help
- Placements for Social Workers from Keele and Wolverhampton University

How we can act on your behalf

- Challenging Department of Work & Pensions, HM Customs & Revenue, Care in the Community decisions and representing clients at tribunals
- Challenging Blue Badge decisions with Shropshire County Council

Our service is for

- People with disabilities and their families and carers as well as health and social care professionals seeking information on any aspect of disability
- We also accept referrals from health and social services and other voluntary agencies
- We have offices in Shrewsbury and Telford for personal visits and our advice line is open from 9.30 to 3.00pm and by answer phone for out of office hours. We may also be contacted by text phone for those with hearing impairment and email. Advice sessions are available Monday to Friday by appointment but may not be available on a drop-in basis due to staff availability.
- Home visits are available for people unable to leave their homes

What you can expect from us

- We support the Social Model of disability
- Confidentiality
- Empowerment of disabled people to maximise choice and control over their lives
- Equal opportunities and challenging discrimination
- High service standards that meet national accreditation ie the Community Legal Services Specialist Quality Mark
- Commitment to service across the urban and rural areas of Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin
- Providing training, volunteering and employment opportunities for disabled people
- Commitment to disabled people serving disabled people
- Premises that are user friendly to people with disabilities

What we can expect from you

- Please let us know if you cannot attend an appointment, so that it can be offered to another person.
- Advisers will see clients with an accompanying small child but no separate provision is available.

How you can help us improve our service

In order to improve the service we have a client feedback system, where we ask for your comments. The results are regularly evaluated and improvements made accordingly. Any complaints or difficulties you might have may be dealt with by speaking to a member of staff or in writing and addressed to the Chief Executive Officer.

Summary of the year

Since the AGM in November 2006, we have had great difficulties in securing funding to continue delivering our services to disabled people in Shropshire, and it is clear that we need to adapt to survive. Moreover we have for some time been extending our provision of 'Advice' into 'Advice and Advocacy'.

We have acknowledged that there is a need for us to join with similar like-minded, local organisations to extend our service delivery and financial viability by:

- Providing more and better services to disabled people
- Increasing efficiency through better use of resources
- Preventing duplication of services
- Raising our public profile

Positive negotiations with Shropshire County Council regarding our future continue, and a new 5-year agreement will include the Council providing us with facilities at Louise House from September 2007.

Louise House is an Community Services Centre based at Roman Road, Meole Brace, Shrewsbury that provides services for people who require support to continue living independently at home. This is an excellent opportunity for us to form alliances with other similar organisations to improve our service delivery and financial viability.

The growing transformation of equality and diversity indicate that disability is now part of a wider national agenda. We need to change our image to survive and to ensure that disability continues to command attention under this new banner.

Trustees

51% of the Trust Board either has a disability or personal experience of disability but the composition is based on a skills audit to ensure the Board maintains appropriate and effective levels of expertise to manage and develop the organisation in line with the aims of the Business Plan.

Trustees are encouraged to attend training and take an active role in the organisation wherever possible. Training on the National Occupational Standards for Trustees and Management Committee commissioned by the UK Workforce Hub was also undertaken.

Volunteers

We are indebted to the commitment of our volunteers, who totalled 45 throughout the year, and first and second year Social Work students across Shropshire Telford & Wrekin who delivered the following:

- 1932 Helpline enquiries
- 281 disability benefit form fills
- Financial and administration tasks
- Volunteer taxi drivers
- Shrewsbury Dial-a-Ride for transporting volunteers and clients unable to access conventional transport



Staff

A4U volunteers are supported by a team of 11 paid, part time staff who provide a financial and management infrastructure and a comprehensive welfare rights service, including coordinating county wide welfare benefits take up campaigns on behalf of county borough and district councils, department of work and pensions and voluntary act community sector. During the year the following was achieved:

- 806 clients assisted with specialist in legal welfare rights cases
- 106% of target hours under the Community Legal Services contract
- £130,000 raised in backdated lump sum welfare benefit awards
- £1,153,000 raised in weekly benefit awards over 2 years
- 49 Community Care cases
- 66 children and families cases
- 8 Blue Badge appeals



Future Plans

Trustees and senior Management have identified the following areas for future development:

- Risk Register
- Reserves Policy
- Partnership, collaborative and/or mergers
- Maintain negotiations with Local Authorities regarding future funding
- Identify potential external funding to meet planned service aims
- Development of generic advocacy service in line with national directives
- Recommendations from the Improving Life Chances Report
- Maintaining and improving IT infrastructure

Funding

A4U is a registered charity and Company Limited by Guarantee that relies solely on donations from various sources, including local authority service level agreements, Community Legal Services and funding from the big lottery for a joint project with Telford and Wrekin Citizens Advice Bureau the Community Fund. Income is never enough to cover the escalating costs of delivering a quality mark service and monies were received from the following:

Donations

Community fund grants

Community Legal Service

Shaw Trust

Donated assets

Local authority grants

DIAL UK Helpline

Other income

Capital grants

Training grants

Mid Counties Coop

Bank interest

BANKERS

CAF Bank Ltd, PO Box 289, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4TA

ACCOUNTANTS

Whittingham Riddell, Chartered Accountants, Belmont House, Shrewsbury Business Park,
Shrewsbury SY2 6 LC

Full audited accounts are available from DIAL on request.

SOLICITORS

Clarks Solicitors, Hazledine House, Telford Centre, Telford TF3 4JL

A4U is a company limited by Guarantee
Registered in England & Wales – No 4381722
Charity Registration No 1092083



The information in this leaflet can be made available in other formats such as large print and audio tape or in community languages.

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