Lowestoft & Waveney
(Disablement Information Advice Line)
161 Rotterdam Road
Lowestoft
Suffolk
NR32 2EZ
Telephone: 01502 511333

Annual Report & Accounts
1st April 2013 - 31st March 2014

D.I.A.L. LOWESTOFT & WAVENGY affiliated to D.I.A.L. UK and SCOPE
Registered Charity No: 296844
Who’s who at D.I.A.L. Lowestoft & Waveney
2013-2014

Management Committee:

Chair: Margaret Oldham MBE
Vice-Chair: Jill Brough
Treasurer: Neil Payne
Secretary: Gwen Parsons
Other Trustees: Julie Lambert
Jerry de Mierre
Allen Pettitt
David Smith
Sam Tiffen
Dr. Gordon Walker
Richard Ambrose (User Rep)
Philip Jarvis (Volunteer Rep)
Cllr. Frank Mortimer (WDC Rep)

Staff:

Manager: Julie Fulbrook
Snr. Disability Advisor: Denise Brentnall
Disability Advisor: Gemma Atkins
Steve Smetham
Outreach Dis. Advisor: Chris Zielinski

Volunteers:

Corinne Anderson, Paul Everton, Philip Jarvis, Rebecca Summer and
Margaret Oldham MBE.
Welcome to D.I.A.L. Lowestoft & Waveney’s

Our aim is to offer a free, impartial and confidential information, advice, advocacy and representation service to all disabled people, their carers, and professionals working with them.

We aim to help disabled people overcome day-to-day problems they encounter.

We are committed to working in partnership with other organisations to enhance the provision of advice services throughout the county of Suffolk and to maintain the standard of information given.

We will continue to strive to secure vital funding to maintain D.I.A.L.’s staffing and volunteer numbers.
Another year has flown by and it is A.G.M. time again. They say that time goes quicker the older you get, and they are certainly not wrong! I seem to have been so busy this year that I have hardly had time for myself. This has caused me to make a decision about which I have thought long and hard, but I announced recently to my Management Committee that I can no longer cope with doing the fund-raising for D.I.A.L. I have done this for the last twenty years, but the weight and responsibility of having five staff members to fund as well as the on-going expense of running the service has just become too much for me. I have said many times that a service like ours should be properly funded, but each year we have to struggle to make ends meet, and the cut-backs and efficiency savings upon which the government and the Councils are insisting are making this even more difficult.

I thank each one of the staff for the continued hard work which they do for D.I.A.L. and which resulted in an excellent report from Suffolk County Council in their recent audit. This not only looked at the policies and procedures which are the backbone of running the service but also to the quality of their advice and casework, which the Management Committee and I know is exemplary. We were asked to share our good practices with other advice services in Suffolk and have offered this assistance to the other three services, with whom we still meet on a regular basis through the Suffolk Disability Advice Services County Management Committee, for which I also act as Chairman.

We have also been very pleased this year to improve our partnership working both with the Citizens Advice Bureau and with Access Community Trust in coming together with the W.A.S.P. project (Waveney Advice Services Partnership). This has enabled us to employ a new member of staff, Chris Zielinski, who has turned out to be an excellent addition to the team. He undertakes the Outreach work in the more rural areas of Waveney, in G.P. surgeries in Halesworth, Bungay and Kessingland, sharing the C.A.B. offices in Beccles and doing many home visits, for people who are too ill or disabled to easily get to the Lowestoft office. We have always been very aware that our title is Lowestoft and Waveney D.I.A.L., and there have been times when we have felt we have neglected the Waveney aspect, but at the moment, thanks to a Lottery grant, this is being addressed.
We again thank all the people who have helped the organisation during the last twelve months, from the volunteers to the Management Committee. I do thank the Management Committee for all their support, many of whom have worked away at their contribution for many years. I also thank all our current funders who will have mention in the Accounts, but particularly Suffolk County Council and Waveney District Council with whom we have Service Level Agreements. We continue to liaise with them and attend meetings both at the Waveney and Suffolk levels just as often as we can.

I think I said last year that we face difficult times ahead, and this year is no exception. All the changes to the social care policies, the health services and the benefits system do not make the disability adviser’s job any easier and the lives of people with disabilities are often flung into turmoil. I invite anyone to come and spend a week in the D.I.A.L. office to see just how difficult and diverse is the work with which the D.I.A.L. staff have to cope. Added to that are the problems with funding the service, which is where I began. Our costs, together with uncertainties for the future should not have to impact upon the work, but we know that they do. We know that our service is of vital importance to the people of Lowestoft and Waveney, as without it people with mental health problems, people with learning disabilities, people with long-term health problems and physical disabilities, of all ages, as well as their carers and families, would have nowhere to go for help. I hope that is never the situation, and that we will always be here for those who desperately need us.
This year DIAL has helped to generate

£2,567,910

in benefits for disabled people in
the Lowestoft & Waveney area.

DIAL is in a time of change and we see next year as a challenge.
We are seeing huge delays in benefit decisions of many months and will see our financial acquisitions plummet for 2014/15.
Yet again, it has been another successful but increasingly busy year for the staff and volunteers of DIAL. Year upon year we are witness to the ever increasing demand for our service by disabled people and their carers and we have yet again seen enquiries rise by approx 14% this year. We continue to build upon our relationships with other organisations and regularly receive referrals from Job Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau, local housing associations, health care professionals and our MP, Peter Aldous’s office to name only a few. We have seen a steady rise in the amount of work involved with Personal Independence Payments (PIP) from new claims to the steady migration of claimants from Disability Living Allowance (DLA). The lengthy time scale involved for decisions to be made for both new and existing claims are causing a huge amount of stress and anxiety for those affected. With this in mind we anticipate the demand for our service to steadily increase as the awards for PIP are not expected to be as long as those experienced with DLA, with many people receiving regular reviews after only a year or so. Along with this and the expectation that forms must be completed and returned within a four week period continues to put a strain on our already stretched service.

We have also seen this year the introduction of Local Welfare Assistance which has seen DIAL become a gateway organisation for the distribution of Food and Fuel vouchers. People arriving at our office seeking this help need a full assessment of their needs before these vouchers can be issued which can involve a lengthy and involved discussion with an available advisor. We have also seen a steady increase in the requests for Blue Badge applications as most of our clients either do not have access to, or are unable to use a computer for on line applications. Again, we anticipate this need to grow as the Department of Work & Pensions encourages more and more applications to be completed on line. It also appears that word has got around that we have a supply of paper versions!

We were very pleased to welcome Chris Zielinski who joined our small team in August 2013 as our Outreach Disability Advisor working within the local GP practices of Bungay, Halesworth and Kessingland with a further session at the Beccles Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) as well as offering home visits to the housebound, elderly and vulnerable. This post was made possible as a result of our Waveney Advice Services Partnership (WASP) working with Citizens Advice Bureau and Access Community Trust and funding from The Big Lottery Advice Transition Fund. Chris has certainly “hit the ground running” having had many years of experience already working for DIAL Barking and Dagenham and has very quickly got to grips with our Redial database and other office systems as well as the layout of the more rural locations within Suffolk.
As of January 2014 we have begun phase 2 of our electronic filing system. Thanks to Denise’s hard work we have gained a very easy and logical way of closing and archiving files. This is leading to a steady reduction in paper files needing storage and ultimately will give us more room in and around the office. During the year representatives of DIAL have continued to respond to Mental Health consultations, attend multi agency meetings and actively seek out opportunities for new streams of funding. This includes a recent partnership agreement with the MS society supporting those coping with MS.

After some 20+ years of continual fund raising for DIAL, Margaret Oldham has decided to take a step back from this role. Gwen Parsons has offered to take on this task with a little help from both Gemma and myself, who have a lot to learn but are willing to have a try! Like so many other charities DIAL faces another difficult year ahead as our service level agreements are threatened with year on year reductions and funding in general is getting harder to find.

Yet again, we have been the victims of our own success and have had to say goodbye to three more of our volunteers to the world of full time work this year! Corinne, Paul and Rebecca have all secured jobs and we wish them every success for their future. The recruitment of volunteers is getting increasingly difficult due to the changes to the benefit system and agreed permitted work. We are always looking to recruit volunteers and are able to offer a variety of opportunities from admin support, managing our website and Local giving pages, as well as completing benefit forms with clients, to name a few. So, anyone out there who has some free time on their hands please get in touch.
Enquiries

Disabled people continue to be worried about the changes to the Welfare Benefits system and the demand for information and advice has continued to rise. As disabled people begin to receive letters informing them of the changes to their benefits especially the migration from Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to the new Personal Independence Payments (PIP), the calls on the helpline have increased. 7,010 enquiries came through to the telephone helpline compared to 6,296 for the same period last year with the majority of these being about benefits. The huge delays surrounding new PIP claims are also causing disabled people great distress and financial hardship with the majority of decisions taking anywhere up to 9/10 months to be decided upon with no money being received during this period. We are also seeing a steady increase in the number of people being migrated from DLA to PIP and the demand for our service continues to grow. As a team we continue to work hard to meet the demands and time constraints put upon us especially as these forms have time constraints as to when they should be returned.

The following chart shows the trend in the amount of enquiries we have received specifically regarding benefits over the last 5 years.
Appeals

Employment Support Allowance Appeals continue to represent the main bulk of our appeals work significantly outnumbering the DLA appeals. The ESA appeals are divided more or less equally between appeals against being placed in the Work Related Activity Group and appeals against being turned down completely.

We have continued the policy of not attending Employment Support Allowance appeals unless the claimant is particularly vulnerable and has no one else to attend with them. This does not detract at all from the amount of work that I do prior to the hearing and does not seem to have affected the success rate in general. In fact most of our appeals are won before the case even gets to tribunal stage. 98% of our Support Group Appeals were won most at the GL24 stage unless we picked them up at Tribunal Service stage and even then all the cases except one were overturned before having to attend a Tribunal.

From 28 October 2013 there has been a significant change in the regulations as to how challenges to decisions are handled - claimants now have to request a 'mandatory reconsideration' from the DWP/JC+ first and only if this review is unsuccessful will they then appeal the decision directly with the Tribunal Service. The main downside of this new system is that during the mandatory reconsideration stage the claimant cannot be paid ESA as they used to do while they were appealing. They either have to do without benefit or claim Jobseekers Allowance and be subject to all the job seeking requirements and potential sanctions that go with this. This can be very difficult for our clients who have either physical or mental health problems (or both) which limit their ability to seek work. If the decision is not changed at MR stage then they can appeal and the ESA can be put back in payment. Ensuring that claimants have the advice and support to work their way through this now very complicated system is an important responsibility for all advice agencies as well as the JC+ themselves.

Our biggest concern is the drop in the number of enquiries re Mandatory Reconsiderations in the last quarter compared with the number of Appeals which would have been logged in the same time under the old system. We are striving to coordinate with other agencies to gather figures in relation to this.

In the past year we have worked on 170 appeals - 60 ESA ordinary/63 Support group appeals/ 22 DLA and 25 other. Two thirds were formally represented. We have sent questionnaires following case closure with very positive results in terms of feedback. We are continuing to do this as each case is complete (unless it is inappropriate due to the clients severe mental health problems/learning difficulties).

Even though my title continues to be 'Appeals Worker' I now consider myself to be an 'Appeals and Mandatory Reconsideration Worker' as the latter has replaced the GL24 stage appeals which accounted for most of my work as many of our appeals were won at this stage. I will continue to strive to do the representation work at as early a stage as possible to prevent clients having to be put through the anxiety of an appeal tribunal hearing whenever possible.
Miss J has significant learning difficulties alongside visual impairment and other physical difficulties. She was advised by the Jobcentre advisor to seek help from DIAL after she was turned down for Employment Support Allowance on conversion from her old Severe Disablement Allowance. Most of Miss J's functional difficulties resulted from her Learning Difficulties, lack of understanding and communication problems. We were able to see Miss J at our weekly outreach session at Lowestoft Jobcentre.

We originally worked with Miss J, her family and friends to gather information in order that I could write a submission arguing her case. The appeal began in the Summer of 2013 so was under the old system - allowing her to continue receiving benefit while her appeal was pending and much less confusing for her. She would have found the new system totally confusing and very difficult to cope with. I picked up the case at GL24 stage. I sent in a very detailed submission arguing that not only should Miss J have been awarded ESA but that she should have been placed in the Support Group. Within 5 minutes of talking to Miss J and her mother I had identified 70 Work capability Assessment points (she needed to get 15 !), alongside her fulfilling three different criteria for Support Group and feeling that she would have fulfilled both sets of criteria under exceptional rules - ie that to be found capable of work or work related activity would pose a risk to herself or those around her due to behavioural issues and lack of understanding and communication skills. Having written a very detailed submission backed up with evidence of her condition she did win her appeal but was placed in the 'Work Related Activity' group - hence she was now expected to take part in the work programme, attending individual and group sessions to prepare her for a return to work despite her many difficulties due to her condition. Once again we appealed this decision - there was no way this claimant would have coped with work related activity. She would have been totally confused by the system and would not have understood what was expected of her. She would have been at significant risk of sanctions and loss of benefit as a result. Again I sent a submission with a GL24 appeal form. Again the case was considered and the decision was changed and Miss J placed in the Support Group backdated to the date of her original decision.

This claimant would never have been able to appeal either decision without support. She wouldn’t have known her appeal rights or where to go to for help. Thank goodness for the advice and support that such claimants get from the advisors at the Jobcentre in Lowestoft who will direct claimants to the appropriate agencies for help and support. Without this I cannot imagine where this claimant would be today in terms of her benefit income and quality of life. She did not even understand that she had won her appeals and still requires ongoing guidance through the system despite the positive outcome.
### Results of User Survey given to D.I.A.L. clients following an Appeal

#### A. Help you received with your appeal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Made you feel supported.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced anxiety caused by appeal.</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved your mental health in any way.</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made you feel better in yourself.</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped you understand more about the benefits system and appeal's process.</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made you more confident to speak out for yourself and your needs.</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### B. Do you feel that the Appeals worker:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gave you the right amount of support.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaised with you in a way that you were happy with e.g. phone, text, email, face to face.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave you the right amount of information.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kept you informed as to the progress of your appeal.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advised you what to do once the appeal was over</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### C. If your appeal was successful, will the extra income/back pay following your appeal enable you to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eat healthier</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heat your home more effectively</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy special equipment you need because of your disability.</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get around more easily wither by taxi, public transport or in your own car.</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be more independent</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a better social life or more life chances.</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td></td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The help I received was more than I could have asked for. The Appeals worker was brilliant. She gave me help from day one. Took all stress out of it. Winning appeal will allow us to get other equipment I need. Denise and D.I.A.L. are out of this world. The help and back-up for me and my wife was exemplary. She put us at ease, helped with everything. We cannot thank you all so much. You were great. Took out all the stress, which was making me ill.

Denise was brilliant. Couldn’t ask for a better person.

Without the help of D.I.A.L. I wouldn’t have known how to go about my appeal by myself. I found it all very reassuring.

Thank you so much. Was very helpful.

My appeal process was dealt with I would say, utter professionalism and understanding which in turn helped me in my case. I am most very grateful to the Appeal’s worker who dealt with my case.

Very helpful. Very good and I'm thankful.

Very overwhelmed with all the help we had.

A really good service, felt that I got the information I needed for both winning or losing the tribunal. Thank you.

I would not know where to start without D.I.A.L.’s help.

Always at the other end of the phone if at any time I needed more support. Who knows where I would have been if it wasn’t for D.I.A.L. to help me through the worrying times.

Once we had Denise dealing with us we could not have been happier. She was brilliant. Denise was really good and explained everything fully to us. She was always there and kept in contact and advised us all the way along – what we needed to do and say. She really was excellent. We cannot thank D.I.A.L. enough for the support we received. Because of Denise we won our appeal after years of trying without her. It has made such a difference for us. Brilliant service from Lowestoft D.I.A.L.!

I was very impressed with the way Denise dealt with my appeal. I was very indebted to her for the kind service she gave me and I tell everyone about the good service you give to people.

Without D.I.A.L.’s help I could not have attempted the appeal, never mind about winning it. The help was absolutely crucial. Denise was approachable, warm, encouraging and realistic. She has a lovely manner, even whilst explaining the nasty bits. She’s always clear even when I am not. The back pay and increased money is great of course, but the supported process and time of appealing itself (as opposed to outcome)have been in itself the most significant benefit to me- giving me time to heal. I thank D.I.A.L. for that peace. During my breakdown I have come into contact with many services (statutory and voluntary) D.I.A.L. alone has been consistent in always providing very good advice and support. Well done, and thank you.
Disability Advisor
Steve Smetham

As we all know, the benefits system is going through a period of enormous upheaval that is causing a lot of distress to people caught up in it. Dealing with employment benefits as I mainly do, we are seeing a lot of people losing out on contributory benefits that used to be paid as long as they were ill, but may only be paid for 1 year now. We look for other alternatives to replace the benefit, but this is not always possible. A lot of people just give up and drop off the benefit and employment statistics we continually see in the media.

As I have said before, the statistics tell the tale of how busy we are, but each number represents an individual or family, disabled person or carer, each with a unique set of problems and needs. At DIAL, we don’t just deal with the immediate problem but work to ensure all other benefits and support or help are looked at; everything from Social Services to RADAR keys (for ‘disabled toilets’). Then there is the hardship. A lot of people forget that Unions can be a source of benevolent funds or maybe they were in the forces. Even membership of the Home Guard entitles people to help. We will search for charities that may be able to help perhaps with one-off items of equipment. Then there are the Food Bank vouchers and Fuel vouchers we help distribute.

Looking at benefits, I often perform a benefit check to assess them at that time. This can often reveal missing elements in their benefits, such as tax credits, housing or council tax benefits or more technical details, such as premiums that could make them eligible to further help. Every client has the opportunity to return to reassess their position and refine their decisions or update their status as things change.

If we find anything, from support or benefits, missing or not applied for, we will do our best to help them get these. To see the weight lifted from shoulders visibly is one of the most rewarding aspects of the work we do.

Of course, we can’t solve everybody’s problems so we will liaise with statutory organisations such as the DWP, local council, etc. to try to minimise the stress or effect of the problem either now or in the future.

I could give examples of every single one of these situations from our work at DIAL. As I said, these are not just statistics, nor examples, but real people facing these problems every day.
DIAL continues to achieve its aim to help disabled people as this year we have dealt with 7,010 enquiries.

The Census figures of 2011 show a net increase of 2% in the population of Waveney therefore it is likely that the demand for our service will continue to grow.

6.6% of the local population considered themselves to be in bad or very bad health.

1 in 5 households in Waveney are in an area designated as one of the most deprived in England. These areas include Harbour, Kirkley, Normanston, St.Margarets and Whitton in Lowestoft as well as parts of Pakefield and Beccles south.
I am now well into my second year as paid staff here at D.I.A.L and still thoroughly enjoying it! I came into the job just as the new Personal Independence Payments or PIP for short was being phased in and we have seen some differences in the system and how the benefit is assessed and awarded. I have taken on the PIP as my area of expertise and I’m trying to understand their processing and reasoning. It is still early days as far as awards go with only 15 PIP awards from my list of 65 clients who I have helped so far. I have to say no turn downs as yet for me! From the 15 awards I have had, I can start to guess fairly accurately what awards they will give and what points scored.

Starting off the PIP claim process is now down to the claimant by having to ring DWP themselves to apply for PIP, this is called part 1. That phone call will require the claimant to answer several questions about their personal details and in return this starts the claim. DWP will send out the form and the claimant will have 4 weeks from that call to receive the form, complete it and return it. In theory this sounds ok but it has its problems, mainly being DWP can’t get the forms out quick enough leading to the claimant receiving the form 2 days before its return date! Then the claimant has to arrange an appointment with us for help completing the form, again this can be up to 3 weeks away or more.

To see if you qualify for PIP the DWP are now asking a series of questions relating to a claimants personal care and mobility needs. Each question is graded by a set of points ranging from 0 to 12 for each question and depending on a claimants level of care or mobility it will be awarded accordingly. To get the standard rate care or mobility a claimant would need to score at least 8 points and for the enhanced rate 12 or more points.

Once a claimant has completed and sent back the form they will have to attend a face to face consultation with a medical professional at an assessment centre, for us normally being Norwich unless you can’t use the stairs! So far this has taken months to happen and even claimants who applied in June 2013 still haven’t received a date as yet. This is delaying the whole process and worse delaying the payment of PIP money if awarded. Some claimants have no money whilst waiting for a decision.

Once the form has been assessed, medical completed and reported on, a decision will be made by the DWP. The claimant will receive a letter of award if successful stating the result and points scored. This is proving to be very helpful when arguing the decision or even to notice mistakes made (see attached case study). If the claimant hasn’t been awarded a positive decision they can ask for a mandatory reconsideration to have the decision looked at again before having to go to appeal.

Gemma Atkins
CASE STUDY

D.I.A.L’s first Personal Independence Payment was awarded on the 29th October 2013 a mere 20 weeks after the claim was made. The claimant rang to inform me of the Standard Rate Mobility award, which she felt was unfair and didn’t take into account her care needs. The claimant had already spoken to DWP to express her views and they had promised to ring her back within the next 3-4 days to discuss at length. I advised the claimant to bring in the award letter for me to look at and to see if it was worth asking for a mandatory reconsideration.

The next day the claimant came into D.I.A.L and after reading through the thorough award letter I noticed a big mistake. DWP have given at length training and guidance on how they score the points and what each point will be awarded for so I was confused to read the response for each question on the claimant’s care needs. Out of the 10 questions asked 7 of them DWP had stated that the claimant needs an aid or appliance to help with each activity. According to DWP’s rules and guidance this would result in 2 points for each activity, therefore the client should have scored 14 points and not 0 points.

I advised the claimant to ring DWP and to bring this question up with them and ask why they didn’t award her the 14 points for her care which would result in Enhanced Rate Care. After several days DWP contacted the claimant to say they were sorry but yes they had made a mistake and the client should have been awarded the Enhanced Rate Care. They quickly changed the award and back paid the claimant for the 25 weeks pay that she should have received.

As you can imagine the claimant was very pleased and thanked us for all the help.

If I hadn’t spotted the mistake she wouldn’t have known. So the moral of the story is that you can’t rely on DWP to give the correct details and results and to read and check the useful decision letters they now supply and whilst we are new to the benefit, so are they!
I joined DIAL Lowestoft & Waveney on 13th August 2013. I had spent the previous 6 years working for DIAL and CAB in Barking & Dagenham so I felt at home with the work from day one. Although I was familiar with the Welfare Benefits system I had to learn a new admin routine, familiarise myself with local support groups and find my way around and out of Lowestoft.

My work can be broken down into 4 sections: home visits, office clients, outreach sessions and WASP outreach.

I am a generalist disability advisor and have completed approximately equal numbers of Employment Support Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance and Personal Independence Payment forms. I have completed smaller numbers of Blue Badge, Carers Allowance, Housing Benefit, Pension Credit and HC1 forms. I have also completed a number of income maximisation checks.

During the period 13th August 2013 to 31st March 2014 I had 178 client appointments with just 1 client failing to turn up. 80 of my appointments have been home visits ensuring the most vulnerable have access to our service. Home visits are provided to the elderly and frail, those that find it difficult to leave their houses and those that either through disability, lack of transport or rural isolation cannot easily get to our office or outreach sessions.

I have assisted 55 clients in the office. I usually have a couple of appointments in the office each week. This gives me time to catch up with my admin, make phone calls and meet up with the rest of the team between appointments. On Friday mornings I answer the telephone and provide information and advice to callers.

I have held 42 outreach sessions since September. These were at Longshore Surgery Kessingland, Bungay Medical Practice, Cutlers Hill Surgery Halesworth and Beccles CAB. These are pre booked as many clients prefer to come to outreach sessions rather than struggle to get to Lowestoft.

My post is funded by the National Lottery and is part of Waveney Advice Service Partnership (WASP). Through WASP I have attended 3 outreach sessions designed to promote our services to the public. These sessions were held in St Margaret’s Church Lowestoft, Coffee Caravan in Kessingland, and Asda Lowestoft. The WASP outreach has enabled us to offer on the spot advice to clients as well as maximising awareness of our services to others.

Finally thank you to all the staff and management for making me feel so welcome. Thank you to the GP surgeries and Beccles CAB for allowing us to host our sessions with you.
Mrs K has been a client of DIAL for a number of years. She has Multiple Sclerosis and her condition has gradually deteriorated. She struggles to move around indoors and cannot go out without support. Mrs K has difficulty signing her name so could not complete any forms herself.

Mrs K called DIAL at the end of 2013 as she needed help to renew her Blue Badge. I visited her at home and completed the form for her. We had difficulty locating all the supporting evidence so I wrote a covering letter and posted it to Suffolk County Council with the form.

4 weeks later Mrs K received her Blue Badge and I made a second visit to complete a benefit check. Fortunately Mrs K was receiving all her entitlements but I was made aware of the difficulties she was having getting in and out of bed. Mrs K is getting into and out of bed on her hands and knees and regularly falling over in the process.

Mrs K was advised by her Occupational Therapist that the best solution would be to get a thera posture bed. Fantastic that will be much easier to get into and out of bed and save all the falls. Unfortunately Mrs K will have to buy it herself. Mrs K has no savings so will have to apply to Charitable Trusts for help to pay for the bed.

I then found myself stepping out of my usual Welfare Benefits role and into grant applications. This was quite a time consuming piece of work! Firstly we had to identify a number of potential funders and then write the applications. We identified some potential Trusts based on Mrs K’s past employment. I then completed the application forms and visited her GP for a supporting letter.

We have made 3 applications to Charitable Trusts to date. We have received a favourable response from one, which as well offering a contribution towards the bed has given Mrs K an annual income of £1300. Even better the officers from this Trust are talking with the other Trusts we have applied to, hopefully to agree to pay for the bed between them. At the time of writing we are waiting to hear if we have sufficient money or if more applications will be needed!

When Mrs K finally receives all the money I will have the satisfaction that I have helped one of the most vulnerable people in the area and made her life a little more comfortable.

Mrs K said “I would not have got the Blue Badge without your support. Without a Blue Badge I would be stuck at home all day as nobody would be able to park near the shops. You have helped me so much and I am very grateful. It will be so nice not to have to get on my hands and knees to get into bed. I am so excited. I can’t thank you enough”
Feedback from our user survey questionnaires this year show that 33% of our clients are recommended to DIAL by other organisations such as Sensing Change, Flagship Housing, Age Concern to name a few.

These are some of the comments that other organisations have to say about us!

The last customer I referred to DIAL was contacted on the same day that I referred her. When I visited her again she advised me that she was extremely happy with all the advice that DIAL had provided her and although she was not entitled to any additional benefits she was pleased to have been able to discuss this. She stated that the lady she spoke to was very nice and explained everything to her in a way that she was able to understand. I will definitely be referring to DIAL again. Good work!!

Sandi

I am writing in a token of appreciation for the consistently excellent services that DIAL provides for Sensing Change. I find that in my dealings with DIAL they are easier and quicker to refer to, and the staff are knowledgeable, dependable, helpful and always make a special effort. This has resulted in an improvement in the delivery of service for our customer both in time scale of being seen and the quality of advice and support that is available for them. Sensing Change is very pleased with the quality of service that DIAL provides and sincerely appreciates their responsiveness. We have always been
able to rely on DIAL’s flexibility and courteousness. We at Sensing Change have no hesitation recommending DIAL to others because of our and the customer’s satisfaction with the service. We look forward to working closely with DIAL for many years to come.

Peter

I have been a caseworker for the MP for Waveney for nearly two years and I have had the need to call on the help of the staff at DIAL quite regularly. I find them always helpful, sympathetic and quick to respond to my calls for help for our constituents. They have carried out home visits when necessary even though they have an extremely large workload.

Trish Black
Case Worker to Peter Aldous MP for Waveney

We have a highly professional working relationship with DIAL. Their knowledge and expertise is invaluable to us and more importantly to our customers.

Janet
JobCentre Plus Advisor
Our highlight of the year came from our Suffolk County Council, Financial Inclusion and Advice Service (FIAS) audit which happened in January 2014.

We welcomed two advisors for the day that used the same format to evaluate each disability advice service covering Suffolk. DIAL Lowestoft & Waveney were praised as being “outstanding and very difficult to fault” and “congratulations were recommended to all staff and volunteers.” They felt that “the other services could benefit from learning about some of the processes that we use as they stood out as being extremely effective.” It was felt that “the staff and volunteers are very well supported and their knowledge stood out as being exceptional,” and the overriding theme was that the work we do “is carried out to a high standard and is very effective.” This is down to the hard work, passion and determination of our staff, volunteers and supportive Management Committee and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all.
Comments from our User survey questionnaires

How did people find the DIAL staff/volunteers?

95% of people found us “Extremely helpful” and 5% found us “Helpful.”

How quickly was their enquiry dealt with?

99% of people stated that their enquiry was dealt with immediately!

Did contact with DIAL help to improve people’s Health and Well Being?

“The information DIAL gave me helped!”

“I can’t explain how good I feel.”

“Yes, it relieved the stress.”

“The worry was taken off my mind.”

“It has definitely helped me!”

“Yes, as I was informed about the extra equipment that could help me.”

“Yes, as before I was feeling fed up and depressed.”
There are many ways in which you can help D.I.A.L.

You can:

- Give your time by becoming a volunteer providing general admin support to the advisors, helping to manage/maintain our wheelchair loan service, meet and greet members of the public as they arrive at the office, form filling, or, fund raising to help keep our much needed charity going to name just a few!

- Make a donation no matter how small, in person or via our website, or via www.localgiving.com

- Promote our services to people you know, tell your friends and neighbours.
• Become a Company sponsor.

• Leave a lasting gift by remembering D.I.A.L. in your will.

• Become a Member or Friend of D.I.A.L.

• Respond to our User Survey questionnaires or complete the feedback page on our website www.lowestoftdial.co.uk

• Tell your local councillor about our service.

• Hold a coffee morning, charity event or cake stall on our behalf.
Contact Us

**Telephone us on 01502 511333**

Our helpline is open:
- Monday to Friday 9.00am-12.00 o’clock
- 1.00pm-3.00pm

**Or Fax us on:** 01502 586130

**Write to us or Visit**

161 Rotterdam Road, Lowestoft, NR32 2EZ
- Monday to Friday 10.00am-12.00 o’clock
- 1.00pm-3.00pm

**E-mail us:**

info@dialnet.f2s.com

**Visit our website:**

www.lowestoftdial.co.uk