

## City Bridge Trust – Monitoring Visit Report

<b>Organisation:</b> Disability Action in Islington	<b>Grant ref:</b> 10426	<b>Programme area:</b> Positive Transitions to Independent Living(c) Managing independent living & personal budgets
<b>Amount, date and purpose of grant:</b> 17/02/2011: £135,000 over three years (3 x £45,000) towards the costs of an independent advice service on personalised budgets for disabled people in LB Islington.		
<b>Visiting Grants Officer:</b> Julia Mirkin	<b>Date of meeting:</b> 30/01/14	
<b>Met with:</b> Rahel Geffen, Chief Executive		
<b>1. Introduction to the organisation:</b> Disability Action in Islington (DAI) was established in 1996 to represent the rights of local disabled people. It seeks to ensure that disability issues remain on the agenda with statutory and other authorities, and that disabled people have the opportunity to be part of the decision-making processes. DAI provides support, advice and information to individuals and to other local disabled organisations. Each year, DAI works with around 1,000 people, advising on their rights, helping them secure the support and assistance they require to live their lives to the full. Both the staff team and management committee of DAI are composed of disabled people.		
<b>2. The project funded:</b> With a three-year grant from CBT, DAI created a dedicated post to lead on the provision of an independent advice service for disabled people applying for and managing Personal Budgets. The aim of this project is to support disabled people transitioning to independent living, which for many requires a shift in behaviour from being dependent to being independent decision-makers about their own care needs. The project has also aimed to disseminate information about personalisation to beneficiaries and those supporting beneficiaries, either family members or colleagues in the voluntary sector. DAI has been able to support people at different stages of the application, appeal or management process. It has also been able to offer a flexible service that responds to a range of support needs. For example, supporting people who need high-level in-put, including one-to-one support for several months, to those who just need advice by telephone or who can attend and benefit from a one-off training event. DAI has delivered training for individuals and their Carers and for professionals, such as Social Workers and voluntary sector Workers on the personalisation process. DAI has developed training tools and an Independent Living Guide, drawing on the experience of disabled people living in Islington. This guide details services and facilities available to disabled people living locally. Five service-users have been trained as volunteers and now coordinate peer-support groups around the borough.		
<b>3. Work delivered to date:</b> DAI has exceeded its targets for this project: it has supported 106 beneficiaries with high-level needs against a target of 80; of those beneficiaries with high-level needs, 85% attribute DAI's support to their successful management of personal budgets and independent living. This achievement exceeded DAI's target of 70% of its high-needs caseload attributing its support to their ability to live independently. During the final year of the grant, DAI has adopted a more strategic role; the post-holder has joined the London Self-directed Support Forum and meets with Social Services to contribute to the 'Making It Real' national consultation on personalisation.		
<b>4. Difference made:</b> DAI believes that with CBT funding it has been able to offer support to a wider spectrum of service users; it has become more professional in its approach and more efficient in how it operates. It has		

developed new expertise in working with the terminally ill, working with the council to advocate for a person-centred approach. However, it has been challenging for DAI to strike a balance between working strategically and meeting the continuing demand for direct support and advice from the disabled community. A further risk is that beneficiaries' dependency is simply transferred from social services to DAI, implying that, for some individuals, often the elderly for example, independent living is not realistic. DAI believes that as the capacity of Social Services to deal with the needs of disabled people is now reduced, there will always be a demand for the support and advocacy that it has been providing. Although DAI has initiated peer-support groups through this project, it has found that sporadic attendance, caused by ill-health and unreliable care provision, makes them an inadequate alternative to the support service.

DAI has started to work with Inclusion London on the development of a tool to measure the added value of their support and advice model. The aim of this piece of work is to be able to demonstrate how this holistic approach can lead to financial savings, which will strengthen DAI's ability to tender for future work.

#### **5. Grants Administration:**

The Trust received DAI's first monitoring report in April 2012 and its second in April 2013 and both were rated it as 'very good': targets have been exceeded and a thoughtful response to a changing policy environment has been made, seen through DAI's adoption of a more strategic role. DAI provided a financial report against its budget; it provided all coded invoices in relation to the budget and copies of P11 forms for the post-holder for the last twelve months. Invoices were checked at random and were all found to correspond to bookkeeping records.

#### **6. Concluding comments:**

DAI is confronted with conflicts in terms of its scale of provision and how it raises funds to support it. Presently, its constitution confines its work to the borough of Islington. However, the results that DAI achieves warrant its expansion to serve a broader catchment area. This would also allow DAI to work more strategically, liaising with Social Services in multiple boroughs and developing greater coordination of services. The broader agenda of merging health and social care services will introduce a new range of issues for disabled people, which would further warrant a more coordinated approach. However, DAI is still committed to meeting the needs of local people and it struggles to secure funding for this element of its work.