

# **DIGG: ANNUAL REPORT to JUNE 30<sup>th</sup> 2007**

## **Services provided**

### **1. Response to enquiries**

- In person
- Telephone/letter
- Website

### **2. Self-Management Courses**

#### ***'Expert patient' courses***

The "Self Management of Chronic Condition Course" aims to provide people with long-term disabling health conditions the confidence, tools and strategies to enable them to take more of a self management approach to their condition both on a day to day basis as well as in the long term.

The Course runs for six consecutive weeks for approx. two and a half hours per week. The course is tutored by people who themselves have long-term disabilities or health problems. Some of the topics covered during the six week sessions include: Improving communication skills with friends, family and your health care team; medication usage; improving nutrition; better breathing; relaxation; symptom management; fitness/exercise; Depression; fatigue and problem solving.

Early in 2007 DIGG took over the administrative running of these courses. During the Spring, they were responsible for setting up and running three courses across Glasgow, Moodiesburn (22<sup>nd</sup> March – 6<sup>th</sup> April), City Centre (4<sup>th</sup> April – 9<sup>th</sup> May) and Knightswood North Glasgow (5<sup>th</sup> April – 10<sup>th</sup> May)

#### ***Course for adolescents and young adults***

This is a new self-management course to target the particular needs of adolescents and young adults with a moderate or severe physical disability has been set up by DIGG during the past year. The course, which lasts for four consecutive weeks, has already been presented at three venues across the city.

It is proposed to deliver two more 4-session self-management courses in the coming months.

#### ***'Mindfulness' course***

This entirely new self-management course, incorporating 'mindfulness' techniques, is being developed. Geared to the needs of a West of Scotland audience, it is hoped to present this course in the coming year.

### **3. 'Outreach' Patient Support Workers(acquired brain injury, neuromuscular disorders)**

#### *Problems addressed by these posts*

1. People with 'low-profile' conditions such as muscular dystrophy, congenital ataxia and acquired brain injury are not included in chronic disease management programmes. As a result, these individuals are much less likely to access specialist health and social support services than people with MS, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease, epilepsy, and chronic heart and lung conditions for example. They are also much more likely to 'slip through the net'.
2. There are no effective systems to ensure that children with 'physical' disabilities (including acquired brain injury and sensory impairment) continue to have their needs met when they 'transfer' to adult services. This has been recognised as a serious problem for many years.
3. Children with certain life-threatening conditions who until 10-20 years ago were unlikely to survive beyond childhood, are now living well into adulthood: but there are few services or lifestyle opportunities available to meet their particular needs.

#### *The role of the patient support worker*

1. To identify young adults with neuromuscular disorders and acquired brain injury, to work with them and their families to identify their difficulties and unmet needs, and to assist them in accessing services and lifestyle opportunities to address these needs.
2. To observe at first hand the difficulties and experiences of clients and their families – picking up subtle indicators of distress, inappropriate attitudes and treatment and other areas of concern. Challenging existing practice where necessary, and suggesting creative alternatives.
3. To guide clients and their families through the network of services and opportunities available, and where necessary to directly advocate on their behalf.
4. To help clients to attain their full potential in terms of physical and psychological wellbeing.
5. To collate, analyse and interpret information derived from individual clients in order to identify service gaps and deficiencies and to assess the need for development of services and opportunities. This is a most important role because - in contrast to conditions included in Chronic Disease Management programmes - there is little general understanding of the particular needs of people with neuromuscular and other 'low-profile' conditions.

6. To ensure (as with Chronic Disease Management Programmes) that as few individuals as possible 'slip through the net'.
7. To develop small-scale models for the role of the 'transition worker': to help ensure that as children progress through adolescence to adulthood they continue to receive the therapies they need and are helped to secure the services and opportunities they need to fulfil their potential in life.
8. To help 'physically' disabled adolescents and young adults to understand and access the range of opportunities for training, employment, personal development, leisure activities etc. that are available.

#### 4. Website Development

The website has continued to be developed over the last year in response to the needs of DIGG staff and feedback given to them by website users and people working in disability.

- A new template has been created to improve the accessibility and use-ability of the website, decreasing the number of links on each page and reducing the volume of text on the home page. The pages meet WCAG AAA Priority 1 and work is ongoing to meet the highest measurable standards.
- Live RSS news feeds have been added to the home page from DIGG's own blog and the BBC website's disability blog.
- The DIGG blog continues to be trialled with a free online service. There have been issues using this with JAWS screen reader software and it may be necessary to find an alternative blog service which can be used more easily by the visually impaired. Contacts made at the 'Ability Fest' event will be invited to participate in writing their own blog through DIGG.
- A new Reports Section has been added and this will be developed into an archive for publications relevant to disability issues created by DIGG and other organisations.
- Videos from the Ataxia Scotland Group were successfully filmed, edited and published by DIGG on the website. This page will be developed into a Video Section, with contributions from other groups and individuals on a range of conditions.
- The website is currently being re-developed in ASP.Net C# (from ASP VBScript) following training completed by the website developer in December 2006.

Below is a brief summary of website statistics for the last year along with a comparison to the previous 12 months. A full version of these statistics and an explanation of the terms are included as 2 PDF documents.

	May 2006 – May 2007	May 2005 – May 2006
Visitor Sessions - Total	22875	20240
Visitor Sessions - Monthly Average	1907	1687
Unique Visitor - Sessions Total	8321	7399
Unique Visitor Sessions - Monthly Average	693	617
Hits - Total	109346	97471
Hits - Monthly Average	9112	8122

Page Views - Total	42290	37095
Page Views - Monthly Average	3524	3019

## 5. Self Assessment

This is an internet-based 'pathway' to help disabled people to live to their full potential: and to live as normal a life as possible. In order to do so it is necessary

- To know what is available, for example: support; opportunities for leisure, recreation and learning; employment; 'benefits'
- To learn what other disabled people have been able to achieve.

The self-assessment pathway takes the user in steps through the processes involved in getting the support needed to achieve his or her aims and aspirations. It is designed in sections, each of which links to a variety of other sites. For example the user can find information about benefits from a range of links contained at one 'junction' on the self-assessment pathway; and the same applies for other areas like legal assistance or carer support.

An important aim is not to swamp the person with a mass of information all at the once but allow them time to find things relevant to their needs.

## 6. Citizens' Forum; Self-management Support Groups

### *Citizens' Forum*

The purpose of the Forum was to produce a consensus statement of priorities for health, social work and other agencies to address. Participants met on eight occasions for 90 minutes or so over a period of about six months. These meetings provided valuable insight into what disabled people themselves think. It is hoped it will raise the profile of the needs of people with a physical disability. The ultimate aim is to improve the deployment of current resources, create more activities and other opportunities for disabled people and - if possible- to increase the total resources available.

Individual members of the Citizen's Forum represented a range of Disabilities including Ataxia, Multiple Sclerosis, Arthritis, Huntington's Disease and Visual Impairment.

### *Self Management Support Groups*

In response to numerous requests from course participants, a Support Group was set up. The group meets on a monthly basis in a venue provided for by DIGG. DIGG staff

carry out any administrative duties and also facilitate the meetings which take the form of an informal discussion group where people who are dealing with long-term health problems on a day to day basis can share information and experiences they have in an empathic atmosphere.

### **7. Development of flexible employment opportunities for young physically disabled people**

At present there three people who have a physical disability are employed at DIGG on a continuing basis, and two others are employed from time to time as work becomes available. Most of these individuals are able to work only intermittently, as their condition allows - so DIGG provides a work opportunity that would not otherwise be available. DIGG has also employed school leavers on a temporary basis (6-8 weeks) in order to give them an introduction to general office work.

### **8. Advising and advocating on behalf of people with visual impairment: with individuals and with organisations (eg RNIB)**

The following is an outline of work that contributes to and helps raise the profile of Visual Impairment issues:

1. Suggestions made to a doctoral researcher in the department of Design, Manufacture and Engineering Management at the University of Strathclyde who is developing principles for the design of domestic products that people with a visual impairment can easily interpret and use
2. Participation in an event to highlight the unacceptably high number of Visually Impaired people of working age (around 8.000) who are unable to find employment. A recent survey carried out by The RNIB found the rate of unemployment within this group to be approximately 80% - a statistic which has not changed in the last 15-20 years. A DIGG member was interviewed for the programme 'Insight Radio' about her pathway to employment, and was asked to speak specifically about the barrirs faced, and how these were overcome.
3. Article published in The Hollyrood Magazine March 15<sup>th</sup> edition.to highlight the problems that people with sight loss may face in life, for example with regards to school, further and higher education and finding employment.
4. "Lets Get Physical" - "Visual Impairment Awareness Event at Meadowbank Sports Centre Edinburgh. The aim of this event was to provide practical solutions and suggestions for physical education (PE) teachers in mainstream schools across Scotland who have children with Visual Impairment in their classes. The training was designed to promote the idea of inclusion by providing the teachers with ideas for alternative activities for Visually Impaired pupils so they can fully participate in PE. As a consequence of the success of this event it has been agreed by Margaret Orr

(Head of Special Education for Glasgow and West of Scotland) that similar event should be held across Glasgow for all PE teachers within Glasgow Schools.

5 “Barriers to Employment” event at the First Forum Centre, Possil and Milton Forum on Disability, 74 Closeburn Street, G22. A DIGG member gave a short talk to a group of about 30 disabled people who attend the centre and who are interested in finding employment. The talk focused on ways to overcome barriers or difficulties faced when looking for work and also after a job has been secured.

6. RNIB Right to Read Campaign - A call for a National Transcription Centre Glasgow City Chambers. A DIGG member gave a Visually Impaired person's perspective on the need for a National Transcription Centre for the transcription of written material into alternative formats for people with Visual Impairment.

7. Interviews for Evening Times and STV News. At present the Mobility component of Disability Living Allowance is calculated on a person's ability to physically walk from A to B, therefore, Blind people are not able to claim for the higher rate of the Mobility component. RNIB are campaigning to change this. They argue that in fact a Visually Impaired person's ability to walk from A to B is severely affected by safety and logistical implications. I was asked to give my opinion on the campaign.

## **9. Physiotherapy for younger adults in care homes**

Residents of care homes have little or no access to the physiotherapy and occupational therapy services (or indeed many other specialist health services) that are available to people who live in their own homes. As a result younger residents in particular lose mobility and independence and sometimes suffer irreversible damage (e.g. contractures, social isolation). We have demonstrated that these problems can be much-reduced or prevented, and the wellbeing of residents greatly improved, by an enlightened physiotherapist working just a few hours a week in a care home.

We have also demonstrated that similar input from an experienced occupational therapist is also invaluable for residents: for example in reversing long established negative behaviour; improving social contact and integration; increasing self-confidence and independence; developing previously hidden abilities and by promoting choice rather than passive acceptance.

**10. Publications:** of reports, data analyses etc

## **Supporting activity**

Representation on committees etc:

- Glasgow Access panel: Board of Directors; Development and Strategy Sub-Group
- Glasgow City council (Culture and sport) Physical Activity Working Group
- Disability GO: Disability Steering group

Developing working relationships with other organisations (eg Momentum, REMPLOY, Wellbeing Initiative)

Analysis and interpretation of data collected locally (eg from 'outreach workers, 'stories' from individual clients) and from other sources

Identification and reporting of material relating to relevant developments in Scotland, England and elsewhere (eg Long-Term Conditions Alliance, national Service Framework, Prime Minister's Strategy Group)

Presenting and advertising at conferences (eg European Association of Neurologists), exhibitions (eg Ability-Fest), and other events. Other promotional activity:-

## **1 Exhibitions and Conferences**

### ***Conferences in which DIGG was actively involved as an exhibitor***

*June 2006*

European Association of Neurologists Conference  
The Crown Plaza Glasgow

*September 2006*

Glasgow "Open Doors Day"

*November 2006*

Conference Long-term Condition Alliance  
Radisson Hotel Glasgow

*May 2007*

Ability Fest  
Radisson Hotel Glasgow

*June 2007*

Glasgow Disability Alliance – Learning Opportunities for Disabled People Conference  
Radisson Hotel Glasgow

### ***Conferences and Events Attended***

*October 2006*

Disability Rights Commission – Leadership Conference  
Dynamic Earth Edinburgh

*November 2006*

GAP AGM

Glasgow Access Panel AGM and Election of Board Members

Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living

*April 2007*

Hustings at Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living: issues for Disabled  
People in Scotland

*May 2007*

Sound Site 2007

The Quality Hotel Glasgow

*May 2007*

SITE Re-focus Visual Awareness Pack Launch

Glasgow City Chambers

SITE (Supported, Integration, Training and Employment)

Working together to develop opportunities for the Visually Impaired  
Community.