



Glasgow Disability Alliance
Confident Connected Contributing



Project Impact Report

Year 1: October 2018 - September 2019

"I didn't realise I had any rights. I phoned GDA and the Rights Now Welfare Rights Officer helped me through it all. Without Rights Now I would have been sitting in the house wanting to kill myself. People don't see my disability. There's just not enough support for people with Mental Health issues."

"Efforts to reduce poverty must focus on the problems faced by disabled people, as well as involving disabled people themselves."

Joseph Rowntree Foundation



Introduction

In an early pilot of participatory budgeting, it was identified that welfare benefit changes such as the rollout of Universal Credit were disproportionately impacting on disabled people and those with long-term conditions.

Disability is understood to be inextricably connected to poverty. Disabled people are amongst the worst hit by austerity and make up almost half of those in poverty. They are more likely to be unemployed, in insecure employment, or economically inactive, as well as being less likely to have formal qualifications. Disabled people experience health inequalities and poorer life outcomes all round. Loneliness and isolation can compound this inequality, creating a sense of despair and hopelessness. There are correlations too with other forms of poverty such as child poverty: strikingly, many children in poverty in Scotland have a disabled person in their family accounting for more than 90,000 children – around 40% of all children living in poverty. A third of Glasgow’s children live in poverty, higher than the Scottish average of one in four.

Despite the staggering evidence connecting disability and poverty, GDA members confirm that a number of significant barriers prevent disabled people from accessing welfare benefits advice and representation services. These barriers further compound poverty.

“Every other service I tried could not meet my needs. Most were drop-in and you’d have to wait for hours with no guarantee of seeing someone, or there was no level access and they couldn’t give me information I could understand.”

“I waited ages for an appointment to see someone and when I did they knew nothing about disability and how my condition affects me.”

Our research on existing provision in the City identified challenges such as:

- Services provided in physically inaccessible premises.
- Services operating drop-in sessions which meant a lengthy and challenging waiting time that deterred individuals e.g. those with mental health issues.
- Advisers having limited knowledge and experience of health-related benefits such as Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payments or ESA.



As part of its commitment to mitigating the impact of the roll out of Universal Credit and disabled people’s increasing poverty, Glasgow City Council funded the Rights Now project: this addresses barriers and offers a free fully accessible welfare benefits information, advice and representation service to disabled people and those with long-term conditions in Glasgow.

The unique Rights Now approach

GDA is the largest Disabled Persons Organisation in the country with over 5,000 disabled members and organisations led by disabled people in Glasgow. It was therefore an obvious priority to promote **Rights Now** to GDA members and to GDA's many partner organisations. As anticipated, there was a huge demand for project support.

The service provided by the project has 2 dedicated welfare rights officers (WROs). In Year 1, one WRO was seconded from HSCP welfare benefits appeals team and the other appointed externally. **Rights Now** is fully accessible offering:

- ✓ Home visits
- ✓ Assistance with transport to and from meetings
- ✓ An appointment system at GDA's accessible office
- ✓ Personal Assistance and other access support as required e.g. communication support, accessible information etc
- ✓ Outreach to community venues and wider community engagement

Importantly, the project offers support from the same adviser from application right through to appeal if needed.

Outreach and Engagement

Using GDA's tried and tested community development approaches the project was promoted through outreach activity and events in local communities.

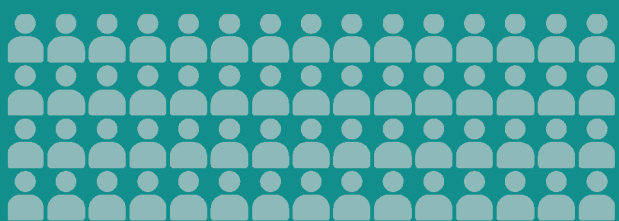
Working in partnership with Glasgow City Council, approaches were made to engage with individuals most likely to benefit from project support e.g. in the Calton area.

Referrals for project support started to come in from a range of partner organisations including GAMH, Housing Associations, The Advocacy Project, Glasgow Life, Flourish House and other disability organisations desperate for the support.

"I was very stressed dealing with the whole process. The adviser came to my house, helped me with the paperwork and helped me complete the application form. They explained the process. I felt more at ease as I had been given that information and just knowing I had someone fighting my corner." Bernadette

"The Rights Now adviser takes you through the whole process from start to finish – rather than just saying I'll meet you half an hour before your hearing and you have to turn up to see someone that you have never met before. It's been a positive experience for me and I got my award!" Lizan

The Impact of GDA's Rights Now Project October 2018 – September 2019



372 individual clients



556 appointments

262



claims made



63

appeals lodged

Each £1 spent from GCC = £5.20 in the hands of disabled people in the first year of projected financial gains
(Return on Investment)

"It's had a great impact on my life. Now I know that I am not going to be re-assessed. I've been given a long-term award so I don't need to worry every 2-3 years." Maureen

£183,642.50
Arrears received by disabled people to date



£827,995.62
Projected financial gains



Wider Impact

As there are additional disability premiums in legacy benefits that do not exist within Universal Credit, a major aim of the Rights Now project is to help those who are eligible claim these premiums and maximise their income.

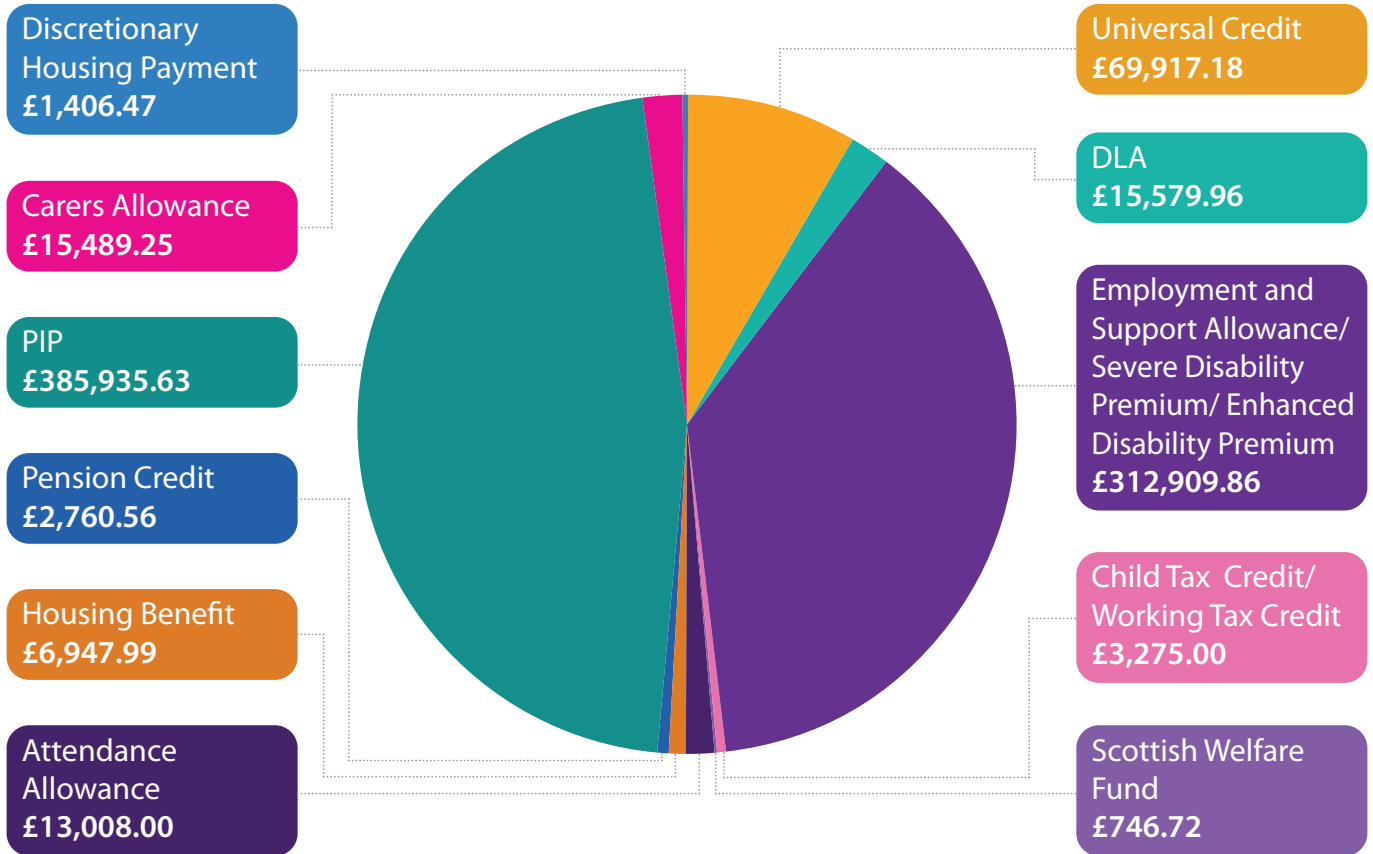


Diagram: Social Security Payments secured by GDA's Rights Now project Oct 18 – Sep 19.

"The impact of the Rights Now project for Flourish House members has been absolutely fantastic. This is life changing for people. People have been supported to get money they are entitled to and they have been treated with the dignity and respect that they should have received from the DWP in the first instance. I can't praise the Rights Now project enough!"
Noel, Project Worker, Flourish House

Peer Support

The majority of people supported by the **Rights Now** project have chosen to join GDA to access wider support, ongoing connections, participate in learning and build their confidence.



"It's been brilliant meeting others in the same boat and not having to explain yourself. We just get on with it, learn new things and have fun."

"When the GDA Welfare Rights Officer went with me to the appeal he was very supportive and made me feel more at ease. I had someone in my corner, fighting for me." Eddie

Peer Support: Making Connections

GDA's fully accessible community development approaches mean that disabled people can genuinely and meaningfully participate – often for the first time – in activities that build confidence, foster connections and motivate them to become involved in further community activities, knowing they have the support and connection to peers via GDA.

The majority of people supported by the **Rights Now** project have chosen to join GDA to access wider support, ongoing connections, participate in learning and build their confidence. This enables them more choices and a greater sense of control over their lives.

"Meeting other disabled people has been wonderful. I've been so lonely and isolated, but through GDA, I made friends and have things to look forward to. I know the others really understand me and I'm more aware of what's going on, what my rights are and feel better able to cope and take positive action."

Contributing Lived Experience

GDA's role in supporting disabled people and building skills, voices and capacity for participation has ensured that a groundswell of disabled people in Glasgow are involved in decisions that affect them. An example of this is GDA's collaboration with both Scottish Government and the new Scottish Social Security Agency supporting disabled people to contribute lived experience of the current benefits system to ensure that the new system operates within the guiding principles of dignity and respect. The **Rights Now** project staff are able to bring their own expert knowledge as advisers directly to our organisational responses to the design, development and testing of the SSSA services.

"Through the support I got from Rights Now! I found out about some of the other learning that GDA offers.

GDA really helped me to get away from alcohol, plus being out of the house gets you around people and talking.

At GDA events, other members are friendly, offering advice and sign posting me to other services in the city. Not thinking about alcohol and being around people keeps you happy.

I think GDA's absolutely brilliant." Suzanne



Summary

Almost 50% of all people living in poverty in the UK are themselves disabled or live in a household with a disabled person, therefore **disability must be at the centre of any efforts on poverty reduction.**

"Of all people in poverty, 28% are disabled, and a further 20% of people in poverty live in a household with a disabled person. Disabled people have a higher poverty rate than the average, and this is even clearer once the effects of disability benefits are accounted for. Furthermore, within the disabled population, there are even higher-risk groups, for example, two-thirds of working-age single disabled people are in poverty and more than half of disabled renters are in poverty. These groups have rarely been the focus of much direct policy attention." **Disability and Poverty**, New Policy Institute / JRF, 2016.

Rights Now is a vital service enabling disabled people to get the right support, at the right time - delivered in the right way. In its first year, the project has supported 372 individuals to secure a projected income of **£827,995.62**, including a life-changing amount of **actual arrears received by disabled people of £183,642.50.**

The success of **Rights Now** depends on being able to **deliver an accessible, holistic service** with transport, face to face appointments, home visits, assistance and communication support. This is vital if disabled people are to receive the support and advice they need in order to maximise their income and address poverty in the longer term. **Rights Now**, in turn, contributes to Glasgow's economy enabling disabled people to spend more of their income in Glasgow.

"I was asked at the appeal, "Would you have come today if you didn't have the worker from Rights Now?" The answer was no. I told them I could never have went there." Pauline

An additional outcome for disabled people is the opportunity to participate in learning, connect with others and increase their skills, confidence and capacity for participation and being involved in decisions which affect their lives. For example utilising lived experience in shaping the new Scottish Social Security Agency.

GDA's ability to deliver such an accessible service requires investment and such investment has a massive impact on the economic outcome for disabled people in Glasgow: **Every £1 invested in GDA's Rights Now Project has generated £5.20 for disabled people across the city.**

Rights Now has identified and addressed a huge unmet need and the holistic model contributes to efforts to mitigate universal credit, address child poverty and tackle disabled people's poverty.

About GDA

GDA is a vibrant disabled people's organisation (DPO) controlled by its 5000+ disabled members including a vibrant network of organisations controlled by disabled people.

Our Mission is to build the confidence, connections and contributions of disabled people, recognising and building on talents and strengths.

GDA's work supports disabled people of all ages and any type of impairment or disability. Our activities include: programmes of free, fun, fully accessible learning, peer support, personal development, goal setting and individual support via life coaching, employability and Welfare Rights advice.

We provide accessible information, signposting and referrals to services, including specialised support: GDA is Foodbank referral agency and 3rd Party Hate Crime Reporting Centre

GDA supports disabled people to participate in wider opportunities, including sharing voices and lived experience in policy, campaigning and civic involvement.



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