

Glasgow Disability Alliance

Social Capital Evaluation

**Drivers for Change and
the Purple Poncho Players
2016**



Glasgow Disability Alliance
Confident Connected Contributing



assist
social capital



GDA's mission is to build the confidence, connections and vital contributions of disabled people, enriching their lives and the whole of society. Through programmes of free, fun, fully accessible learning, events and activities, GDA encourages and supports disabled people to build on their strengths, fulfil their potential and live ordinary – or extraordinary lives, with the support they need.

Contents

Foreword.....	2
Executive Summary.....	4
Introduction.....	6
Glasgow Disability Alliance.....	10
Methodology.....	17
Drivers for Change.....	18
Purple Poncho Players.....	33
Outcomes & Findings.....	46
Conclusion.....	50

Foreword

There are over one million disabled people in Scotland and over 100,000 live in Glasgow. Over 50% of disabled people in Glasgow do not have opportunities to work, they live in poverty and face extra costs related to disability. They are more likely to be socially isolated because they lack the support they need to live the life they want: to participate and to make their contributions. Yet disabled people have so many talents and strengths and want to make their contributions.



The Scottish Government has made significant advances in important areas of policy and service delivery, such as self-directed support, supported employment, strengthening Building Standards and our new Accessible Travel Framework, to name but a few. And I hope that the action we have taken in response to welfare reform, and in the early stages of establishing our own social security system in Scotland, will show that we are serious about protecting disabled peoples' human rights. In December 2016, we published 'A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People', setting out five long-term ambitions and 93 actions we will take in the current parliamentary term, to make a real, measurable difference to the lives of disabled people in Scotland. I am delighted to say that GDA – and many other disability organisations – were involved in the development of our delivery plan, and has welcomed its publication.

But transformational change will not happen if we work alone. We must work with others, using the sum total of our collective resources to make the greatest impact for disabled citizens. For this reason, I am delighted to support the work of Glasgow Disability Alliance which delivers programmes and supports, placing disabled people in the driving seats of their own lives and empowering them to make the contributions they want to make. Using a cocktail of funding from Scottish Government, Big Lottery and Glasgow City Council, GDA have once more demonstrated their impact and the fact that, with a little support, disabled people's lives can be amazing

This research report proves that investing in social capital can have transformative effects for individuals and communities. Social connections are shown to be crucial to allow people to flourish as assets to their communities and society.

The Scottish Government understands social isolation to be a public health concern leading to inequality and poor health and life outcomes.

Glasgow Disability Alliance is a shining example of tackling this: by investing in social connections and disabled people as “assets” in themselves, a strong, articulate and more resilient community of interest has been co-created. Through GDA programmes, disabled people receive support and opportunities, they increase participation become resilient and are enabled to make vital contributions. They develop strong voices which are crucial for developing policy and add value to the wider community of disabled people. GDA is an inspirational example of a community of interest: it’s about disabled people doing “with” each other rather than being “done to”. In this way, disabled people are more in control of their own lives, and all of Scotland will benefit.



ANGELA CONSTANCE

Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities



Executive Summary

Social Capital in Action

- Glasgow Disability Alliance is a membership-led organisation run by and for disabled people in the Greater Glasgow Area. GDA was established in 2001 with the aim of bringing disabled people together to support one another to take the lead in tackling the inequality, exclusion and discrimination they face.
- Through GDA disabled people in Glasgow are connected to each other (bonding social capital), to information, services and opportunities which build personal resilience (bridging social capital), and to more powerful decision-makers through relationships of partnership and co-production, contributing their voices and expertise to shape policies and the services they use.
- For individuals, connections, resilience, choice, control and wellbeing are increased, while collectively GDA's community of interest approach empowers significant proportions of Glasgow's population to make active and engaged contributions to policy, economy, communities and society, tackling inequalities, improving cohesion and health and social outcomes across the city.
- GDA's work demonstrates the value of social capital in action. Social Capital refers to the network of relationships and values that connect individuals and groups in society and enable collective action. With over 3000 members at the time of writing, this report finds that GDA's model of community capacity building has enabled a strong network of community connections to develop across a diverse demographic of Glasgow's disabled people. We find this supports members to thrive, individually and collectively, and take an active, connected role in improving their communities and society.

Investing in Social Connections

- GDA's 'community of interest' approach to capacity building is proven to be crucial for disabled people who are often physically and socially isolated within their geographical communities, due to inaccessible environments, transport, community facilities, inaccessible economic and social opportunities, lack of social care and support, as well as attitudinal barriers including segregation in education which can leave disabled people suddenly isolated in transition to adulthood and throughout their lives.
- Through taking part in GDA's accessible programmes of lifelong learning and peer support, GDA members report increased confidence and demonstrate increased connections within and across peer groups, as well as linking with broader opportunities to participate in and contribute to communities, the services they use, policies and decision making, and wider society. Isolation is removed by being involved in GDA.

- GDA's methodology brings people together as a diverse community of interest, creating trusting relationships founded on a shared identity as people living with impairments or long term conditions and facing barriers to full inclusion in society. Through learning and connections formed, this peer support builds individuals' resilience and increases access to opportunities and confidence to take these up, increasing disabled people's contributions and participation in families, communities and wider society.

Policy Implications

- The value of investing in Social Capital is increasingly recognised by policy makers at local, national and global levels. Social capital is acknowledged around the globe as crucial to the wellbeing of communities and to ensuring the effectiveness of a broad range of economic and social policies and programmes.
- For example, the Scottish Government has identified social isolation (i.e. a lack of social connections) as a major public health concern. Meanwhile stronger, more resilient communities are recognised to have better health, social and economic outcomes. Approaches to tackling disadvantage are increasingly focussed on investing in people as assets, with social capital the vehicle for garnering collective action towards shared goals.

GDA – Community Asset

- GDA represents a grassroots surge in social capital in an area of Scotland facing some of the greatest health, social and economic challenges, where higher proportions of the population are disabled, unemployed, living in poverty and with poor health outcomes (see figure 2).
- Findings from our 2014 Social Capital Report were once again confirmed: being led and controlled by disabled people, GDA was found to build increased trust and reciprocity, with members' confidence and connectedness enhanced by the organisations' responsiveness to members' access needs, ambitions and direction.
- This report provides both qualitative and quantitative evidence of the transformative impact of GDA's approach to empowering individuals and their community of interest, through expanding and strengthening these trusting social connections. Quantifying growth in the bonding, bridging and linking social capital resulting from member's involvement with GDA, this report showcases the development of GDA members as assets to their community, alongside qualitative data testifying to the impact of this on individuals' confidence, wellbeing and sense of connectedness and self-worth.
- Individual disabled people are assets. Disabled people working collectively are assets. GDA is also an asset in and of itself.

Introduction

Social Capital in Action

In 2016 Glasgow Disability Alliance commissioned Assist Social Capital to carry out research examining the impact of and “difference made” by two specific GDA programmes- the Drivers for Change and Purple Poncho Players. The focus was on the value and impact of the social connections supported and social capital generated as a result of participation in these programmes. This research builds on a previous 2014 study across the wider GDA programme of learning (‘Pathways for Change’).

It found that on becoming one of GDA’s 2000+ members at that time, the average individual will be familiar (enough to say hello) with over **150 other members**, in line with ‘Dunbar’s Number’ of optimal connections. They will have a closer network of connections of around **11 people** whom they see on a regular basis. Of these 11 relationships **6 will be close, trusting** relationships.

Table 1 - Showing a segment of the GDA membership

Relationships	Pre-GDA	Post-GDA	Close	Reciprocal	Trust
Average per Member	1	158	11	6	6

This compares very favourably with the social connections of the average adult in the UK. The UK Household Longitudinal Survey (2011/12) reported that 95% of adults aged 16 and over have at least one close friend, while over two-thirds reported having between 2 and 6 close friends. The comparatively high social connections found amongst GDA members is all the more remarkable because evidence tells us that disabled people across all age groups are routinely very isolated (cf GDA’s Social Isolation Report 2015, Scottish Parliament Social Isolation Report 2015).

This report evidences the results of GDA’s broad investment in social capital as an enabling platform for disabled people, connecting them to each other and to external opportunities and services. The strong relationship networks identified result from GDA’s emphasis on providing opportunities for regular and repeated interaction across a large programme of learning activities. As a result members have the opportunity to interact with people they have met previously as well as meeting new members thereby maintaining current relationships and making new ones.

The present report echoes the 2014 findings, with a focus specifically on two funded projects which support members to increase their involvement in influencing policy makers, and speaking up to help improve communities and society, for disabled people.

The two projects examined in this report seek to build on the 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital established within the network, to further develop 'linking' social capital, supporting members to make active contributions to their communities by accessing further opportunities outside of GDA, and to build reciprocal relationships with service providers, policy makers and elected representatives.

About Social Capital

Social Capital identifies the value inherent in the relationships and networks that make up communities.

Evidence shows ('Social Capital

A review of the literature', ONS October 2001) that where social capital is high, e.g. support through social networks, trust and participation in membership organisations, benefits are also higher on a range of socio-economic and health outcomes. Social Capital describes the value of relationships between individuals; it is the 'glue' that binds people together. It is defined as "networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or amongst groups" (OECD, 2001). In this way social capital and social connections are increasingly recognised as a resource and an asset in and of themselves, crucial for the individual and collective outcomes sought by health, social, economic and environmental development strategies and programmes.

People who are more socially connected tend to identify as healthier and happier (ONS, 'Guide to Social Capital'). Both the size of an individual's social network and the frequency of the contacts are positively associated with wellbeing. Social Capital therefore has an impact on the quality and quantity of social interactions impacting on our health and wellbeing and defining the social fabric and structures of our communities.



The four main elements of social capital are:

- (i) Shared Understanding is based on shared norms and values and impacts on shared standards of behaviour and expectations within a group and/or community.
- (ii) Reciprocity occurs when people help each other, confident that someone will return the favour to them in the future.
- (iii) Trust is the expectation and confidence that other members of the community will be honest and act cooperative.
- (iv) Networks describe the relationship ties by which people are linked together; there are three different types of network:
 - i. **Bonding** – close, strong ties between members of a community
 - ii. **Bridging** – horizontal ties across similar groups and communities
 - iii. **Linking** – vertical ties between groups with differing power (financially and/or politically) (See Social Capital and Social Wellbeing, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002).



Fig. 2 Disability and Disadvantage in Scotland

- Nearly one in five people of working age (1 million, or 19%) in Scotland is disabled <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/disability/>
- In numbers terms, this translates to over 1 million disabled people in Scotland, over 2 million with long terms conditions. (Health & Social Care Alliance, 2016)
- Glasgow has highest rate of disabled people in actual numbers and second highest in percentage terms at around 25% (Census 2011 and Glasgow SOA). This totals well over 100,000 people and this number is likely to increase over time.
- Of the total households in the UK living in poverty, disabled people's households make up more than half (52%).
(Joseph Rowntree Foundation and New Policy Institute 2016)
- Over 50% of welfare reforms fall on the shoulders of disabled people.
(Scottish Parliament Welfare Reform Committee)
- Around 43% of disabled people are employed compared with 80% of non disabled people – only 36% of disabled people are employed in Glasgow.
(Glasgow Centre for Population Health)
- 48% of Glasgow Housing Association tenants – living in social rented housing – have a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity – according to their tenant survey late 2015. (Wheatley Group, Dec 2015)
- Extra costs are associated with disability e.g. transport, fuel, equipment and access. (Extra Costs Commission 2015)
- 22% of individuals in families containing a disabled adult lived in relative poverty. For families with no disabled adults the figure was 15 percent.
(DWP Family Resources Survey, Households below average income datasets)
- A recent report by JRF and NPI found that, due to a combination of additional costs, reducing support, and multiple disadvantage in the labour market, 48% of people living in poverty in the UK are either disabled, or in a household with a disabled person. (JRF and NPI 2016)
- By summer of 2016, GDA's membership stood at an impressive 3500+ individuals. This includes people of all ages and impairment types e.g. physical, brain injury, sensory, learning difficulties, mental health problems and people with long term health conditions and so on.

“Reducing Poverty among disabled people must be at the heart of any attempts to reduce poverty overall in the UK.”

Joseph Rowntree Foundation & New Policy Institute, “Disability & Poverty” 2016

About GDA

Glasgow Disability Alliance was set up in 2001 by disabled people who wanted to address the exclusion and inequalities they faced and create a supportive network for disabled people's voices to be heard. Now with over 3500 members, it is the biggest disabled people-led organisation in Scotland if not the UK.

Their mission is to build the confidence, connections and contributions of disabled people, recognising and building on strengths which disabled people have. The ultimate aim is enabling disabled people to have full and equal participation, choice and control, drawing on increased support and resilience to have improved and fulfilling lives.

GDA builds the capacity and connections of disabled people as a community of interest, putting them at the heart of actions and solutions to tackle isolation, poverty, disadvantage and inequality. This contrasts with more prominent, but equally vital, 'place-based' approaches which are more routinely funded, but which have been found to fail equalities groups - simply by not taking account of their needs (Equality & Human Rights Commission). Disabled people face a myriad of additional barriers to participating and making connections in their geographical communities – from inaccessible environments, transport, community facilities, inaccessible economic and social opportunities, lack of social care and support, as well as attitudinal barriers including segregation in education which can leave disabled people suddenly isolated in transition to adulthood.

By recognising the strengths and talents that disabled people have, building on these and connecting them to each other, to services and to wider opportunities, GDA grows these 'community' assets by developing social capital: the organisation demonstrates the value of asset based approaches in abundance through numerous case studies.

GDA recognises and seeks to remove external barriers which prevent people from living a full and equal life such as attitudes, physical barriers and the way policies, systems and society are organised. This is based on the social model of disability.

GDA provides a range of fully accessible learning opportunities and activities that enable disabled people to make new connections, build peer support networks and develop the confidence, skills and resilience necessary to regain control over their lives.

GDA delivers accessible programmes of learning courses, events, one to one coaching and activities to build confidence, connections and support people to make their contributions. GDA recognises the strengths and talents of disabled people and works alongside them to build on these, connecting them with peers and with services and opportunities which support them. GDA supports disabled people to participate and be leaders in their own lives, contributing to their families, communities and wider society and becoming more visible across all aspects of life in Glasgow, Scotland and beyond. GDA works with disabled people of all ages and with any type of impairment.



Various equalities and human rights legislation states that disabled people of all ages have legal rights¹ to the same freedom, choice, dignity and control in their lives as other citizens across the whole range of life opportunities. Public agencies are required to ensure that policy and practice – all of which affect disabled people – meets these standards, yet, the way society is currently organised means there are still many significant barriers and a widening gap between the rhetoric and reality. As a result, too often disabled people's lives are blighted by poverty of opportunities through exclusion, stigmatisation and discrimination.

GDA is a disabled people's organisation, led by its 3500 disabled members. GDA members democratically elect the Board i.e. the Governing body, and the organisation involves disabled people in prioritising issues to take forward and programmes to tackle need, planning outcomes for funders, setting priorities for disabled people and related work targets and planning events and meetings. This ensures high standards of accessibility, participation and feedback. GDA actively listens to the membership in order to understand the needs of disabled people.

¹ See The Equality Act 2010 and United Nations (UN) Convention on Rights of Disabled People (UNCRPD)

As a result GDA activities are both designed and delivered by and for the members to support each other to overcome barriers by:

- building skills, strengths and confidence to have more control.
- reducing isolation and increasing connections and resilience.
- facilitating opportunities to become more active in the community for all GDA members, no matter what their circumstances, to make contributions with the support they need to do this.

Through a wide range of activities and programmes such as Drivers for Change and the Purple Poncho Players highlighted in this report, GDA and its members connect, learn and share together. Our research findings demonstrate, from this sample, that when disabled people realise that they are not alone and are affected – like other disabled people – by their external contexts and environments which are disabling, the results are incredibly powerful.

“GDA makes us realise we are not alone. The poverty, the loneliness, the lack of confidence – these things are because of the way society is constructed and not an innate quality within ourselves. We aren’t the problem although we do need access and support to help us move forward” Chris, PPP

The introduction to others “in the same boat” is liberating and not only offers connections and personal growth, it can also raise critical consciousness, moving the individual’s “private or personal troubles” into the realm of “public issues” and public policy, as famously described by American sociologist C Wright Mills, a professor of sociology at Columbia University. This has the additional benefit of both raising aspirations and spurring individuals to achieve more and also of enabling GDA to make a contribution to improving policies and services which in turn improve the lives of disabled people. GDA offers critical analysis and understanding of socio-economic inequality and additional barriers that disabled people experience and frames these in an equality and human rights context.

GDA’s ambitions make up a proactive, collaborative response to the risk of isolation and of being written off and forgotten by a society struggling with its own problems, mainly as a result of economic challenges but also, because in historical terms, the evidence tells us that disabled people have been routinely stigmatised, demonised and excluded. Professor Bill Hughes argues that demonisation of disabled people can be traced back to the mythology of the ‘sturdy beggar’ in early modern times (‘Disabled people as counterfeit citizens: the politics of resentment past and present’, 2015).

GDA’s methodologies are part of a positive, asset-based approach to prevention, at the level of both the individual members and the asset of GDA itself and its contributions to both Glasgow and Scotland.



Approaches such as these are very much needed at this time when social isolation and lack of connections has become a public health problem alongside other public health issues (Scottish Parliament, 2015).

“Without GDA I’d be stuck in the house, nowhere to go, no one to see and thinking it was my fault. I was isolated, lonely and depressed. I genuinely felt more unwell at this time and although my condition hasn’t improved, my sense of wellbeing has. Now I’m volunteering every week and helping other disabled people realise what they can do too”, Annemarie, PPP.

This is further supported by the Scottish Parliament’s research findings following their inquiry into social-isolation.

“The evidence we heard and received during this inquiry has led us to believe that social isolation and loneliness are significant problems in Scotland and that individual citizens, public services and the Scottish Government should take collective responsibility for improving the situation.

We believe that it is everyone’s problem, that it should not be ignored or tolerated and that a change in attitude is needed”, (Equal Opportunities Committee, Scottish Parliament, ‘Age and Social Isolation’, 5th Report, 2015)

“We work together with other disabled people, with GDA and our community of disabled people and across communities with those in power to bring about change. There has been progress but much more must be done.”
Susan, PPP

GDA is a strong and diverse disabled people's organisation (DPO); the biggest disabled member organisation in Scotland and on a scanning of Scotland, it is clear that funders including the Big Lottery, Glasgow City Council and Scottish Government have recognised that GDA is uniquely leading the way in using innovative approaches and have funded GDA accordingly. GDA connects people, builds social capital and increases the strengths and contributions of its community of interest.

Exploring GDA's approach to Social Capital

In this study we looked at two key peer support networks within GDA – **Drivers for Change (DfC)** and the **Purple Poncho Players (PPPs)** to specifically explore and identify the difference made by being involved with GDA in these 2 projects. It should be noted that there are multiple ways to be involved in GDA and these are just 2 examples.

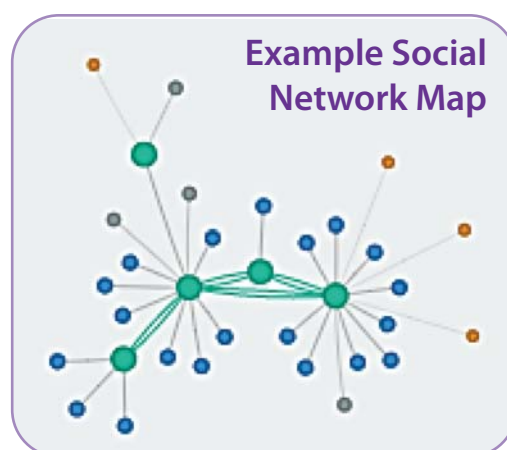
This research project was robust in its methodology, in that we:

- Identified participants who self-selected for the interviews.
- Conducted 24 interviews, independently.
- Provided access and support for people to take part.
- Asked the same questions to each participant.
- Produced social network maps for each interviewee, which are aggregated to demonstrate social capital outcomes for the projects.
- Analysed findings based on the social capital being generated by the specific projects. This is distinct from the wider social capital GDA members gain as a result of participation in GDA highlighted in the 2014 report.
- Produced a social capital report for the results from DfC and PPPs.

Through a series of interviews **Social Network Maps** were produced.

These visualise the journeys of those involved in the projects, both the individual and collective impact of these relationships.

The results of this Social Capital Evaluation show that through both Drivers for Change and Purple Poncho Players, GDA are enabling participants to build substantially more relationships and to become part of larger more interconnected networks, including the overall GDA community itself.



As a community of interest, GDA members have a high degree of shared values and identity. There is a high level of trust in the organisation, demonstrated through their deep connection with GDA, with each other and with the activities and programmes. The trust is based on the shared values and identity, on knowing access needs will be met and on an intense sense of connectedness, community and cohesion. As a result, the collective social capital of these groups and of GDA becomes an asset in itself, based on shared purpose and understanding.

Following the interviews detailed in this report, the Social Network Maps evidenced that through DfC and PPPs, GDA is engendering significant levels of new bonding, bridging and linking social capital. Both projects are creating impressive levels of bonding social capital, which is consistent with the aims of a community of interest. The PPPs aim to engage and impact on those influencing policy can be seen particularly in the linking scores; this in turn delivers substantial benefits to the individuals involved and to the wider community of disabled people in Glasgow- see results below:

Drivers for Change

	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
Before:	18	40	8
Now:	86	79	10
Difference:	+68	+39	+2
Increase:	3.78	0.98	0.25

The report evidences that through projects such as DfC and the PPPs, GDA is helping its members build their autonomy and resilience by co-creating community capacity within the GDA network to respond to the particular needs of disabled people who often face multiple social and economic challenges. In addition, it shows that members are able to reach out to stakeholders outside of the GDA membership in order to take advantage of external opportunities and to influence inclusive decision-making.

Overall, the results demonstrate an impressive increase in connectivity, with the aggregate level of connectivity with other GDA members involved in these two projects increasing by 4.2 times (420%). Higher levels of social connection benefit the individual members, providing them increased access to resources such as information, services and opportunities.

Purple Poncho Players (PPPs)

	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
Before:	43	30	14
Now:	172	74	53
Difference:	+129	+44	+39
Increase:	4.0	2.5	3.8

Aggregate Scores

	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
Before:	61	70	22
Now:	258	153	63
Difference:	+197	+83	+41
Increase:	4.2	2.2	2.9

In addition, social capital theory demonstrates that as well as benefiting those active in these specific activities, the wider networking ties that GDA provides its member as outlined in the Social Capital Report of 2014, means that the whole of the GDA community of interest will also benefit. As a result the GDA membership will be in a stronger position to confront barriers to inclusion and take advantage of new opportunities ('The Place of Social Capital in Understanding Social and Economic Outcomes' Woolcock, 2001).

GDA's projects, programmes and initiatives are inclusive and the organisation continually paves the way for a lasting legacy: this is found in the increased resilience, connections, strengths and lives of GDA participants and community. GDA is therefore a generator of valuable social capital for its members. Almost every member of GDA has a story of how their situation has improved as a result of joining, in many cases radically. The programmes delivered (by GDA) ensure that barriers to involvement are reduced and GDA's members remain active, connected and confident.

This investment in social capital delivers significant added value, over and above targets achieved. GDA is a powerful example of how to deliver services through effective collaboration. Positive outcomes for individuals and the collective community of GDA members have long-term cost benefits to the wider community. The project has significant preventative impact making it a highly cost effective organisation.

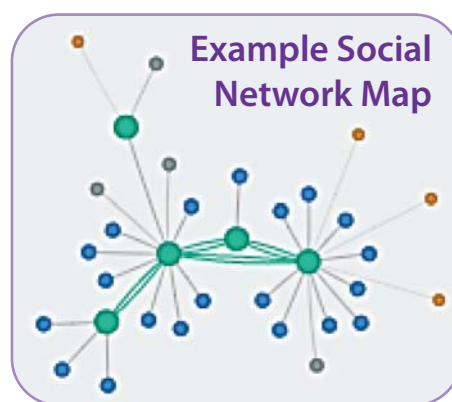


Methodology

Interviews were carried out on a one-to-one basis in person, using ASC's online social capital evaluation tool to capture, plot and demonstrate social networks. ASC interviewed two groups of people, 10 members from the Purple Poncho Players and 14 from Drivers for Change.

The groups comprised members who had varying lengths of membership at GDA and the two programmes, from just one month to a founder member who'd been involved for 15 years. It was expected that these two groups would give an overview of the kind of journeys that members joining GDA can expect, given range of length of membership and also the different objectives of the two initiatives. As a result GDA would be better placed to demonstrate the impact of their work and a deeper understanding of how this is achieved, i.e. the theory of change which GDA uses to drive its work and prove its worth.

The data gathered from each of the interviews was used to generate a **Social Network Map**: this creates a visual picture of the network of relationships between the different members of a group/ project. There are three different kinds of relationship ties, which are represented in the diagram through the differently coloured dots or nodes:



- The **green** nodes describe the members of the group/project who have been interviewed.
- The **blue** nodes are other members of the group/project mentioned by the interviewees.
 - ⇒ Together the green and blue nodes identify the BONDING relationships (between members of the network).
- The **grey** nodes represent people outside of the network with whom the member has an equal relationship, a BRIDGING tie.
- The **orange** nodes define vertical ties with influential people outside the network, LINKING ties.

The relationships between the different nodes are visualised through lines to depict the structure of the social networks.

For each of the projects there are two SNA maps: a 'benchmark' and a 'now'. The 'benchmark' map displays the relationships with other members of the project (DfC or PPPs) they were involved with, which already existed when the person being interviewed joined the project and the 'now' map displays the relationships which the participants of the project had at the time of the evaluation.

NB. The results do not represent the wider relationships with other members of GDA which a number of the interviewees already have access to. This means we can focus on the impact of the specific projects in terms of the social capital they are generating.

Drivers for Change

Drivers for Change (DfC) is Glasgow Disability Alliance's network of active members who build skills, confidence and connections; at the time of writing, this network stands at 80+ disabled people. It is a peer group who work together to build their individual and collective skills and capacity, drawing on their expert lived experiences to work together and collaboratively with others, to improve both their own their lives and well-being, and the lives of other disabled people.

Building their own resilience is critical to developing the sense of community which is palpable from our observations of the group. This is fundamental to the sense of confidence in their own ability to bring about changes for disabled people e.g. to services which they shape to better meet the needs of disabled people. This includes GDA itself.

Members of DfC receive support to build skills, confidence and abilities through training and peer support. The extended DfC Network meets at least 4 times a year and has a rolling programme training and support events in between. Network members are also updated by email, postal bulletins and social media.

The main benefits of DfC and their work is evidenced in their daily lives: they have the confidence to speak up and be in the lead, making choices and having their voice heard. Then, almost secondary to this personal empowerment, they are able to contribute lived experience at meetings and events they attend either for themselves or on behalf of disabled people. GDA supports DfC members by providing briefings and



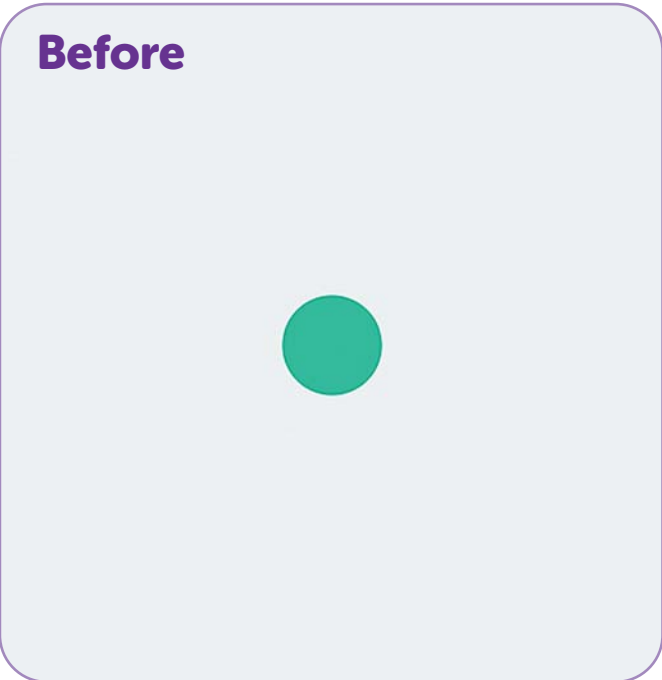
support to increase confidence and ensure that people are equipped to carry out this work.

ASC interviewed 14 members of DfC, ranging from very new members to some who have been

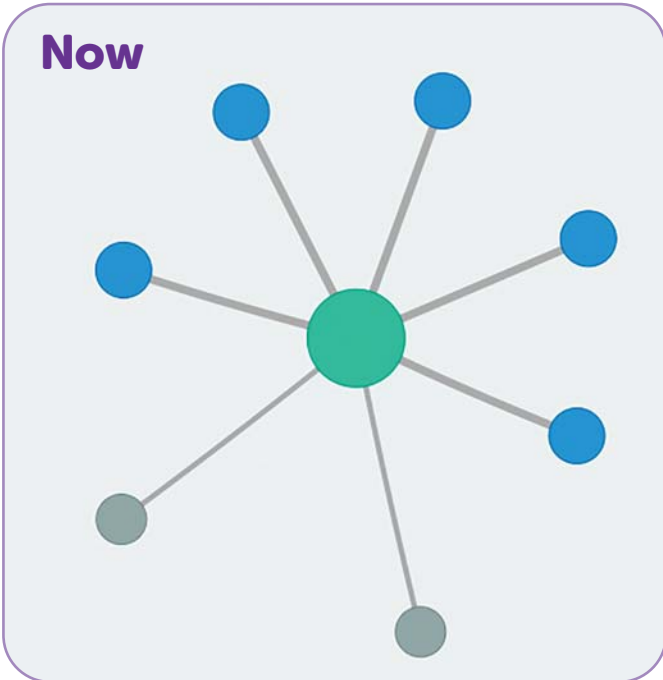
members for several years. The following Social Network Maps outline the journeys that these 14 disabled people have experienced as a result of being involved in DfC.

Findings

DfC1 – Member of DfC for 1 month



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	0	0	0



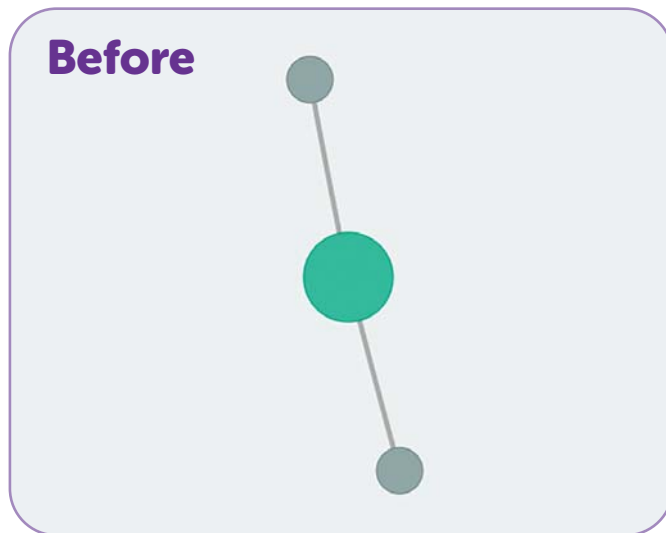
After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	5	2	0

DfC1 has benefited from being part of this group adding 7 new connections in the very short time as a member.

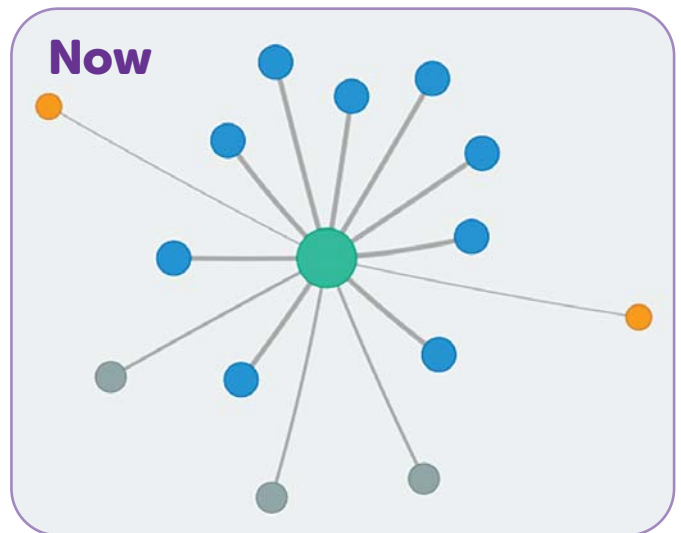
“Didn't really know much about Drivers for Change till recently, but I was really interested in finding out about how to get my points across. I'm quite new to GDA and DfC so I will need to build on that but I will definitely continue to come. Cos it helps you meet new people who understand you – especially new young disabled people. The more events I come to the more people I meet.”

This particular young disabled person is extremely isolated and disconnected from their peers due to severe levels of physical impairment and extreme difficulty in travelling. There is also a lack of personal support and so GDA has expended significant levels of resources to enable DfC1 to participate in DfC, a clear demonstration of their commitment to equality and inclusion. Otherwise DfC 1 would most likely revert back to being completely isolated.

DfC2 – Member of DfC for 2 years



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	0	2	0



After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	9	3	2

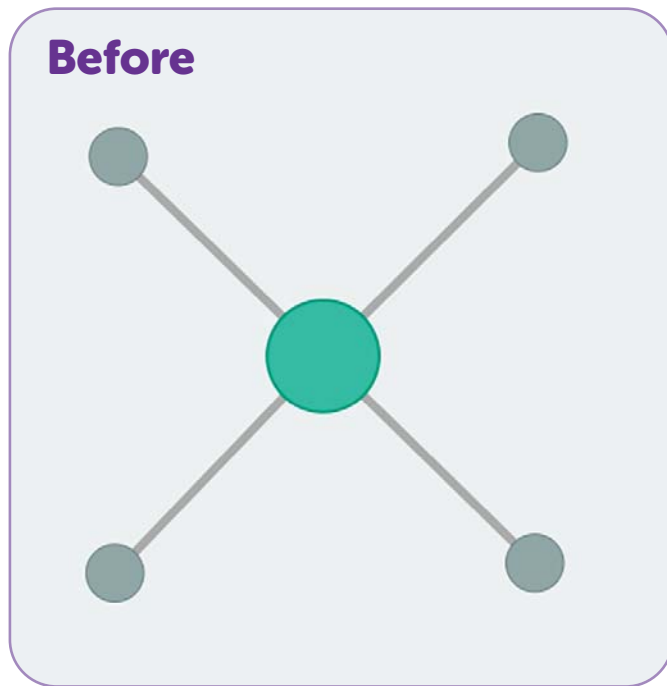
DfC2 joined the group 2 years ago and their social network has increased from 2 people to 14, with 9 of those relationships being bonding ties. Together with the following personal statement, this demonstrates that DfC2 has a strong sense of belonging. It is clear that by being a member of DfC this person has become more confident and as a result is keen to support other members of GDA.

"Drivers for Change has changed me. Without it I wouldn't have **spoken out**. Even for things like looking after my flat e.g. Phoning the building Factor and getting the back yard cleaned up. Before I couldn't have done that. I couldn't speak up for myself- I had no confidence and no voice. I think GDA is a great organisation. It is an organisation for disabled people run by disabled people. Other organisations are run by people who seem to think they know what is best for you rather than listen to you. There is an empathy in GDA because they understand. Other places have good intentions but they don't quite get it. You have to explain yourself over and over again. You feel that people running GDA and Drivers for Change know your situation. It has made a huge difference to me in my **confidence** and **talking up**. They've made me realise I have skills and remember that I have some talents too.

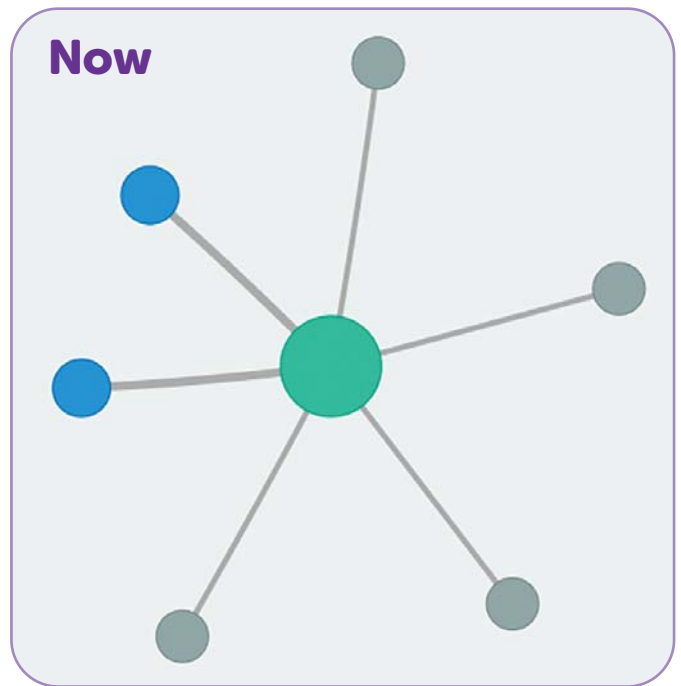
At GDA you don't feel like you're being preached at. You get the opportunity to get everyday information. You don't feel that people are expecting something from you. I've been in loads of places and they do have good intentions but there is a lot of red tape. This is the first place that I've come to that I personally don't get caught up in the 'messy stuff' like funding. Although you can be even more involved if you want to and I am beginning to get there.

It's about people helping you and you helping them. It really does feel both ways (reciprocal). From Tressa (CEO) and the Board to everybody including the new people. No pecking order - everybody is in the same boat. Before I came here I was really down because I couldn't get a job and when I went to the job centre they said not to come back again but they didn't give me other options. GDA supported me to build my confidence enough to join a music group. I was amazed at how quickly being with others grew my aspirations and self-esteem enough to believe I could go back to leading my own group. Returning to do the guitar teaching is great for me. It means I am working but it's also great to see the people that come in are getting benefit from it too. It makes me feel good to be able to give back to people, to make a contribution."

DfC3 – Member of DfC for 6 months



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	0	4	0



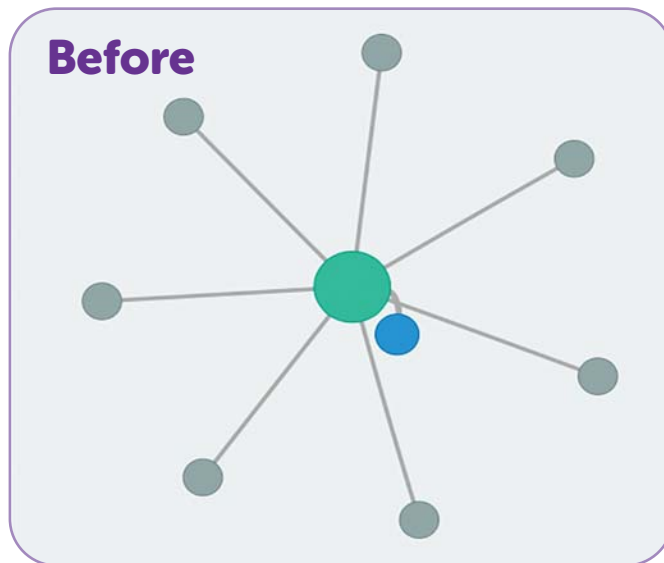
After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	2	4	0

DfC3's membership of DfC has only been for a very short period so this person will only have had the opportunity to attend one or two sessions, however despite this feedback is still positive. DfC 3 had been a member of GDA for 5 years doing intermittent courses before joining DfC, hence the presence of bridging ties before joining DfC.

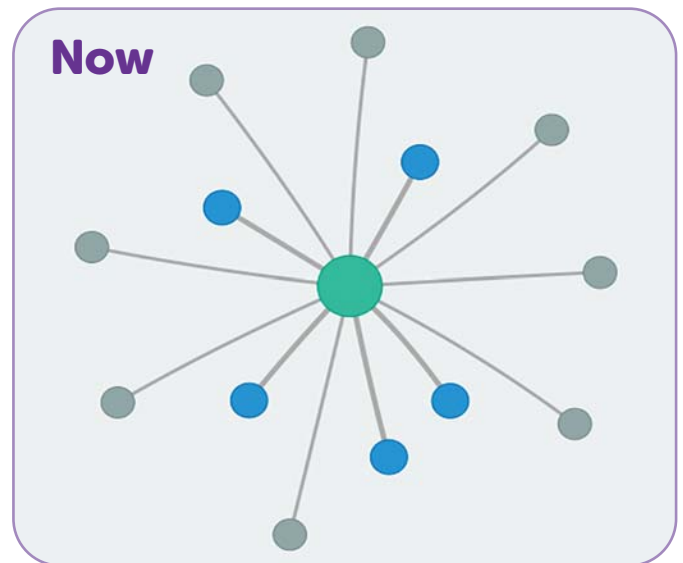
DfC3 has taken part in quite a few GDA activities, firstly joining the project for young disabled people then progressing to more general programmes as their confidence grew. DfC3 is limited in terms of their community connections due to the lack of personal assistance funding as part of their social work funded package. They are not able to access online networks easily due to lack of equipment and broadband in the family home. DfC3 has commented on several occasions that coming out to GDA activities is their only form of social interaction.

"The GDA is really helpful. I'm quite shy and felt a bit lonely but I've met lots of people and made friends. I joined DfC after being involved with other GDA projects and wanted to get more skills to be able to voice my opinions and give something back."

DfC4 – Member of DfC for 1 month



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	1	7	0



After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	5	8	0

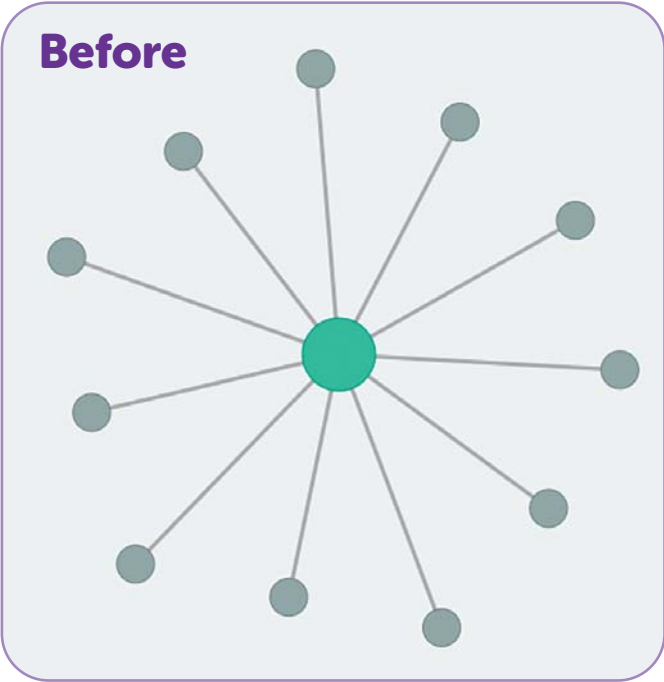
DfC4 has been a member of GDA for a year and DfC for only one month yet it is clear that this person's experience of being a GDA member has given them a real desire to become active again, despite a major setback experienced in the past.

"Just before I left my job I faced an extremely traumatic ordeal, and that had a very negative impact on me and I withdrew badly. Getting involved with GDA has given the chance to find myself again. I started by doing some fun taster sessions then was offered a place on the My Choices programme. This was a brilliant way for me to build confidence, make friends and simply get my life back. I really appreciate all the people who work with GDA, they mean so much to me. That's why I wanted to join Drivers for Change – so I could put my regained confidence to good use and give something back to GDA and to the community of disabled people we all belong to. Very quickly after getting involved in DfC, I was invited to be one of the GDA reps on the Poverty Leadership Panel's (PLP) 'Community Activists Group', which means I'm now part of a group that is able to put forward what we would like to achieve in terms of changes and **voice our opinions to be heard** in relation to reducing and combating poverty in the city. I feel the group is going to be pro-active.

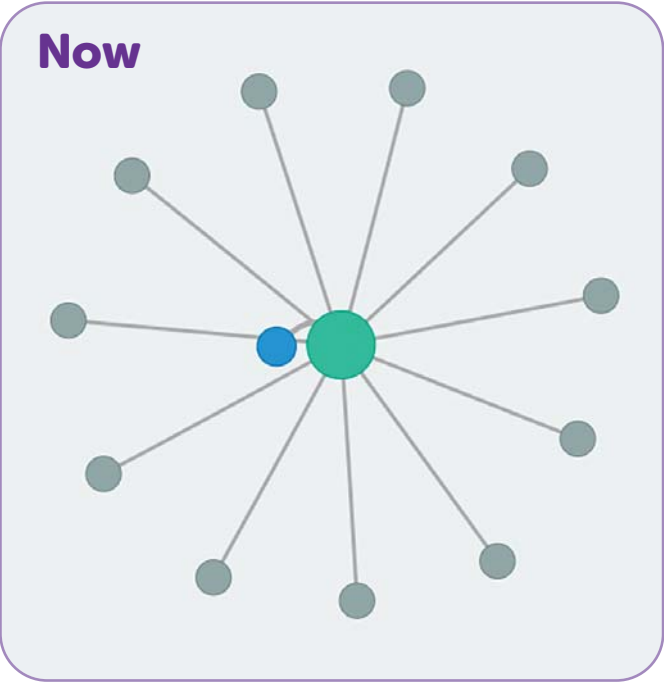
As part of the PLP, I will be taking part in the 'mutual mentoring scheme' which matches people with lived experience of poverty with senior managers from the PLP partners, such as Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Life and Health and Social Care Partnership. This is an excellent way to bring completely diverse people together for mutual benefit and I am looking forward to being able to share my personal experiences in a way that will benefit many people across the city.

Some DfC members were invited to an NHS/Social Work, externally run event about the changes in the mental health framework. But we felt that there wasn't enough time to ask questions and we felt that really they only paid lip service and we should have been given much more time for the questions part of the event. Normally I wouldn't even have got the chance to go to events like this and I certainly would never have spoken up before. Now, I am not only attending these events but feel more able to challenge when I think things are not right. I know if GDA had been running this event, our voices would have been heard and valued and we'd have seen results!"

DfC5 – Member of DfC for 4 months



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	0	11	0



After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	1	11	0

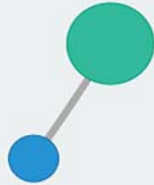
DfC5 again shows the benefits of having been a member of GDA for a number of years with a strong network of related bridging ties already established prior to joining DfC. This person has not been a member of this particular project for long, but from the personal statement it is clear that GDA has had a very positive impact on their life already. Additionally, DfC5 is likely to be a positive asset to DfC given the significant number of external connections they bring to the group, through which it could be possible to access new ideas and activities.

“The courses and the project are all about empowering you and learning about how to understand more about independent living and what support we need to make our personal contributions; and then **communicate that with public services/ policy makers etc.** I feel that I can **trust** all the staff and the members of the GDA. Because they are disabled people themselves and they know what we need for access to take part.

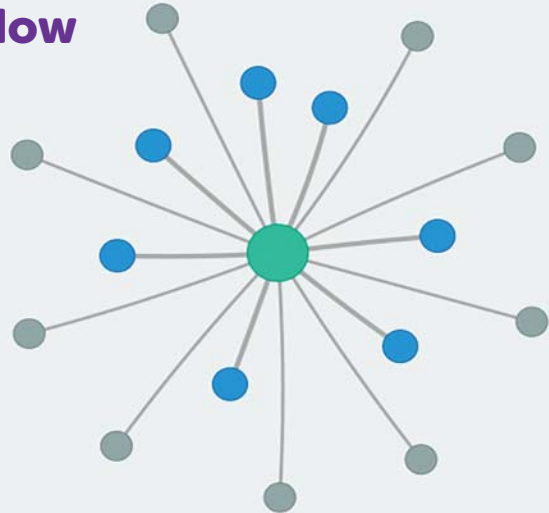
Since I joined GDA I have seen a big, big change in myself. You feel empowered within the organisation and that’s why I felt able to join DfC as my efforts would be valued and not tokenistic. It’s worth putting the effort in. Now as part of the Drivers I feel like I am able to play a lead part in GDA- like, GDA has asked me a few times to facilitate different conversations and also to do interviews with the media. I feel the staff are very positive and very forward thinking to support building **confidence** in particular for the young people. I like how people of all ages and experiences come together with the Drivers and everyone’s opinion matters and our voices are heard. I’m really proud of myself and so is my family.”

DfC6 – Member of DfC for 2 years

Before



Now



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	1	0	0

After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	7	9	0

DfC6 has been a member of GDA for a number of years prior to joining DfC. They live on the edge of Glasgow and independent transport - when not funded by GDA - has been a real challenge to maintaining socialising opportunities which has a knock on effect on their confidence to be a valued friend and therefore on relationships. Despite this, the contacts resulting from involvement in DfC are very positive and well balanced between bonding and bridging, suggesting that they have good friendships and also good opportunities to learn new ideas and access new opportunities via the bridging ties.

Lack of support to participate in anything outside of GDA means that they are unable to maintain friendships unless actively participating in a GDA programme, so friendships made very quickly, can be hard to sustain.

DfC6 reports having no friends or connections beyond family, outwith GDA. Poor mental and physical health quickly magnifies isolation and loneliness, as does a reluctance within the family to seek assistance. At the time of the interview DfC6's regular participation in GDA and DfC has enabled them to gain valuable friendships.

"If it wasn't for the GDA I wouldn't be in such a good place as I am in today. The whole of GDA is like an extended family - I have 'adopted' cousins here! Thanks to being able to get taxis from the GDA I am able to meet people outside of my family and make friends. GDA is the only organisation that will supply transport for disabled people who need it, even if they live outside the Glasgow City Council area as long as they have a grant for this. I trust people at GDA.

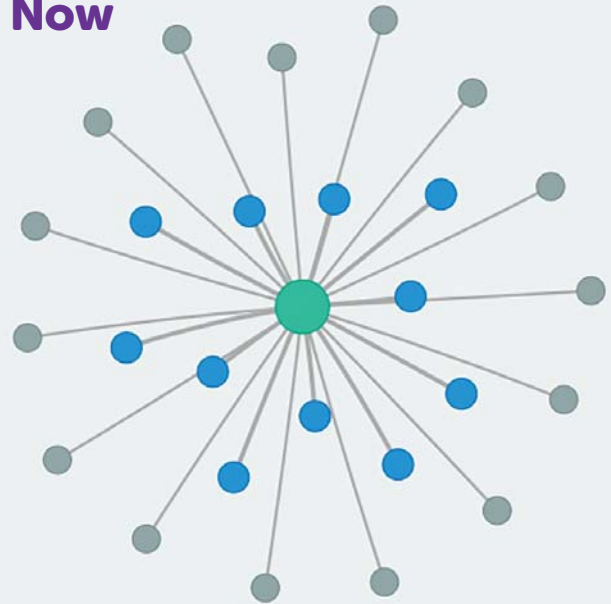
I've done so many courses and programmes over the years and I really like that there is no expectation, like if you're ill you can take time out, but you're allowed to come back again. Now that I am able to be part of DfC and give something back I feel like I can finally contribute rather than feeling useless. **They have totally changed my life."**

DfC7 – Member of DfC for 6 years

Before



Now



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	1	0	0

After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	11	15	0

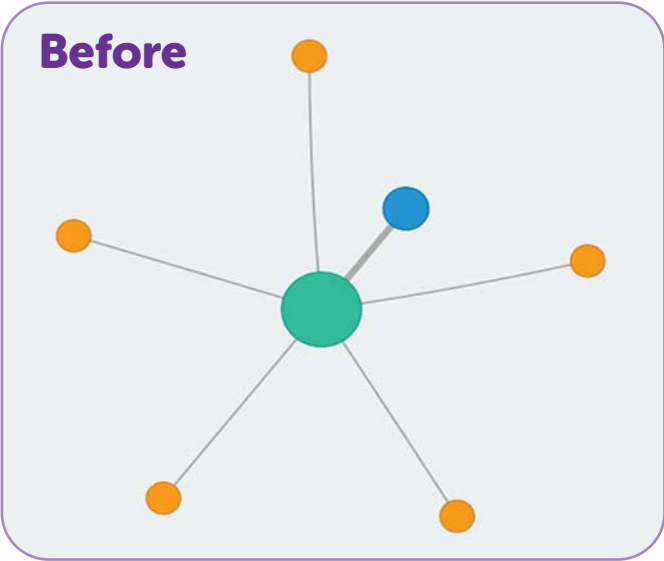
Similar to DfC6, DfC7's social network is well balanced between both bonding and bridging, with bridging being the more slightly dominant score. Again similar to the scores for the previous member DfC7 is likely to have both friendships and also opportunities. This is borne out by their personal statement below.

"The GDA has been amazing for the past six years I have been a member because I wouldn't be as **confident** as I am now to **speak up and speak out** and I wouldn't have made so many really good friends. I have done so many courses I have lost count and I have got something new and positive from each one. I even had to stop coming along to as many things as I got a part time job!

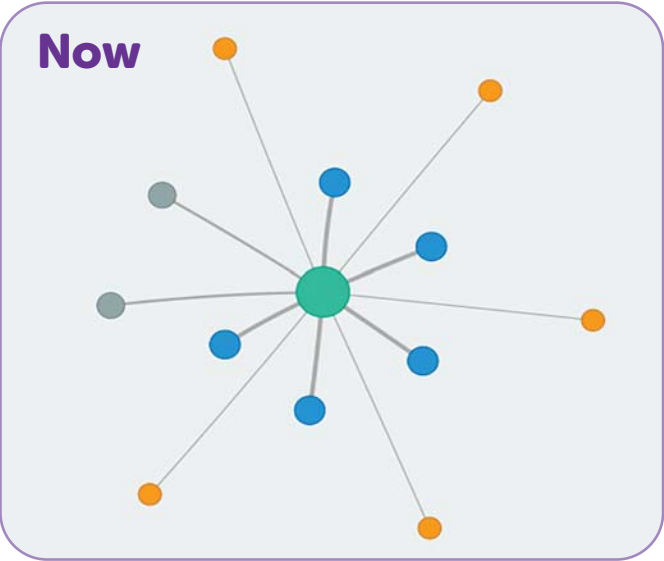
Like (DfC6) I feel I am really giving something back now and I have been asked to help run sessions, work on information stalls, do talks and speak to the press, plus I've been supported to contribute my experience to lots of really important groups.

One of the things I loved the most was the GDA / Glasgow University Activate Course - I wouldn't have thought that I could have completed such a high level course if it wasn't for the GDA. The thing with the GDA is that you can **trust** everybody because it is run by disabled people for disabled people so you are not being or feeling judged. We're all here on an equal basis and we're all wanting to help each other and make it better for disabled people in the future. **It's about improving the community for everyone! We run the organisation, appoint the staff and decide on the programmes. And it is a community- nothing about us without us is our slogan.**"

DfC8 – Member of DfC for 1 year 6 months



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	1	0	5



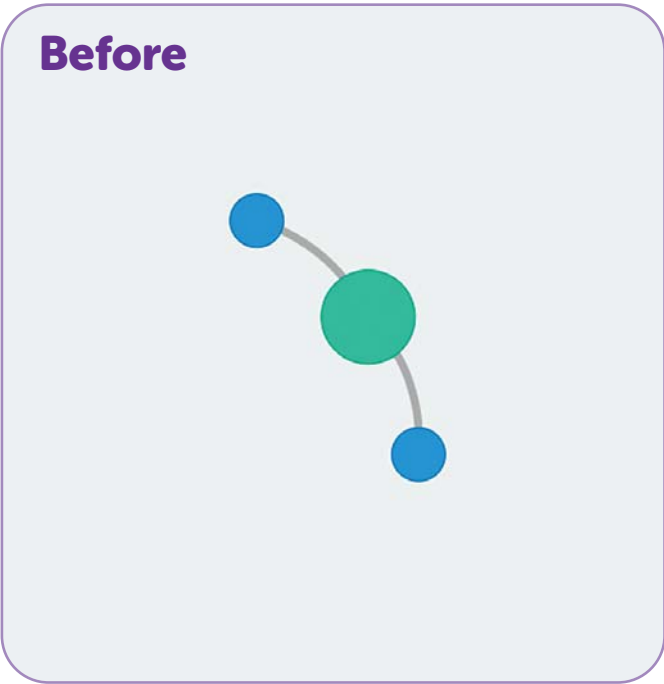
After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	5	2	5

DfC8 has been a member of GDA for many years and from the linking ties identified prior to joining it can be concluded that this person is likely to be ‘active’ on behalf of disabled people. As with DfC6, it might be surprising that there are not more bridging ties mentioned prior to joining DfC, which would have been expected for someone who has been a member of GDA for many years. However, an understanding of their personal story provides some explanation:

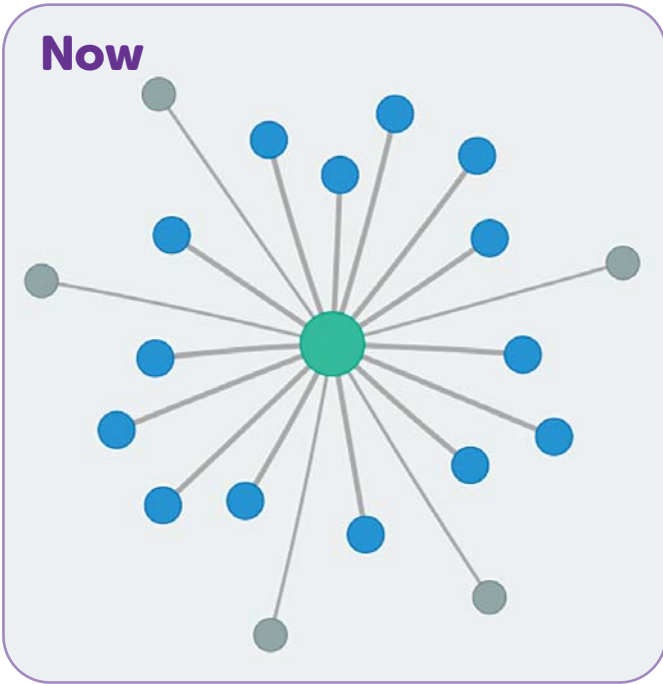
“I was very ill for many years with kidney failure and was on regular and frequent dialysis. I gradually disengaged with GDA activity during this time, although I stayed in touch with the office via the phone and I continued to receive information and phonecalls from them which I appreciated. It made me feel part of something and I felt I was still connected to a source of support. Due to being in hospital for major transplant surgery, followed by a lengthy recovery period, almost all contact was lost. I’d previously been very well connected, in my local community and across Glasgow, as I was involved in loads of local campaign and consultation organisations. But it’s amazing how quickly you become disconnected and isolated when you become ill and not able to get out and about.

Getting involved with DfC was a personal goal I set myself during my recovery, as I was being supported by another GDA specialist project called My Choices. I was supported greatly by GDA staff in this. Getting out and about again and my participation in Drivers really boosted my confidence during my recovery and gave me a renewed sense of connection to the community. Drivers provides people with the access and information, gets people involved and gives them **the confidence to get involved in the decision-making process**. Drivers is for me the place where we can do that with the right access and support on all the pieces of work on issues which help us to support ourselves and get on with our lives. It makes you feel useful, puts us in charge and builds our resilience.”

DfC9 – Member of DfC for 4 months



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	2	0	0



After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	14	5	0

DfC9 has made the most out of joining GDA and DfC. Although only a member for a short time, this person’s social network has grown dramatically within DfC and as such it can be expected that they will be very comfortable with the other members of the group. In this short time they have also been able to generate new bridging connections outside of the immediate group, a positive sign for access to new information and ideas.

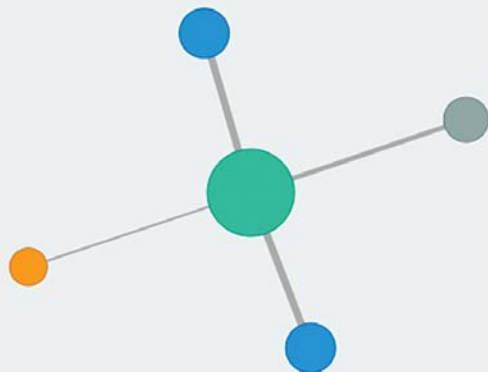
“I got involved with GDA through someone I know and I took part in a few courses, but it was more the changing things side of things I was interested in –using our expert and lived experiences to bring about changes for the better. I found out about Drivers for Change – they do try to let people know that it is there. I like to get involved, make a change, you wanna have an impact. I am glad that I found it and it has been a great resource for me.

I was socially excluded, but once I was in the GDA I found out that there are actually endless opportunities, you get access to more ideas and projects like Drivers. Sometimes it’s just a case of talking to someone new who gives you an idea or you just see things hanging on the wall and think ‘that sounds interesting, I’ll go there and have a look’. It gives you the confidence to do that as there is so much support.

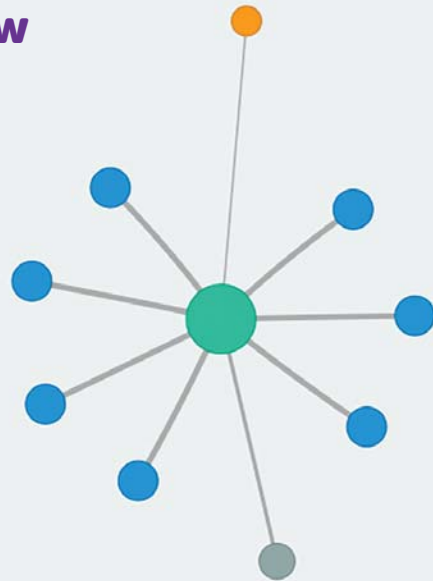
I like to stir things up a bit and this is a positive and constructive way to do this. It’s about taking control of your own life and working together for the better of the community. I’d heard all this talk about assets and I thought it was a lot of nonsense, but GDA has taught me what community assets really are and I’m proud to say that my voice adds to the strength of GDA as a brilliant community asset – 3500 assets!”

DfC10 – Member of DfC for 1 year

Before



Now



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	2	1	1

After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	7	1	1

DfC 10 has been a member of GDA and DfC for 1 year. In that time they have increased bonding ties 3-fold demonstrating enjoyment of the atmosphere and support of the DfC programme.

"I've worked in high powered jobs all my life and also as a consultant. When my health deteriorated so much that I had to give up work, I quickly felt isolated, and lost my sense of professional identity. This feeling of loss and loneliness also made my health worse.

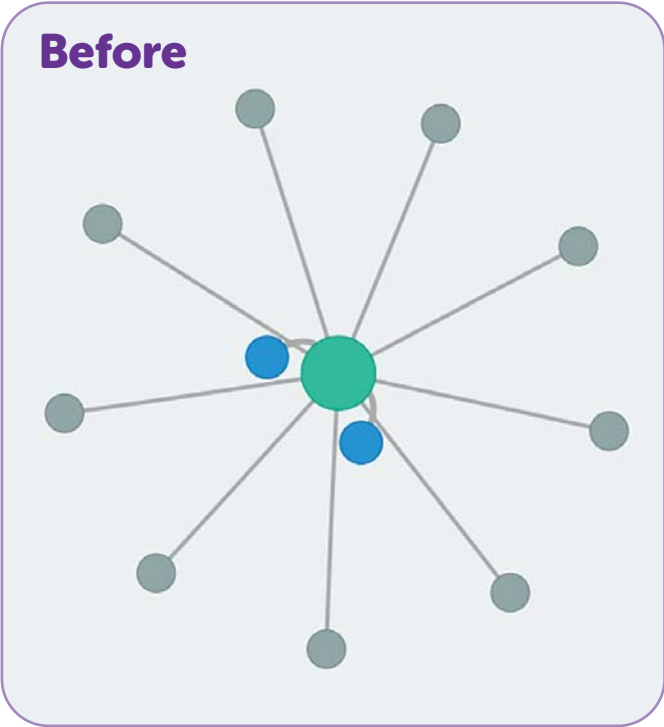
I'd been a member of GDA for a while before I felt I needed to use their services but from the first time I came along to a session, I was amazed by how much better I felt! I rediscovered my artistic talents and was inspired by the support and energy around me.

I quickly got involved in Drivers for Change as I really wanted to get more involved in campaigning and making a difference. The training, support, encouragement and opportunities have been amazing and already I've found a new sense of purpose again. I'm feeling better and more positive and started volunteering .

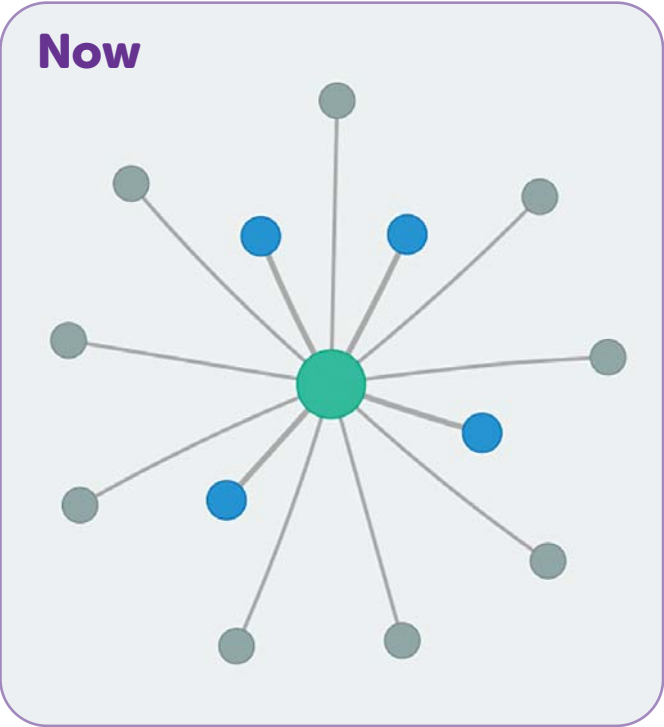
I think it is a great idea, GDA itself has always been a very interesting organisation, especially knowing how it started and continues to be run differently to many organisations being totally user-led, people led and putting disabled people in control.

Thinking back to when I first got involved, by just having a chat with one member of staff, this immediately **raised my confidence**. It is just the way they work with people that makes them so unique. It's because disabled people are in the lead themselves and GDA believes in our potential."

DfC11 – Member of DfC for 4 months



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	2	9	0



After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	4	9	0

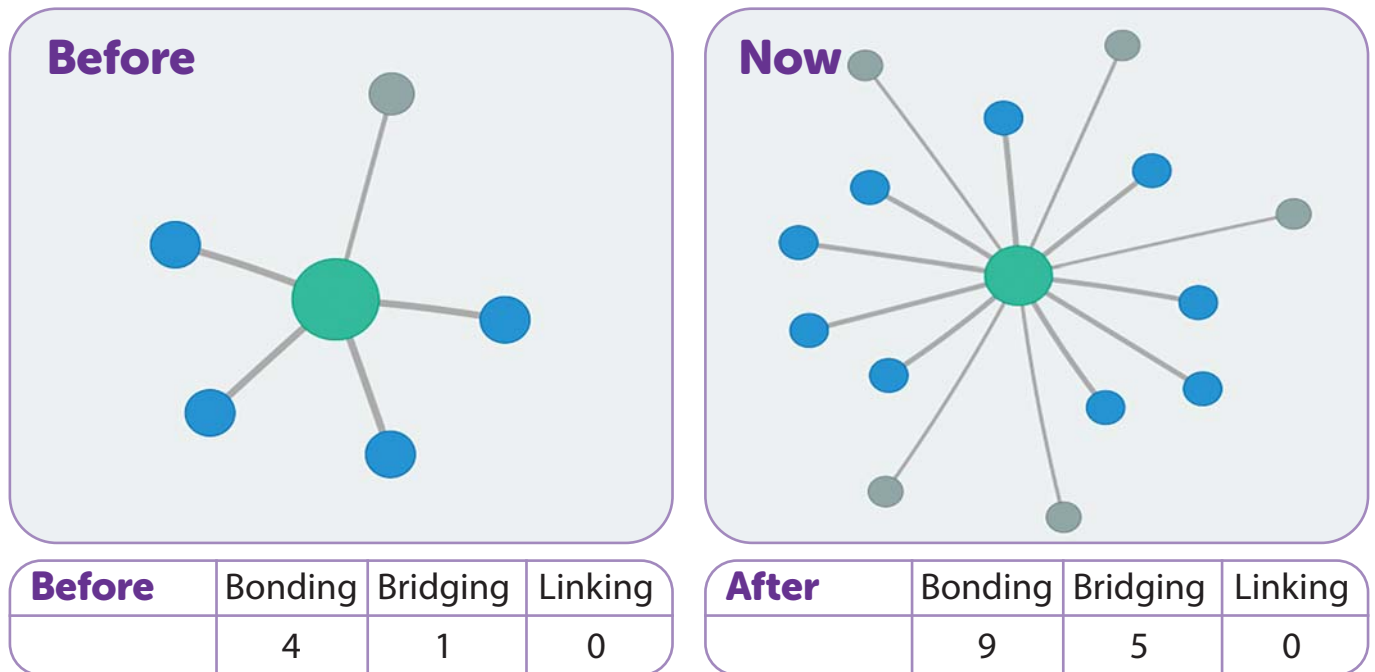
DfC 11 has been at DfC for only a few months but has managed to generate some new connections within the group. Before joining this person already had quite a strong network of connections which would mean they could be seen as a very positive resource for DfC and would likely bring access to new ideas and opportunities to the group.

“In other places I have been bullied but here people just take you on as you are. The people are amazing - the best thing I have ever joined. Ever since I became a member it has just changed me. Before I never cared about what other people's views were. I was always judging people and now I get along with a lot of people, I just changed - it taught me to be a better person and not just how to do things.

I used to have some people in my life that were a negative influence but I was so scared of being alone that I didn't want to lose them. Since joining GDA I have replaced some of these unhelpful people with more appropriate, positive people - people who are genuine friends, who have a mutual interest and genuinely care about me and what is going on in my life. My self-esteem has totally grown and I'm feeling more positive for the future and can see I can take control of my life in a positive way for the first time in years.

GDA is a very good organisation that is all I can say, just outstanding.”

DfC12 – Member of DfC for 1 year 6 months



DfC12 has increased bonding ties 2-fold and bridging ties 2.5 times. These results are in line with what would be expected for someone joining Drivers for Change and suggest that DfC12 will benefit from their involvement in the programme.

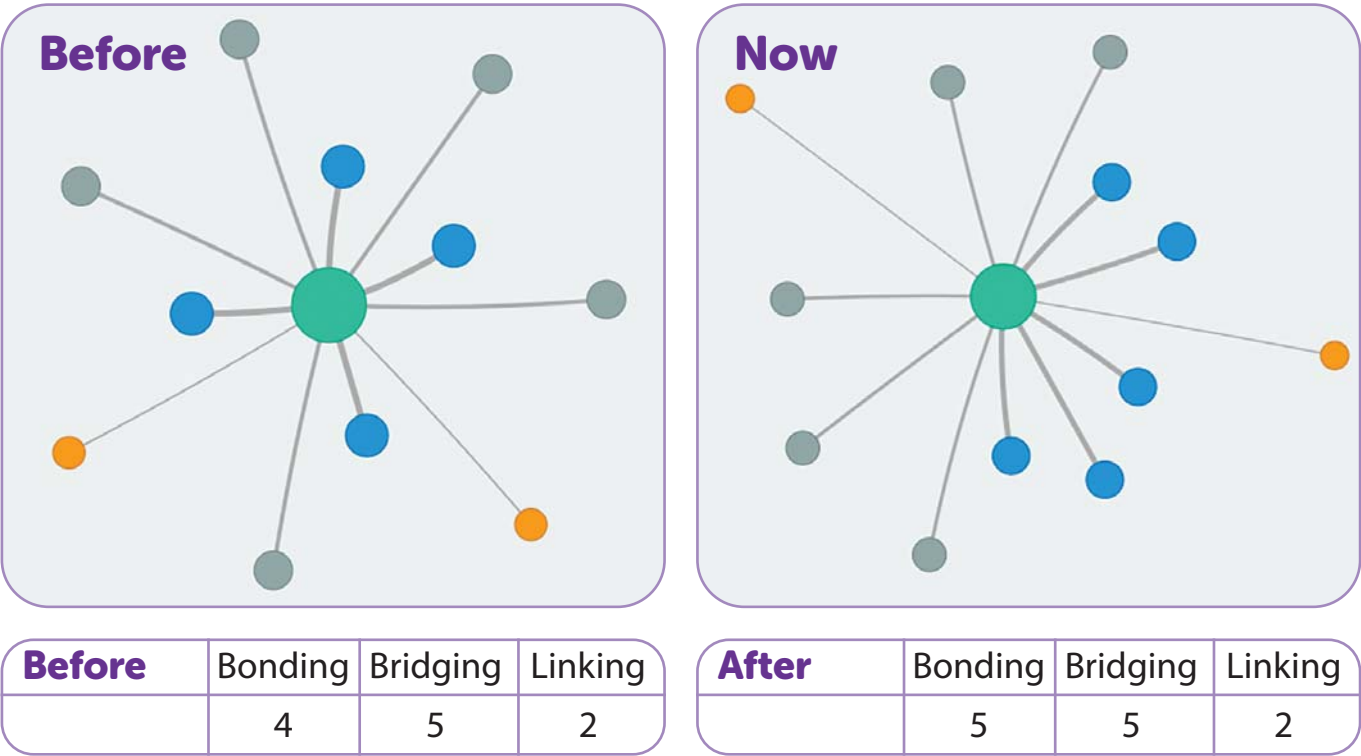
"I attend lots of GDA events but I tend to only attend the DfC learning programmes as I am a student so I don't have a lot of free time. I find the events really interesting and I'd like to know a bit more about 'what happens next'. This is one of the main reasons I joined Drivers, so I could get more involved at a policy and influencing level. I like to be well informed so getting briefing papers and information in advance – in an accessible format – is really helpful. A lot of the people in Drivers have mobility issues so sometimes that can mean things are more focussed that way. But I am much more confident now about speaking up and making sure that all views are heard, so I'm not so shy at challenging others especially as we're so supportive of each other. I also feel I can give feedback to GDA if I feel things could be done better and they take on board suggestions. We're learning from each other, sharing the things we're good at, things we know about so it's a 'win-win' situation!

GDA supports us to take the lead where we can, whether that's in our own life, standing up for ourselves, or within GDA – from leading a discussion group, giving a presentation, starring in a film or representing disabled people on a working group. I know that my skills, knowledge and expertise are valued.

I would like to see even more social events happening at GDA - I think this would provide a more social and relaxed environment to meet people on a regular basis, would be great to extend that a little. I think there is an opportunity here with Drivers to take that on for themselves in the way PPPs have their own social groups now as a result of friendships developed."

From the personal statement above, it is clear that this person is confident to air suggestions regarding how they see GDA being run, and expects that their opinion will be heard. The fact that they would also like to see more informal activities suggest enjoying the events already attended.

DfC13 – Member of DfC for 1 month



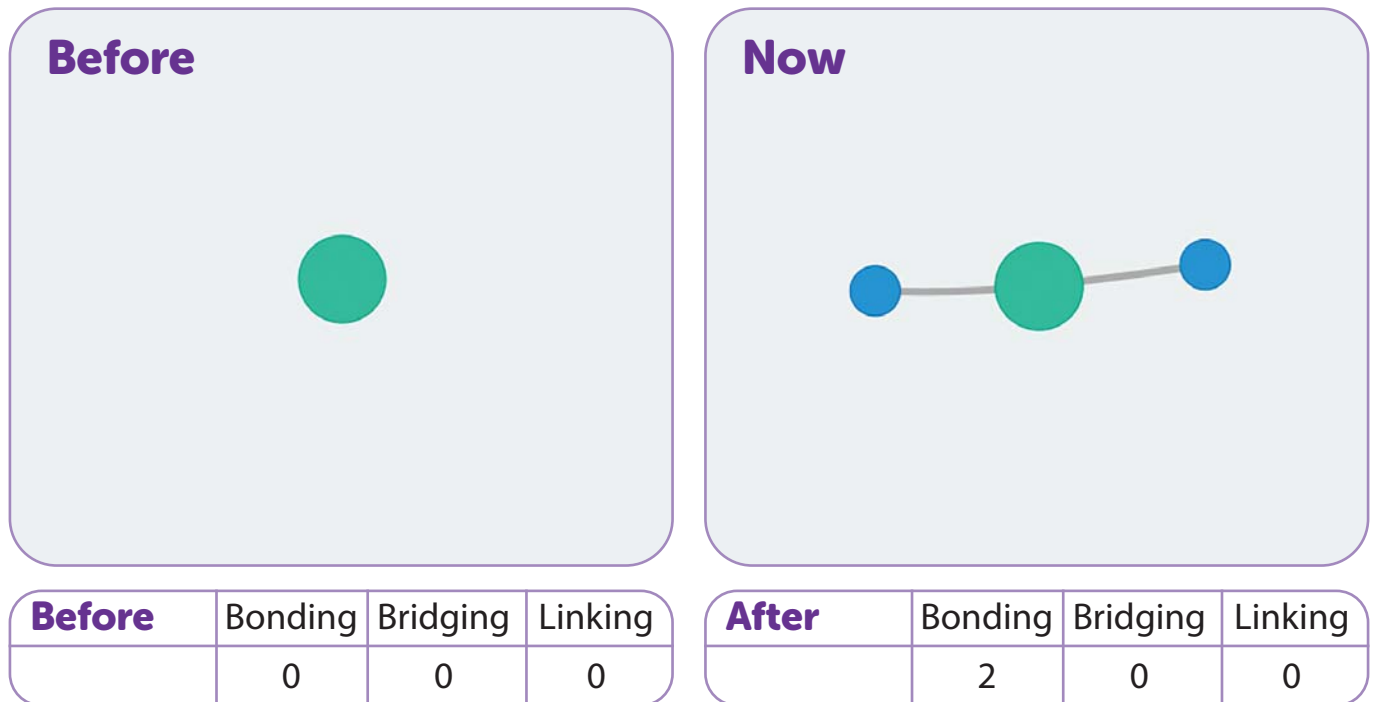
DfC13 has only been a member of DfC for one month, but a member of GDA for a number of years, which is demonstrated by the relationships relevant to DfC activities they already had before joining the project. DfC13 has benefitted by building an interesting spread of connections, which although not as large as some others in GDA and DfC, are well balanced from the very start of their involvement. This suggests that DfC13 is likely to become a valuable asset to the DfC project quite quickly if they continue to attend.

"I've been a member of GDA for quite a while now and really enjoyed all the courses I've done. I made a lot of friends and I've been able to support others I know to get involved too. GDA has helped me to make connections in my local area and referred me to other organisations that can help me, so for example with my housing and social care package/Self Directed Support issues.

As well as the main DfC group, I've been to a few young Drivers meetings and that's really helped my build my voice. It's taken me a long time to build up my confidence and although I felt quite able voicing my opinions in smaller groups of young disabled people, I felt a bit overwhelmed coming to a bigger DfC meeting. However, once I'd been along and met everyone, I realised that we all share the same issues and concerns no matter what our age and we can support and learn from each other. Personally, I would like to keep being informed and involved in DfC but I'd really benefit from staying with the new group of young Drivers too as I feel most comfortable with them at the moment. The good thing about GDA is that there are lots of ways to be involved and lots of opportunities to build up your skills.

The main thing is that I now actually have the **confidence to put my views across and now that I've started doing that, I don't want to stop!**"

DfC14 – Member of DfC for 2 years



The graph of GDA DfC14 suggests that this person has not made significant progress in building connections through their involvement in GDA activities. However, this does not reveal the full story in that DfC14 has a memory impairment due to their medical condition and was therefore not able to recall the facts being explored. This was then demonstrated in the personal statement.

It was also made clear on a number of occasions during the interview by DfC14 themselves, that they had made many more connections but due to a significant cognitive and memory impairment, they were not able to remember many of these names.

In addition, other members of the group made reference to DfC14 during their interviews. Many spoke of their intelligence, great humour and their previous professional experience all being of great benefit to the group.

One interviewee (PPP3) knows DfC14 particularly well as they live fairly close to each other. An example given was that PPP3 has taken on a citizen advocacy role on behalf of DfC14, e.g. during social work reviews and in terms of housing support. PPP3 has also helped DfC14 make connections with local support and information networks. This was a very useful learning point for the study as much social isolation focus is on older and disabled people who might have memory impairments. In future research studies, consideration will be given to this e.g. it may be beneficial for a personal assistant or someone who knows the individual well to support a person affected in this way to take part in the interview if it was agreed by all involved to be appropriate.

"I enjoy coming here, being involved. Getting out my house, talking to other people, even though I can't remember names. Other than at DfC I have no connections and here I see and recognise many people who also know me!"

Purple Poncho Players

In October 2011, over 100 disabled people participated in the STUC People First March and Rally defending public services. GDA supplied purple rain ponchos to protect people from the heavy rain and help identify each other in the crowd.

This experience inspired GDA to form a drama group so members could share messages about their real life experiences of the barriers faced by disabled people to persuade those in power to do things differently, to listen to disabled people's voices and in turn to improve better policies and services.

The aim is to use engaging medium of drama, comedy and song, to deliver the key messages inspired by the Drivers for Change network in a professional, poignant, challenging way, thus enabling consistency of messages and strategic direction – full circle – putting disabled people in the lead role in every way.

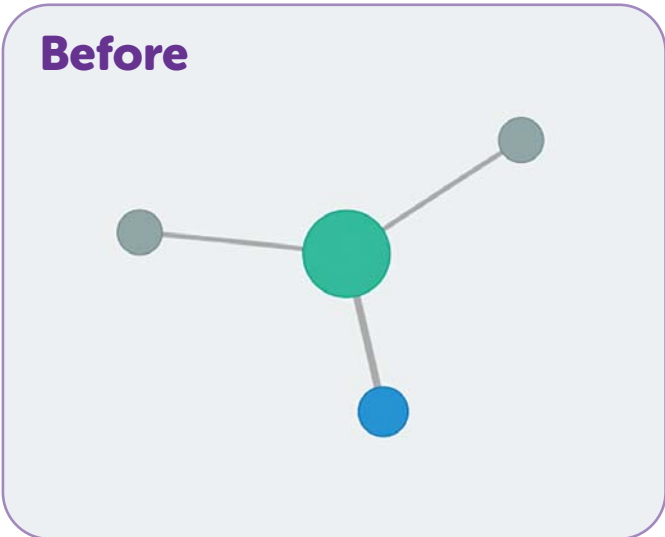
Through the support of GDA the Purple Poncho Players (PPPs) are able to collaborate with professional writers, actors and musicians through iterative, creative and developmental workshops. Together they work to produce poetry, songs and sketches that share the lived experiences of disabled people in a fun, accessible and thought-provoking way.

The PPPs first performed in February 2012 and have presented to audiences of hundreds in venues across Scotland. They have benefited from support and direction from their professional Creative Team as well as theatre workshops from talented and prestigious professionals including Liz Lochhead, Scottish poet, playwright, and broadcaster and Scots Makar 2011 – 2016.

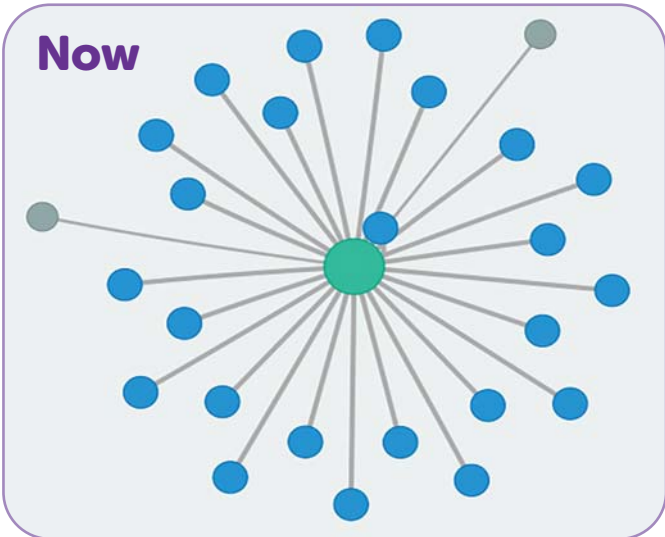
The PPP performances provide the opportunity for members to engage with and speak to a very broad audience. While the events are fleeting they bring disabled people into direct contact with people who they otherwise would be unlikely to meet, this is known as bridging. The purpose of the PPPs performances is to persuade those in power to do things differently so the focus is strongly on using the performances of the PPPs to reach audiences in a way that will impact on policy. The PPPs also aim to inspire other disabled people acting as role models and promoting a sense of community cohesion amongst their peers.

The following 10 Social Network maps show the impact of the PPPs in terms of the social networks being created to try and achieve these aims.

PPP1 – Member of PPPs for 4 years



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	1	2	0



After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	24	2	0

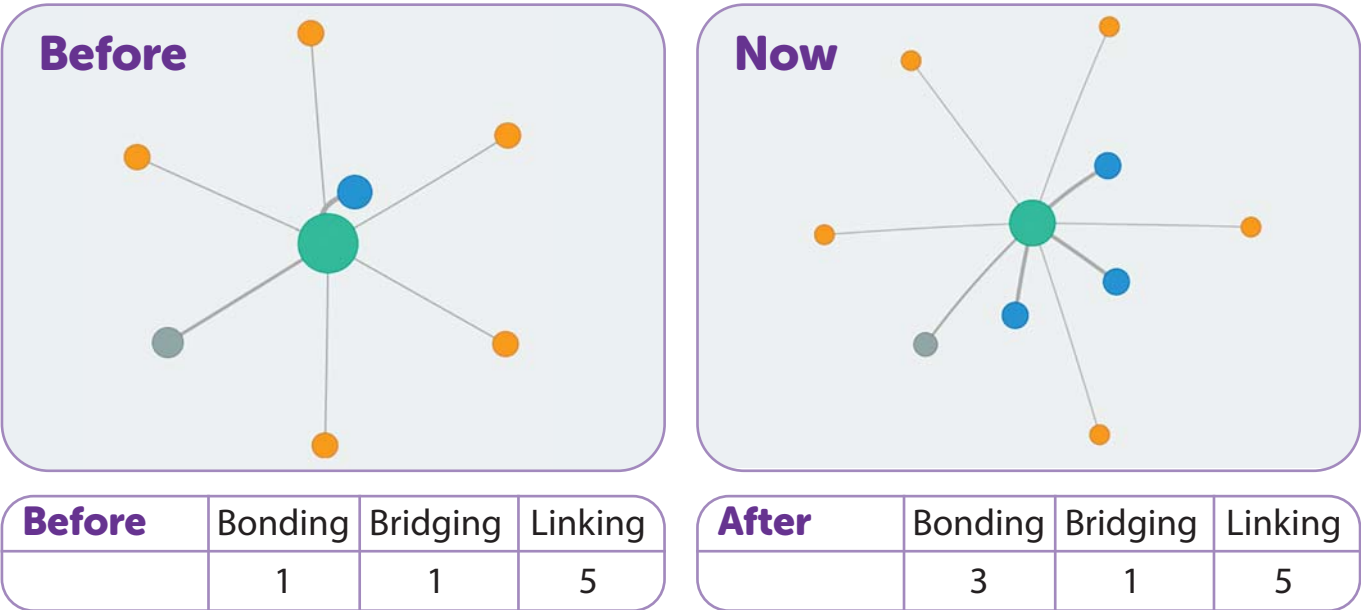
PPP1 has built a large network of peer connections inside the PPPs while bridging and linking scores have remained the same, which would suggest that this person is very comfortable in this environment. They are likely to be a valuable member of the group in terms of keeping information circulating within the group given that they know a lot of the members. This particular person has taken on a lead role in organising social activities for the group which backs up this assumption.

"I think we are all equally important and we are all working together side by side. I think the GDA is a fabulous organisation and the PPPs has been the best thing that I have done in a long time. I've been involved with GDA for a long time but it wasn't until I joined the PPPs that I really found my role (excuse the pun!). It's given me a complete change in my personal confidence and I just can't believe the things I've achieved over the past few years. I never thought that I'd be on stage in front of government ministers and people with real power, and that they'd be listening to me, perhaps having their opinion changed by something I said – it's amazing to think I can have an opportunity to get involved in something so influential.

It's because of the way GDA works. Disabled people lead the organisation – the members, the board, the staff. You're encouraged to develop and use your skills and talents and take on responsibility where possible. The PPPs is built on these same principles. Because we don't get told what to do, we all can bring in our own ideas which get put into our songs and sketches. Basically what I mean is that you get listened to.

I've always wanted to give something back and make a difference in my community. Through GDA I've developed the skills and confidence to do this. Since getting involved with the PPPs I've truly believed in myself. So much so that I am now volunteering with 2 different community organisations and giving my experience as a confident citizen, not a token disabled person."

PPP2 – Member of PPPs for 4 years



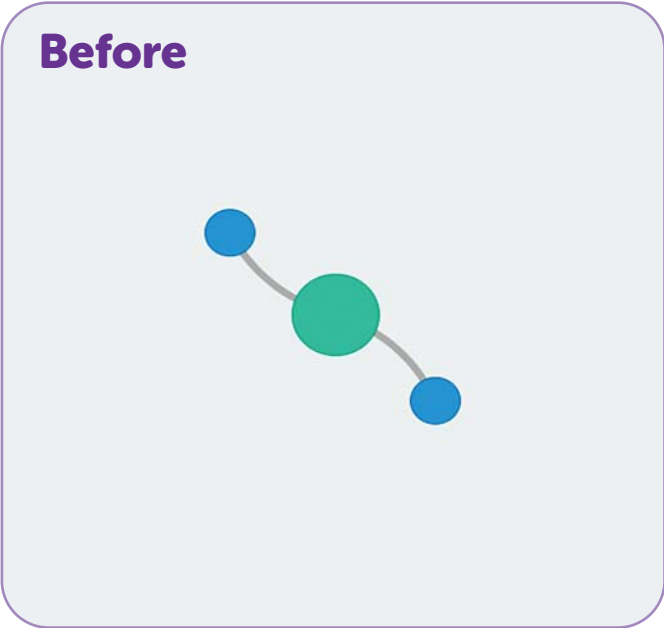
PPP2 has been a member of the PPPs for 4 years now. This person appears to be relatively inactive socially within the project and keeps to themselves, demonstrated by very few new connections being formed in this time. However, despite this PPP2 is still very positive about the impact of GDA and the PPPs and demonstrates in their personal statement that GDA works to its stated values of participation, transparency and mutual benefit for all its members.

I've been involved with GDA and our growing community right from the beginning and I was really active until around 4 years ago when my health really deteriorated. My social care package has been cut so much in the past few years that I've lost all the support I need for any sort of social interaction. Coming to GDA learning and in particular the PPPs, is my way of making a real contribution while still being able to socialise and keep up my connections. Without this level of support and access, I'd just get totally isolated. I love the way the PPPs work. We get more than enough information and support. I know it takes quite a lot of money to do it though and GDA got a special grant for this to enhance it, so a lot of what we're able to do is down to finance but I think it is very important that the PPPs continue to exist as it is beginning to have influence on decision-makers out there.

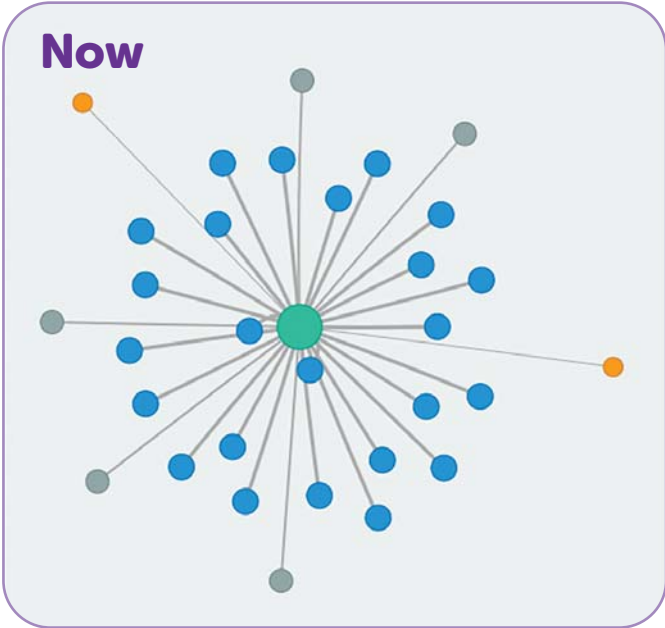
What's really important is that our contributions as disabled people are totally valued. We're in charge. We're a network of people with lived experience and we can put our own spin on how we are feeling about the particular sketch we are doing at the time - there is support from professional actors but we portray issues that are not made up, they have been influenced by us and our lived experiences or issues. PPP brings the best out of people, it draws them out of their 'shell', it provides an 'informal' achievement. The PPP programme allows us to express issues for disabled people which can lead to actions, like communicating our issues by taking them to 'stage' and bringing them to the people (including politicians etc.)

The beauty of GDA is that they have so many members but if you take part in the learning you are meeting new people all the time. I think both the GDA and PPP are important and it is essential that they continue to exist because there are a lot of lonely, lonely people out there and having the GDA and PPP has a positive effect for those people, including myself. Without GDA, there is little if anything for disabled people.

PPP3 – Member of PPPs for 4 years



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	2	0	0



After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	24	5	2

PPP3 has been a member of the PPPs for 4 years. The social network map of this member demonstrates that they are a very active member of the group, with a high number of connections across the group making them a positive asset in terms of building friendships in the group and sharing information. At the same time PPP3 has also built connections outwith the group particularly bridging ties as well as linking ties. This suggests they are likely to be in a position to access new opportunities and to a lesser extent influence decision makers.





"Getting sick, having a disease and becoming disabled – I thought that was the end of my life and it was all over. I lost all my courage, I lost my confidence and thought my life was over. I didn't know how to be a disabled confident person and I totally withdrew from all that I'd known.

Somebody I knew invited me to come along to the GDA, so I thought I'd take the risk to join and make that connection. Wow...GDA changed all that and it kick-started me again and I started studying to challenge my brain, completing my degree. GDA believed I could do it and I did!

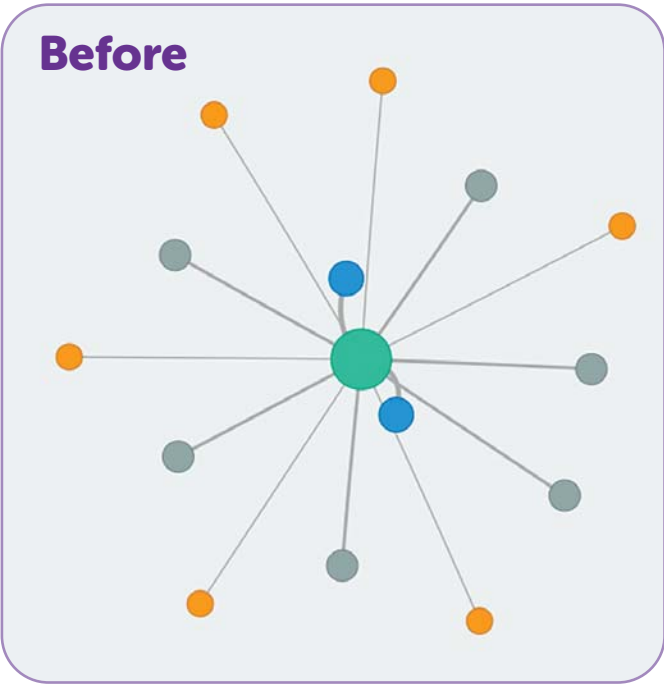
The other thing the GDA gave me was access to information which I would otherwise not have had and the right support is always in place. This is really important, particularly for someone like me who thought their life was over. Seeing other disabled people just getting on with things, seeing what it's like to have the proper support and personal assistance in particular was life changing.

I have gained so much confidence and you get to practice it when you do the drama - but the fellowships and friendships I have gained through the PPPs are incredible and the depths of them are incredible. I didn't know that was possible, I have so much support here and they supported me through difficult times. In the PPPs there is something about family there, I can be me and I don't need to worry because I am disabled - it is those tiny wee things I don't have to worry about.

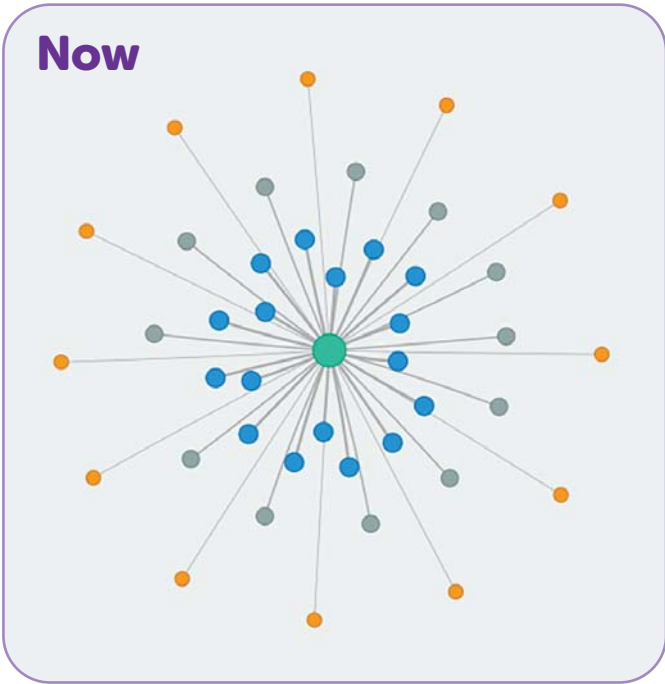
I'm now in a much better place and I feel that I am not only giving something back to GDA with my involvement in the PPPs, but I'm also giving back on a personal level – as a friend, advocate and mentor to others in the group. I'm out working in the community – as I now have a life outside of GDA again! I feel valuable and needed. It's what contributing is all about and looking back I'd never have believed I could be "a contributor" when I became disabled. It wasn't something I associated with disabled people when I wasn't one of them.

Joining the PPPs has helped me and given me so much - because once you start learning it inspires you to go on and do more, better things. I now know if I don't become active and say things, nothing will change, so I have become very active now. Once I started studying again, I just kept going- there's no stopping me now! Now I can speak for other disabled people still finding their voices."

PPP4 – Member of PPPs for 3 years



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	2	6	6



After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	17	12	12

PPP4 has been a member of the PPPs for 3 years and arrived in the group with already well developed bridging and linking scores that are relevant to the PPP activities, mainly due to their prior involvement with DfC where they'd developed the knowledge, confidence and skills to advocate for disabled people, particularly in terms of representation roles. The social network map of this member of the PPPs suggests they are a highly active member of the group having increased significantly their bonding, bridging and linking scores, particularly the bonding scores. The spread of the connections means this person is likely to be highly influential in all aspects of the PPPs and is likely to be a significant asset to them in a variety of ways. This demonstrates that



they are highly adept and maximising opportunities to build relationships internally as well as externally providing strong peer support, bringing access to new ideas and information and also likely to be good at influencing those in decision making positions. This person is likely to be a key member of the PPPs.



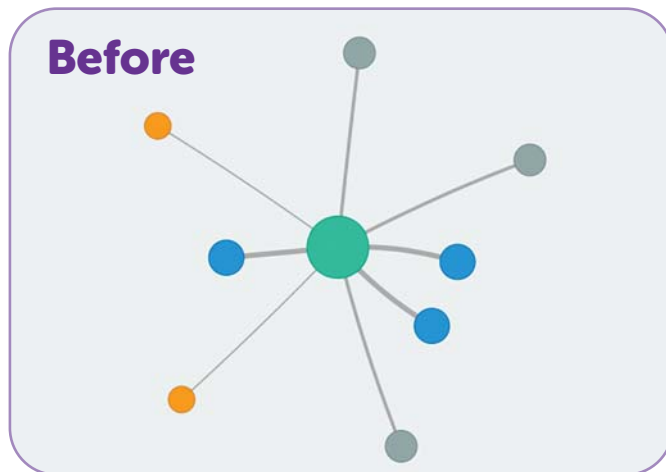
"GDA is a great organisation to be part of. I really feel it is a truly disabled people led organisation and it is at the forefront of promoting the rights and issues of disabled people in Scotland. Overall it is a very inclusive and supportive organisation that helps people find their power, develops their talents and strengths and makes a commitment to expanding connections and influence.

Being part of the PPPs in particular has been very empowering and built my confidence. In general GDA is about building capacity within its members and improving the lives of disabled people. It's about building our connections and supports. Although I was fairly confident when I joined the PPPs, I struggled to speak up in front of "important" people and meetings sometimes intimidated me. I'd never have got up in front of a group to do any public speaking. Being involved with the PPPs has changed all that – for example, I spoke in front of a couple of thousand people at a rally during the referendum, which I wouldn't have been able to do before. Because I had support and people in my life who believed in me. Although that was on a personal level because GDA is not Political, it was the support I'd had from them that made me able to do it.

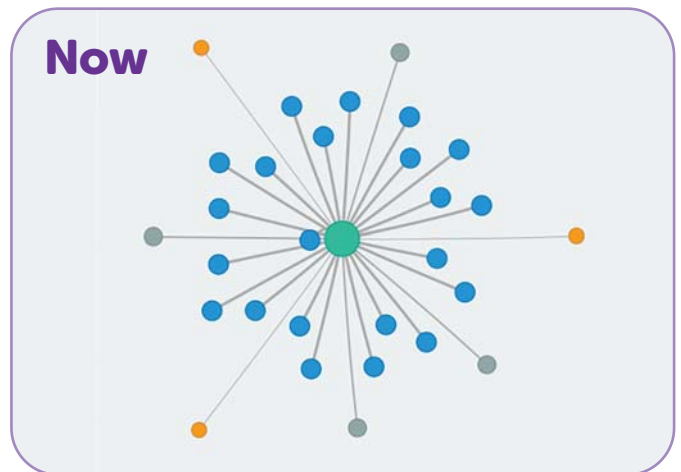
Being involved with GDA and PPPs has given me the opportunity to have interaction with politicians and decision makers that I would never have had the chance to do. I now have greater awareness of the social model of disability and disability rights which empowers me to approach these people and hold them to account. I would be very unlikely to have come across them if it wasn't for the events the GDA organises.

Disabled People want to contribute and give something back. But barriers are put up by society prevent us. The PPPs are effective in countering these barriers and negative images and GDA gives us a platform to tell the story of our direct lived experience. We draw on support of each other. The PPP programme is probably the best thing I've ever been involved with. I'd never even considered doing anything creative before and it's opened up a whole new world. It's given me so many new opportunities amongst very supportive people which have undoubtedly enriched my life!"

PPP5 – Member of PPPs for 2 years



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	3	3	2



After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	22	3	3

PPP5 has been a member of the PPPs for 2 years and in that time bonding social capital has increased nearly 7-fold, while bridging and linking have remained almost the same. The social network analysis suggests that PPP5 is very comfortable as a member of the PPPs and a valuable asset to the group in that they are well connected across the group.

"When I became a disabled person, I had a stroke and quite literally lost my voice. For 2 years all I could say was yes or no. I had to work hard to regain physical, mental and social skills and completely lost my confidence. Joining GDA was a life saver. I was no longer the odd one out, I was with people who understood me and accepted me for who I was. I could see a light at the end of a very dark tunnel.

My motivation to go out and take part in things had been lost but I soon started having things to do and things to look forward to. I met new people and began to make connections, make friends. I learned new skills and was able to feel part of society again. I got angry at the way disabled people are treated and along with like-minded people could play a part in challenging this discrimination.

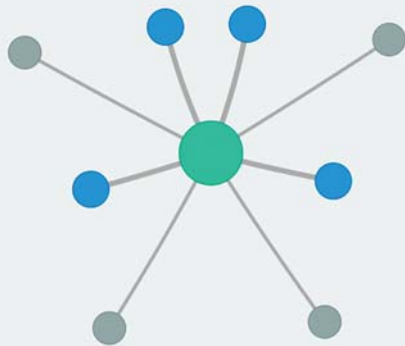
Looking back the transformation in me and my life is astounding: from having no voice, to speaking on stage in a performance and outside at meetings and at community events. Tremendous. It's about camaraderie, unity and a shared purpose and that's very, very important.

The trust we have with GDA, with the staff, with the tutors, with each other is what bonds us together. Within the PPP group there is a more human approach, we are always talking to each other, discussing everything. Some of the people involved in PPP are also very involved in Drivers for Change, so there are many ways to get involved and play your part. Some folk are more comfortable in meetings, sitting back, taking part in discussions, while some of us are loving the limelight! However, it doesn't matter – we support each other and every single person's contribution is valued.

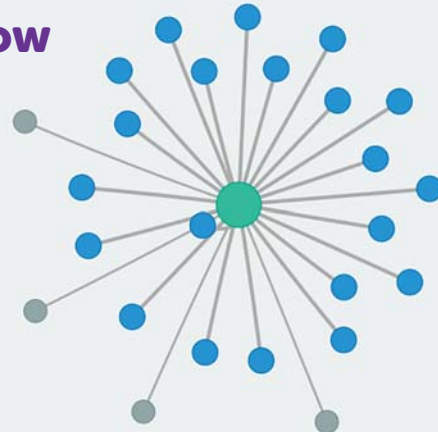
PPP is about elaborating what the issues for disabled people are. We have come a long way, especially in the last two years and I think we are living the 'truth' and we are pushing this out, pushing the boundaries out there. We have a very positive way of working within the group and we totally support each other to be the best we can be."

PPP6 – Member of PPPs for 4 years

Before



Now



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	4	4	0

After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	21	4	0

PPP6 has been a member of the PPPs for 4 years and in that time the most significant increase in their connections has been in bonding ties, which suggests once again that this member is comfortable in the group and likely to be an asset in terms of group dynamics.

"I've found it difficult in the past to trust people and make real friends. Others in my life never gave me the encouragement I needed so I never thought I could achieve much. I have done loads of GDA learning and it's really helped me with planning and taking forward what I want for my future. I've proved to myself and others that with the right support, your life can be amazing.

I find going to meetings and speaking up really difficult. I can't always understand what's going on and switch off, even if the subject is really important. However, with GDA they provide easy to understand information and notes to help, plus lots of opportunities to practice and get support.

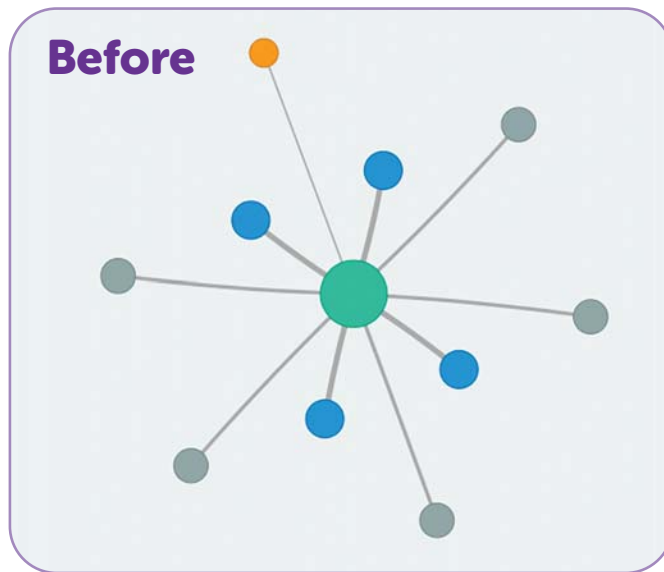
Being part of the PPPs has totally changed my belief in myself and how I can make a difference, using talents and skills I never even knew I had! They encouraged me to write poetry which I sometimes do to sum up how I feel about living with depression and what I need to help me. And that's the family I have in GDA.

I love being on stage and I actually found learning lines quite easy as I enjoy it so much. I love the fact that we all give our ideas and we all support each other to learn get more confident. Like sometimes wee groups of us will meet up outside of the proper sessions to go over our lines and practice together. For the first time in years I've been totally focussed and committed to something. It's like a family where you all help each other and no one wants to let anyone down, so you all pull together.

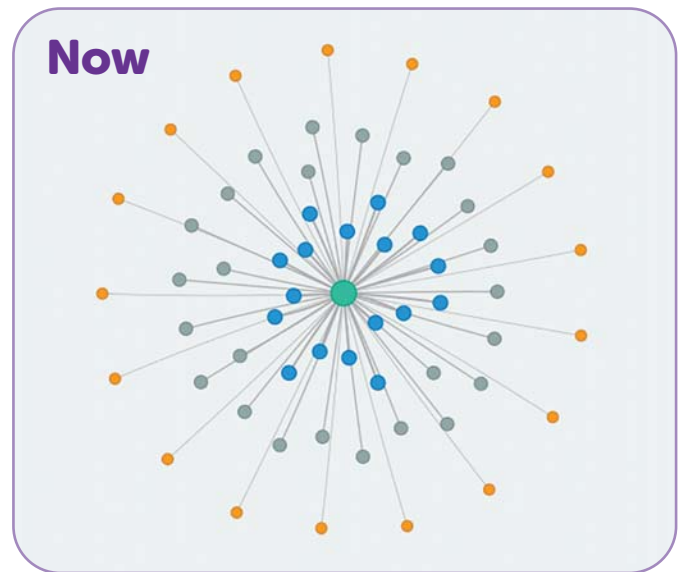
I also like that we've been organising social things together too. That keeps us bonded and working together as a team. There's a few people who like to sort it all out and we've supported each other to come along and have fun. A lot of the group don't get out very much so it's important to include everyone.

The GDA support disabled people, they have got a really positive attitude as well. The PPPs are doing a really good job - they work really hard and the result of this are really good performances at the end and hopefully that helps more disabled people."

PPP7 – Member of PPPs for 3 years and 11 months



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	4	5	1



After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	17	25	17

PPP7 has been a member of the PPPs for just under four years and in that time has built a substantial network of bonding, bridging and linking. This person has increased bonding 4-fold, bridging 5-fold and linking has jumped from 1 to 17. This individual is likely to be an important asset to PPPs connecting with many internally and particularly active externally in comparison to other members of the PPPs.

"I've been involved with GDA for some years but my confidence has grown immensely since joining Drivers for Change and especially the PPPs. I was always interested in politics and it is amazing how being part of an organisation like GDA and projects like the PPPs help you develop the skills you need to make this type of 'political' contribution. But they also create the opportunities for us to bring the messages directly to the people that are in a position to make change happen. All the performances give us a platform to hopefully **influence the decision makers**, like politicians or heads of departments (e.g. Health and Social Care).

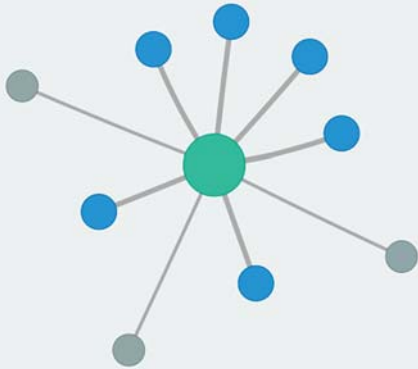
Like a lot of people, I knew in my head what I want to say, but I often lacked the confidence to say it out loud, especially in meetings. Being involved with the PPPs has given me skills, confidence and the courage to get on stage and speak out and from there I've been able to join in other activities that allow me to be a voice for disabled people. For example, I sit on quite a few groups and committees now and feel I can represent myself, GDA and disabled people's issues well. I am able to bring back information to the groups and share their voices back to the committees or other organisations. It keeps the connections going.

Being involved like this means I can make a personal contribution but together with the PPPs we're making a huge collective difference. This is especially true as we keep the content and context current, e.g. just now it's Health & Social Care that's important so we've developed stuff about that.

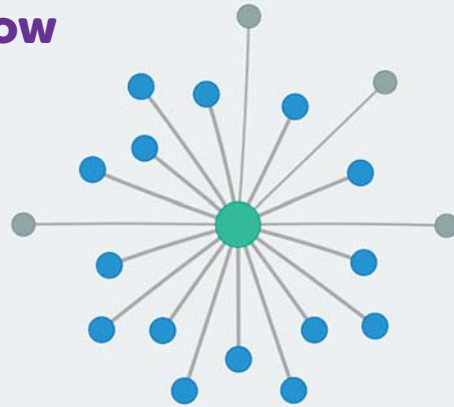
From a practical point of view, GDA's access is brilliant. They provide taxis, personal assistance and all the information that goes out in the leaflets is easily accessible. Without this, none of what we do would be possible, it just wouldn't."

PPP8 – Member of PPPs for 3 years 6 months

Before



Now



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	6	3	0

After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	15	4	0

PPP8 has also been a member for just under 4 years. This individual came to the group already with connections to the group, which is likely to have played a part in their decision to join the PPPs. Bonding ties are the most predominant type of connection to have increased in this time. In line with other members of the PPPs this person is likely to be very comfortable with the role of the group and their place in it.

"I am also part of Drivers for Change and at first I just came along and listened, I hardly spoke because I was so shy. But gradually as I made friends and developed my confidence, I started saying things in the meetings. I always thought the PPPs were brilliant but I never imagined I'd be able to get up on stage and join in. Although I was desperate to get involved with them, it took a lot of persuading me to come along. Like with the Drivers, at first I didn't really take part much. I liked hearing the discussion and I was able to give ideas for the new sketches. We discuss all the different ideas you have and the actors help us decide if they are any good to use in the PPP performances. We try them out to see what works and what doesn't.

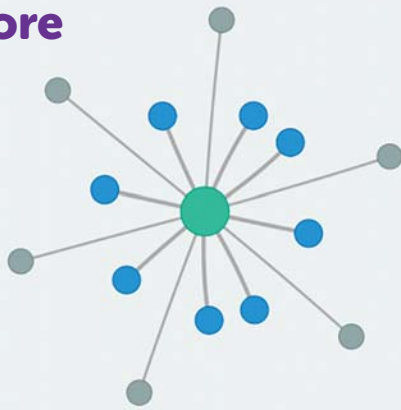
I asked if I could then sit in on rehearsals and sometimes I read a part if someone wasn't there but the thought of actually performing terrified me! The support and encouragement I got from the staff, tutors and other PPPs was wonderful. No one made me feel silly and they all egged me on. When I finally agreed to take a speaking part on stage I felt they were all behind me, every step of the way. I was so nervous but I didn't want to let them all down and it actually went quite well. I've now done a few performances and it is getting better each time, but I still would not have done it without the back up of my friends.

I really enjoy the social aspect of the PPPs as I don't get out much normally as it is too difficult to try to organise my support. But my friends help me with that and we've been flexible about where and when we go, like for dinner or the bowling or whatever.

I just enjoy being part of the GDA and the PPP, they are all friendly - it has brought me out of my 'shell' and it helped me develop my confidence. I recently asked to meet with my local councillor about some things I was dealing with so it's helped me personally as well as for the wider community of disabled people."

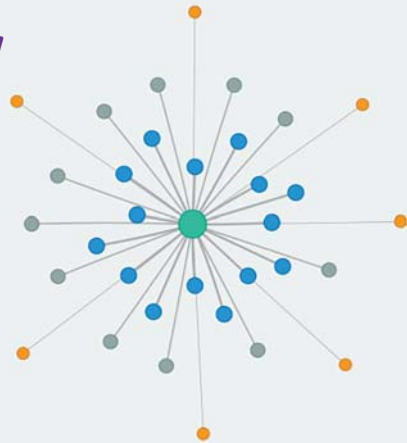
PPP9 – Member of PPPs for 3 years

Before



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	8	6	0

Now



After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	15	11	7

PPP9 has been a member of the PPPs for 3 years. They are also a member of Drivers for Change, which perhaps explains the already high level of related bonding ties that they enjoyed before joining the group, given the fact there is a degree of parallel membership. This person has increased both bonding and bridging ties by around 2 times and increased their linking ties significantly from 1 to 7 as a result of joining the PPPs. This person is likely to be a valuable asset to the group in terms of bringing new ideas and information from their bridging ties. In addition, it is likely that joining the PPPs has enabled this individual to become active politically in terms of trying to impact positively on policies affecting disabled people.

"Like PPP7 I was always interested in democracy and politics, but I didn't see how this could apply to disabled people as our voices just were never heard anywhere. The GDA staff commitment to helping us get our voices heard is an important thing. Before the GDA I didn't know that we had the right to stand up for our rights and I didn't know how to be able to respond to injustice or how to go about making complaints to services that aren't meeting your needs.

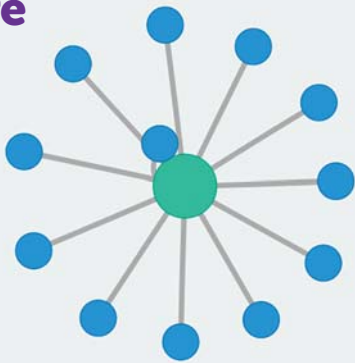
The GDA has raised my confidence through learning and due to my involvement in Drivers for Change, I've raised my knowledge about disabled issues and how to stand up for myself to get better rights, or maintain my benefits for example. I have much more confidence to stick up for myself and now I know my facts and figures. We've had training on how to write letters to MSPs etc and how to help other disabled people to get advice, support and advocates. We're an effective team.

The PPPs take this to a new level. It puts the issues right in the faces of the people that matter – they are a captive audience! The performances are so strong and so real and we develop them together because we are the ones that know how the issues affect us, like social care or health services. When we are doing new sketches or new songs so we are always asked for our opinions and what happens in our lives are the basis of the work. Our connections with each other really matter and there is a lot of camaraderie.

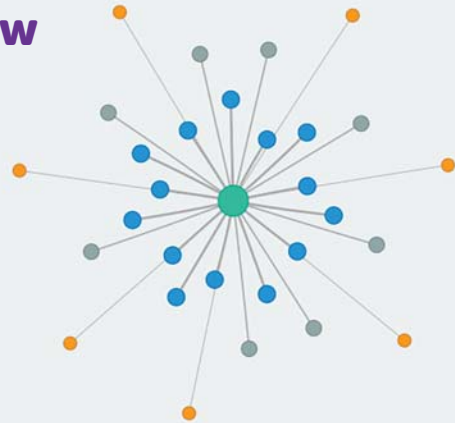
PPP9 have given me a huge amount of confidence and then taken it to another level. It's also just good fun and when things are so bleak for disabled people, being with people and having fun is really important, it keeps you going. Anyone I meet who is disabled I tell them to join GDA. All disabled people need these networks and this bigger community to shore them up because life is tough for disabled people!"

PPP10 – Member of PPPs for 4 years

Before



Now



Before	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	12	0	0

After	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	14	8	7

PPP10 arrived at the PPPs with a high level of bonding relationships already with other members of the PPPs through previous GDA activities. The greatest increase in social connections for this person has been in bridging and linking which have increased from 0 to 8 and 7 respectively. This suggests that this person is comfortable both internally within the group but also has the confidence to connect externally with people they meet through the PPPs. Given that linking ties are the most difficult to cultivate this individual is likely to have become active politically in terms of pursuing positive outcomes on policies affecting disabled people.

"I've been a part of GDA since the beginning. I've seen the organisation grow and mature and I've seen the people blossom. We develop together. It's not about 'think what you can't do' instead the culture is all about 'discover what you can do and think about your strengths'. I'm now in a position where I can support and encourage people to join in, share my experiences with them and I'm old enough to not care what people think, so being on stage with the PPPs is perfect for me!

Even though GDA is an established, much bigger organisation than it was years ago, they remain true to their roots and values. Every individual is valued, their talents and strengths are developed and the support is provided without question to allow people to flourish. It's the same principle with the PPPs – issues are openly discussed and we are encouraged to put forward ideas. All the wording of the songs, poems and dialogue has come from disabled people themselves who are part of the PPPs. There's no them and us, it's definitely a collective team effort including Tressa (CEO) and the Board. I've developed my own confidence too and I am much more willing and able to speak out publicly at meetings, on committees and relish being able to represent GDA and disabled people's issues with politicians, decision makers and other organisations. I see myself as a community activist much more so nowadays. Sitting across the table from a Scottish Government person doesn't faze me in the slightest now – I recognise that I'm the expert about my lived experience and want to work with others to find solutions to problems.

I've watched people develop immensely through their contact with GDA and PPPs, including people who had difficulty even communicating before their involvement with GDA and to see that is an inspiration. It's all about the social support, but without GDA, the access they provide and their belief in us, we wouldn't be here. This is our community."

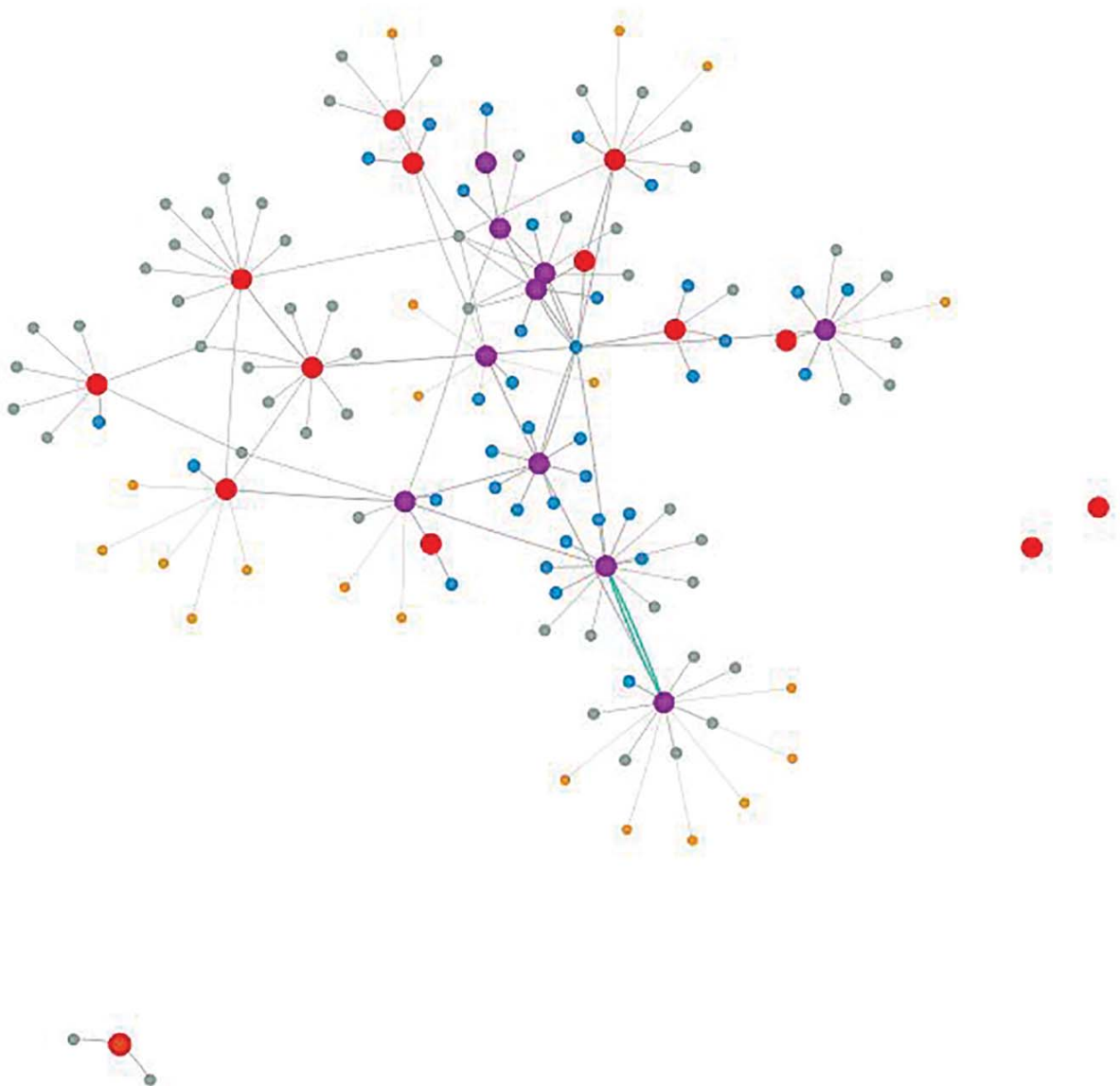
Aggregate Outcomes & Findings

Drivers for Change & The Purple Poncho Players

Below are two social network maps detailing the amount of aggregated connections in the Drivers for Change (red dots) and the Purple Poncho Players (purple dots).

The first graph shows the results of the connections of the members of the two groups BEFORE they joined.

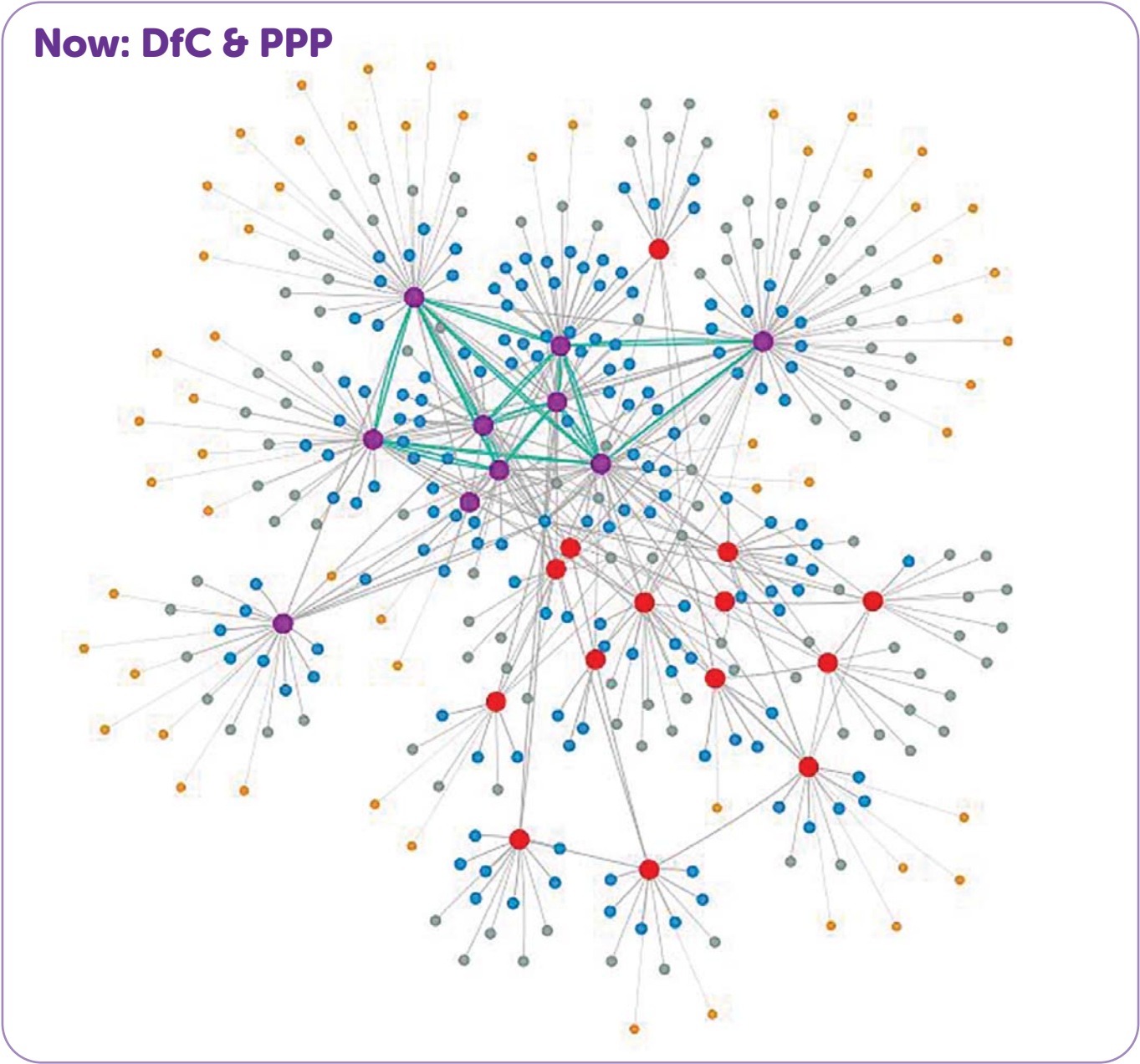
Before: DfC & PPP



The scores below show the connections in terms of numbers.

PPP	Bonding	Bridging	Linking	DfC	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	44	31	12		20	38	8

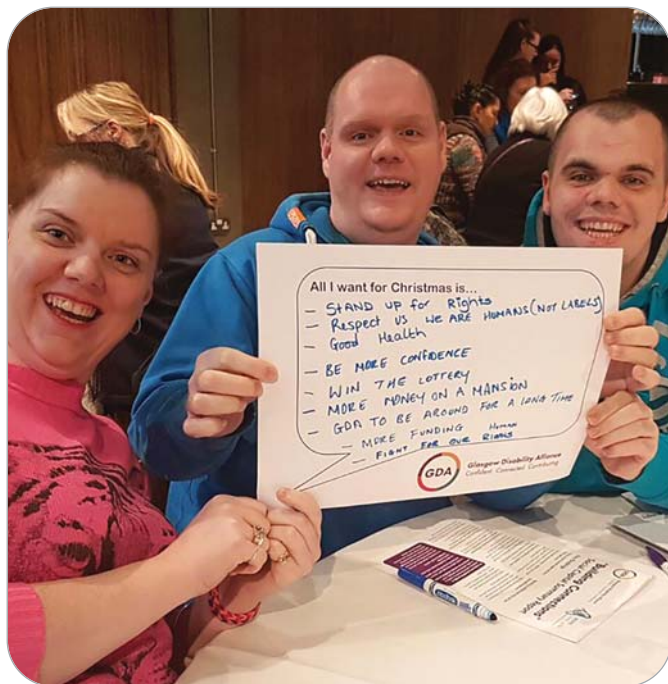
The graph below shows the connections of the individual members and the resulting network after joining. The results are given as NOW since in all likelihood the results will continue to change as members join or leave the PPPs in the coming months and years.



NOW: DfC and PPP members networks.

PPP	Bonding	Bridging	Linking	DfC	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
	169	85	47		87	78	10

One important finding of this study and social capital evaluation to highlight at the very start is that, after joining, not one of the GDA members of either Drivers for Change or the Purple Poncho Players is isolated. Every member is more connected in multiple ways. In every case they have gained new relationships with their peers in the groups and via these connections, externally to information and resources via both bridging and linking ties, whether or not they have direct connections themselves.



This is important given the fact that social capital is said to have an impact at the community level and that by joining a new network individuals will automatically improve their own perception of their situation in terms of health and wellbeing. According to the Office of National Statistics ('Measuring National Well-being - Exploring the Well-being of Young People in the UK, 2014' ONS), having close friends to share good moments and exchange support with can provide a buffer against stress. People who are socially isolated are more likely to suffer from depression and remain depressed for longer. The lack of social connections at any age increases the risks of low personal wellbeing, loneliness, low self-esteem and mental health difficulties. Equally, other members of the group are able to tap into wider group connections for their benefit which sets up a mutual win-win for the members of the group as individuals.

Additionally, the social networks of the group as a whole help create and exchange skills, knowledge and attitudes that in turn allow individuals to tap in to benefits beyond their own direct relationships. The group itself gains an advantage based on the extended network. In the case of both Drivers for Change and Purple Poncho Players members benefit from strong, trusting relationships across the whole project that the aggregated relationships afford. For this reason the collective social capital of these groups becomes an asset in itself where the group members become part of something that is bigger than themselves based on their shared purpose and understanding. And of course these projects sit within the wider context of the GDA community and membership which is an overall social capital asset.

When comparing Drivers for Change and the Purple Poncho Players, we can see that both have externally motivated aims to impact on policies and services. However, the creative platform of the PPPs creates a "performance dynamic", increased confidence and greater sense of achievement through this theatrical medium.

There is also immediate positive feedback to the powerful performance and all of this is reflected in their significantly higher score for linking ties than Drivers for Change. We suggest that there are a number of reasons for this:

- DfC is more internally focused on supporting GDA members to build knowledge, skills and confidence to use their own voices, understand rights and to influence GDA's programmes, policies and approaches as well as external public agencies.
- When DfC feeds into external policies and services, they take on a representative role. However, there is often no sense of how this information is used and what changes as a result – this is out of both their control and that of GDA's sphere of influence and control.
- The theatrical medium of the PPPs and the energy and dynamics involved in performance mean that there is a greater sense of influence and immediacy to winning hearts and minds and potentially bringing about changes. • Both initiatives score equally highly in their capacity to generate bonding ties amongst the membership a key aim for the wider GDA community of interest.
- Critically, both initiatives show important increases in bridging ties i.e. the external opportunities which people need support to access in order to progress.
- Finally, both programmes also demonstrate an increase in linking ties and influencing power- the DfC score reflects that they feel this increase by 25% whereas the PPPs experience this increase as 380% higher than before their involvement.

Drivers for Change

	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
Before:	18	40	8
Now:	86	79	10
Difference:	+68	+39	+2
Increase:	3.78	0.98	0.25

The table shows that through these two activities GDA is delivering significant benefits to individuals and to the wider community of disabled people in Glasgow. By engendering activities which positively impact on disabled people, GDA is effectively creating significant levels of new social capital.

Purple Poncho Players (PPPs)

	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
Before:	43	30	14
Now:	172	74	53
Difference:	+129	+44	+39
Increase:	4.0	2.5	3.8

Aggregate Scores

	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
Before:	61	70	22
Now:	258	153	63
Difference:	+197	+83	+41
Increase:	4.2	2.2	2.9

Conclusion

This social capital analysis and the evaluation findings reveal how two of GDA's main programme of activities impact on the social networks of its membership, leading to transformative change for the individuals who join. GDA and its programmes including DfC and PPPs offer a preventative, co-created, extended network of peer-to-peer support which are both proactive and responsive to need. Transformation in the lives of individuals comes about through effective integration of people who would otherwise be adversely affected by social inequality, isolation and poverty of both income and opportunities. Collectively these relationships create a sense of community, resilience and increased ability to draw on supports and opportunities which improve lives and wellbeing.

This report is intended to reflect GDA's methodology to assist them to better understand and build on what they do within the projects they are running and evaluate impact at a collective level with an additional layer of information provided for each individual. Every individual is unique and their life experiences will have an influence on their ability or interest in connecting with others. For this reason the individual SNA maps should be read as unique journeys and not necessarily compared to each other.

GDA's approach to the work that it carries out is inclusive, accessible and person centred. GDA adopts a responsive, grassroots approach to the needs and interests of its members. It should be noted that the size and scale of GDA together with its Glasgow wide focus may at first be misleading: however our findings firmly support GDA's claim to be a grassroots community of interest where community means a cohesive community of disabled people, albeit city wide. GDA builds programmes such as DfC and PPPs - as with the whole organisation itself - from the grassroots and these individuals are spread across the local geographical communities of Glasgow.

Common ownership of GDA is characterised by the high levels of trust and confidence of being valued as an individual, and by the fact that the organisation is run by disabled people and by shared understanding and values.

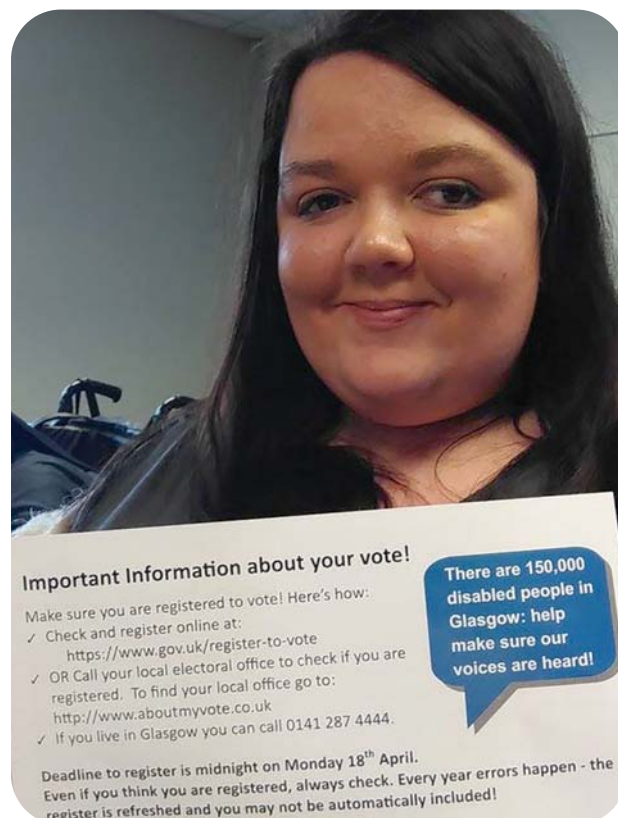


This approach responds directly to the underlying causes of exclusion and isolation that can overcome feelings and beliefs around low aspiration. Peer support, putting people in the lead, individual and collective learning all add to the empowerment of disabled people. The DfC and PPP programmes further meaningfully involve disabled people in the development, design and delivery of GDA as well as build on their strengths and increase connections to have more control over their own lives and to understand and shape wider services which support them and improve their lives.

Participants of PPPs and DfC enjoy high quality relationships that support them to lead independent lives over which they feel more in control. It is this approach and these relationships that instil the energy and motivation for GDA members to fulfil their potential and live ordinary lives, depending on their own choices. This leads to a culture that is accessible, fair and creative, made up of a dense network of members who contribute to the overall objectives and direction of GDA.

GDA understands the importance of participation and regular, repeated interaction that facilitates the creation of reciprocal relationships.

To achieve this, members are able to choose to take up opportunities to interact with others through multiple forums that offer the chance to build relationships with people in similar circumstances but crucially also enables disabled people opportunities to become active in forums where they can meet both similar and different types of people, explore common issues and circumstances, identify solutions and work together to plan actions. Whether individuals have very similar or different backgrounds in terms of previous education and employment opportunities, disabled people have shared barriers.



For example either recent or long term poverty and inequality and denial of rights and freedoms that non disabled people take for granted such as health and social care services, reliance on social security and welfare system, discrimination etc.

There is a common bond amongst disabled people of shared experience of barriers, poverty and disadvantage. This bond builds shared values and drive to move forward and learn together, co-creating the future. As part of the process, GDA's activities provide platforms for members to explore and discuss issues where they can share their experiences, views, testimonies and values in ways that maintain the sense of trust both internally with other members of GDA and also externally with decision makers and also the general public and communities of Glasgow. GDA is very well connected across these communities and has links with housing associations, community projects and public sector partners across Glasgow and beyond (see GDA's Annual Report 2014-15).

Peer support within the membership becomes a stepping stone for members to become active participants in the policy making decisions which affect their lives - to persuade those in power to do things differently, to listen to disabled people's voices and in turn to improve policies and services for the better.

The linking social capital generated in the PPPs is evidence of GDA's success in enabling its members to build on the confidence they obtain by being part of a larger network of people with shared understanding. This sense of taking control and resilience is fundamental to GDA's successful model which enables participants to access support and opportunities to improve their lives.

The Christie Commission outlined the urgent need to 'transform' public services in the face of demographic changes, persistent inequalities and shrinking budgets. It outlined four key objectives as follows;

- **community involvement in service design and delivery**
- **integrated and more collaborative services**
- **prevention of negative social outcomes**
- **efficiency – 'achieving more with less'**

The results of this GDA study build on the social capital report from 2014 and add to the impressive array of benefits for individual members that collectively respond directly to the Christie Commission's call for a transformation of our services by building services 'around people and communities'. This in turn enables members of GDA to 'build their autonomy and resilience' thus delivering on the Community Empowerment Act by building community capacity that responds to the particular needs of disabled people who frequently face multiple social and economic challenges.

Over a 10 year period, with funding, GDA's approach, across a range of activities, provides a demonstrable theory of change: their holistic delivery model builds confidence, connections and contributions using accessible methods and programmes; GDA provides multiple opportunities and has created a sense of community with disabled people at the heart and in the lead; it connects people to services which support them to improve both the services and their lives; it involves people with the very experiences of inequality in tackling that inequality. Ultimately building social networks and peer support are at the heart of GDA approaches, improving lives and putting disabled people in the driving seat.

GDA is an inspirational example of a community of interest where disabled people are given the chance to help other disabled people to be more resilient and in control of their own lives. However it is critical that we aware that until the barriers in society are reduced, support will always be needed to ensure disabled people are able to live fulfilling active lives. Who better to provide that support than disabled people themselves, involving disabled people in the making the decisions which affect their lives and creating a more inclusive society. In the words of one of the participants interviewed for this research:



"If disabled people on the ground are the roots, then GDA is the oak tree providing supportive and protective cover, tending to and growing these smaller roots and branches, nurturing our strengths and vitality and taking us from isolation and potential vulnerability to becoming stronger and more resilient. And like the oak tree, this takes both time and the right conditions for disabled people to blossom."
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