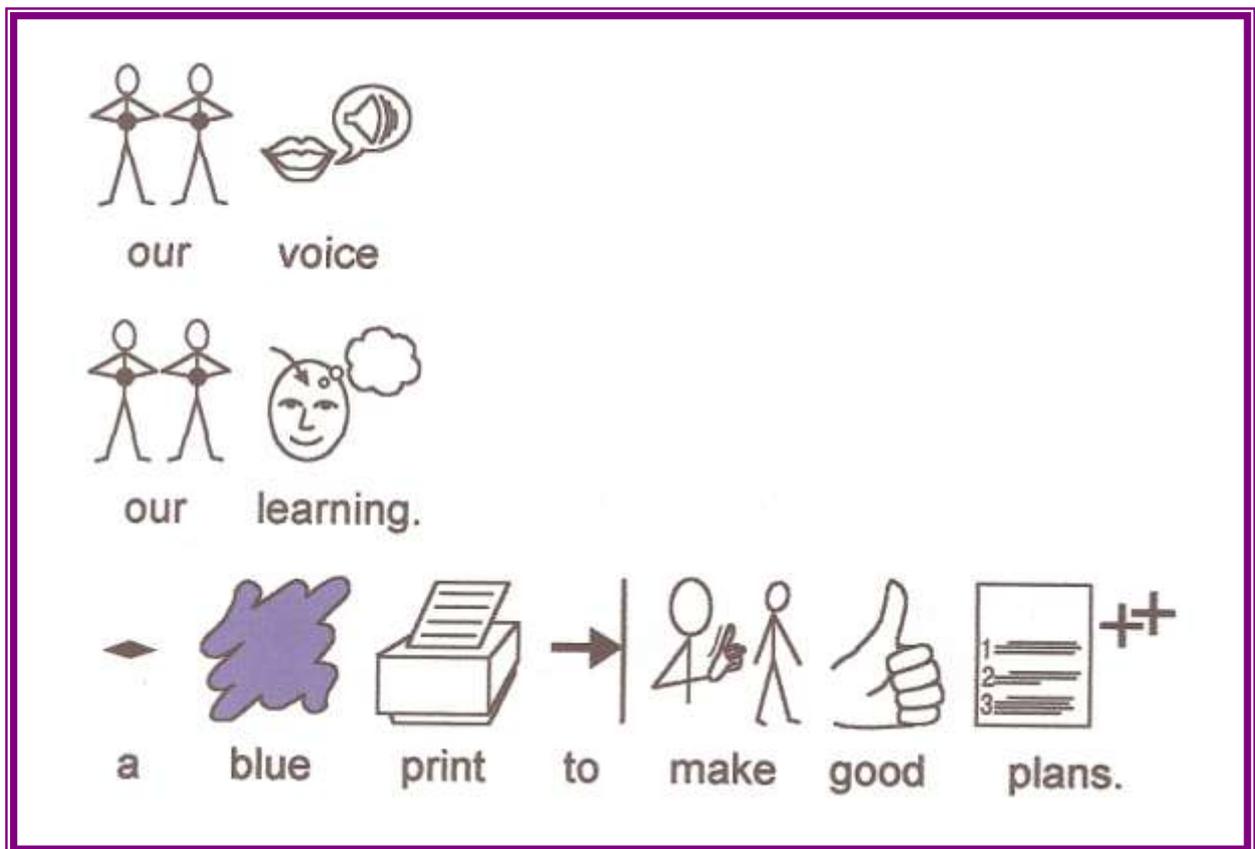




... Speak up, speak out



This is Our Voice – Our Learning – a Blueprint for good plans



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Registered Office: 1 High Street, Inverurie AB51 3QA

July 2009



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Introduction:

Grampian Opportunities (GO) aims to support disabled people and people with health problems access the information and further support they need to take up further education, volunteering opportunities and employment.

"GO" also works with groups which promote employability. Our main activities during 2008/09 included developing a mentoring service and supporting disabled people to volunteer.

In 2009 we secured funding from the Scottish Community foundation to bring together a group of disabled people to visit other disability groups and find out what the group members think would benefit them and make their lives better.

In this way we aim to encourage people who need support to learn from each other, share experiences and use the strength of group learning to encourage an informed user-voice. This voice can then be used to influence how services are delivered, to better meet the needs of disabled people. The information we have gathered has been compiled into this report.

Follow up work will continue, thanks to a successful funding bid to the Big Lottery Fund AWARDS for ALL. This will support further visits and enable us to host an event in 2010 to support people to "Have their Say" and have a voice to encourage positive change

Voices for Change:

When we first met to plan our visits we agreed to make presentations introducing Grampian Opportunities and the Voices for Change project and on some occasions, Independent Living. We agreed that we should then ask groups we visited to tell us a little about themselves and then ask:

1. **What works:** What do you get from coming to this group or service?
2. **What could be better:** Would you change anything? (This could be a general question about the services and support people have – or could be about the group or service we are visiting)
3. **The issues identified and whether we can do anything about them:**
We will ask, "if you could change something, how would you do it?"

This simple format has proved useful and the report highlights the main issues identified.

When you read this report we would ask you to consider – what do you think works, what could be better and if you could change something how would you do it?

Summary and Recommendations

“**Voices for Change**” found that the people we spoke to highlight the importance of peer support and sharing information as key benefits of being part of a group.

Transport and personal assistance were two of the main areas of support needed and when these were not available, it was difficult for people to take part in activities.

Discussions in many groups touched on the role of paid staff when providing support. This is an area which would benefit for further research.

On many occasions people expressed the view that they were not being listened to.

Issues raised during discussion:

- More information needed at the right time
- When leaving school people need to be aware for their choices for learning or work – going to college is often felt to be the only option.
- Workers do not always show their trust in service users taking the lead.
- Workers expect that people should trust them – but they need to gain trust and prove they know what they are doing. If they don't know they should be prepared to help you find out what you need to know. Most importantly if they are not honest then trust is broken.
- Disability Awareness and training is needed to increase understanding.
- People have skills and experience which is not always recognised by the people trying to help them. People need the opportunity to use their skills and not be forced into a place because people underestimate what they can do.
- Some groups are not open to others for a good reason but others can be open to new members.
- Ground rules are needed for groups, and these should be designed and agreed by the group so that everyone sticks by them.

Common Themes

What people get from being involved in groups:

- Friendships and making connections
- Access to information and sharing of information
- Having a voice
- Learning new skills
- Having fun and enjoying yourself
- Everybody likes to have activities to do
- Peer support and self help

What people think is important to live independently:

- Budgeting and handling of money
- Transport issues i.e. difficulties in rural areas but lack of affordable public transport which is wheelchair accessible in Aberdeen city
- Good quality support and the difference it makes to your life
- Learning to cook
- Variety of activities are important in life
- Making decisions for yourself

What does independent living mean to you?

- A. Being able to choose where you live and who you live with and having a choice in day to day decisions
- B. Freedom, with the opportunity to learn and have experiences
- C. Choices and learning different skills such as cooking and washing
- D. Being able to choose your own clothes, and wash and iron your own clothes
- E. Being able to help with the housework and cook for the family
- F. Helping in the home when mum is out working, helping keep things tidy
- G. Taking the next step in life and learning to clean and cook as well as wash and iron. Not being so lazy and doing more for myself. Being safe is important and having a pet gives me company but I might not remember to feed or look after my pet if I was living on my own.
- H. Learning how to live on my own and learning how to travel independently

Job Club Inverurie

Other key finding:

We have been invited back to groups to report back the information we found out about them. This has been very useful to check our understanding. These visits have promoted further discussion and more information. We have also recognised the importance of making connections between groups.

The way forward

“Voices for Change” is a peer led project which has achieved a voice for people who do not always have their voice heard. It has asked key questions in ways that encourage people to express what they feel.

We have listened to what people told us and plan to carry forward the messages they have shared with us. The report is part of this process and we have now secured additional funding to support us host an event which will bring together the groups we have met.

We plan to build on the work we have started, and hope to build connections with the people, agencies and organisations which provide and commission services.

We believe that encouraging an open dialogue about the issues which matter to the people who use services can make a positive contribution to shaping services to better meet the needs of disabled people in the future.

We will widen this invitation to people we have yet to reach and include key policy and decision makers. “Voices for Change” will give people the opportunity to speak out and speak up. Developing a forum where people can explore what they want to say, without feeling judged or being afraid to have their say.

The Scottish Community Foundation funding has enabled us to plan for the future and “Voices for Change” aims to establish itself as a unique service which specialise in peer-led consultations.

We would like to thank the people who spoke to us and for being so honest with us. We would also like to thank the Scottish Community Foundation for their support and endorsement of this project. We hope you find this report interesting and useful.

Voices for change working group:

Andy Strang, Denise Cromar, Emma Rennie, Euan Burr, Ian Stones,
Dorothy Fletcher, Linda Singer

With support from: Bill Napier, Jack Ritchie and Michael Wright

1. The Learning Disability Group of Aberdeen

Who:

6 individuals with learning disabilities attended along with the council worker who supports the group.

What:

The group helps people with a learning disability to cope with different aspects of everyday life. It listens to people's views and ideas and helps give them a louder voice. It brings in regular guests and speakers to talk and share their ideas with the group.

When:

Tuesday 21/04/2009 - Evening meeting from 6.30pm until 9pm

Where:

Cornhill Day Hospital, Aberdeen

How:

We met with the chairperson of the group and the Aberdeen City Council worker who supports the group to have a meal before the meeting. We found out that there is a group for people with learning disabilities, but the Council does not currently support a similar group for physically disabled people. We thought this might be due to the management structures in the Council. For the meeting with the group, we made a PowerPoint presentation to introduce who we were and what we wanted to find out about the group.

We learned:

Group =

- Enjoyment and friendship and connections
- Information
- Learning new skills
- Accessibility
- Sharing information and having a voice

Independent living =

- Own home in a location which suits
- Ability to cook
- Friends
- Staff support, knowing help is there, someone to talk to (when needed)
- Accessible transport
- Little things matter, attention to detail, if the little things are right the whole package falls into place.
- Choice of activities e.g. college, day service, volunteering.

Other outcomes: The Chair of the Learning Disability group is a member of the Voices for Change team.

What People say



In Aberdeen



...More information in Appendix

2. Job Club

Who:

6 individuals with disabilities attended, accompanied by 3 support workers.

What:

The job club provides an employment service for young people with disabilities. The purpose is to enable people to meet new people, to learn new skills and be introduced to some form of employment. People are helped with interview and application skills.

When:

Wednesday 13/05/2009 - afternoon meeting from 1pm – 3pm

Where:

Computers and Integration, 4 St James Place, Inverurie

How:

We used the H form process and pictures of leaves to write on. We asked the questions “what do you like about the job club?”, “if you could, what would you change?” and “what could be better?”

We also looked at issues around independent living and asked “what could help?” All of the group members are still living at home.

We learned:

Club =

- Fun, getting out, seeing places, team work and role playing are fun
- Friends, support
- Learning new skills
- Finding employment

Independent living =

- Choice e.g. where to live, who to live with, what to wear
- Freedom
- Learning new skills e.g. cooking, new experiences, travel independently

What helps=

- Friends, self help
- Learning how to handle money
- Learning to cook
- Information about who can help and where to go

Other outcomes:

Following our visit, staff at the job club helped the members to develop their own presentation about the job club so that they could more confidently describe what the group does. They have presented this to two pupils who may join the group when they leave school.



What does Independent Living mean?



The "H" Form process

- What do you like about the job club
- What could be better
- What would you change and how – for the club and for independent living

...More information in Appendix

3. ACE – Grampian (Advisory Committee of ENABLE)

Who:

15 people attended. People attending were from groups from Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray.

What:

ACE Grampian is one of a network of local ACE groups which has been established throughout Scotland. These groups are attached to local branches or projects. Membership of local and national ACE is open to adults with learning disabilities who are members of ENABLE Scotland. The group meets four times a year and brings together people with learning disabilities from Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray

ACE meetings are run by people with learning disabilities with the assistance of a facilitator.

When:

Saturday 16/05/2009 - lunchtime meeting from 12 noon until 2.30pm.

Where:

Harlaw Day Centre, Harlaw Road, Inverurie

How:

We joined the group for lunch and had a round table discussion. We chatted informally before and during our meal. Some of the things said informally helped us to seek out further information after lunch. To guide our main discussion we used a small display folder which had printed copies of the PowerPoint slides. This helped us and we were able to give out copies of the questions to people who wanted them.

We learned:

Group =

- Coming together, friendship
- Sharing information
- Making a difference
- BUT Transport issues and lack of confidence can stop people taking part

Independent living =

- Family support
- Continuity of care and support staff, and being informed about changes
- Making decisions and mistakes for yourself
- Transport and training for independent travel
- Activities to take part in - places to go and things to do

Changes identified =

- Lack of flexibility when relying on support staff - this leads to little spontaneity in having a social life, and hinders freedom of choice
- Being listened to and having company
- Getting information
- Need for negotiating skills, training, and advocacy (being heard)
- Training on how to manage and support staff
- Help with budgeting

Other outcomes:

Issue of inconsistency when paying care staff expenses when out socially has been taken to the Aberdeenshire Council Strategic Outcome group by one of the ACE group members.

The national group are looking to appoint a paid facilitator to support the Inverurie ACE group. Grampian Opportunities have been invited to submit a proposal to explore if Voices for Change could take on this activity.

Follow up visit Saturday 25th July

We were invited back to let the group know what we had written. This was a good session, we met new people and our feedback led to more discussions and an invitation to visit another group. The discussion raised a number of points:

- When groups meet they sometimes need storage space.
- Confidentiality can sometimes stop friends finding about each other when one is unwell or in hospital. We discussed what would help and if we could give permission for people to know. It was suggested that a personal passport may help. This is a book that lets people know what we like and other things about us.
- Respite is changing and transport to get to respite is not always available.
- We did not think there was enough planning for retirement and people can lose one service before others are set up to support them – but their need for support may not have changed.
- We felt that people could use their bus passes more to visit new places. There is a helpline number on the bus timetable but it has not worked for some people.
Disability Helpdesk Telephone: 01224 597599
Email: aberdeen.disabilityhelpdesk@stagecoachbus.com
- Knowing what's on for us to go to and what is there to help. We shared information about the National Cinema Card and the Aberdeen Arts Trust.

...More information in Appendix

4. Future Choices

Who:

Approximately 30 people at (open) coffee morning.

What:

Future Choices is a Registered Charity with 69 members representing people with physical disabilities in and around Aberdeen. The group was set-up after the closure of the Choices day centre, and they are currently setting up an arts and crafts morning on Mondays and coffee mornings one Saturday per month. They are in talks with other organisations to look at using other facilities in and around Aberdeen. They would like to get a history class, computer class, and even organise angling days. These are some of the things members have shown an interest in and the group hope to deliver on this in the near future. At this time the group has no direct link to any official channels. The group fights to get its voice heard and we were invited to a film shown at the Belmont Cinema, Aberdeen on Monday 13th July at 8pm. The film showed the impact of the closure of Choices day centre and the emergence of Future Choices.

When:

Saturday 30/05/2009 - coffee morning from 10 am – 1 pm.

Where:

Raeden Court (Margaret Blackwood Housing Association)

How:

The group was having their first coffee morning since the Choices day service closed a year ago, because of this we chose to use pictures of coffee cups and ask people to write on these and tell us “What does Future Choices mean to you?” This simple approach worked well and did not intrude on the social event. We all enjoyed the beetle drive which followed and the group raised funds to support future events.

We learned:

Future Choices =

- Socialize, getting out, having somewhere to go, fun, having a laugh, meeting like minded people,
- Learn new skills, motivation
- Advice
- Acceptance
- Accessible activities

Other outcomes:

Grampian Opportunities and Future Choices have identified similar values and are looking at how the organisations can work together.

Review of the “Wrong Choice”

The film “Wrong Choice” came about as a result of Aberdeen City Council’s decision to make cuts in services. It features the protest to these cuts and in particular the closure of Choices day centre, which supported 56 disabled people in Aberdeen.

The film documents their struggle to have their voice heard and their journey from being passive disabled recipients whose services was closed down without consultation to being activists in shaping their own future, with the charity Future Choices developing as a result.

The Councillors who made the decisions which resulted in the cuts to services declined to take part in the film. MSP’s and MP’s were more supportive and spoke to camera. They were highly critical of the way the cuts had been implemented and the way the cuts had affected vulnerable people in Aberdeen.

The film was well attended, with at least 150 people coming to the Belmont Cinema for the first public showing on 13 July 2009. The general impression was that the film was a positive contribution to the growth of Future Choices.

People who made and took part in the film had a right to feel proud. Kevin McCahery the chairman of Future Choices said:

“I was very proud of the film last night and pleased to see so many old friends as well as new friends. I was also a bit sad that five of our friends and fellow users of the Choices Day Service are no longer with us.

All in all I would say that Richard Currie did a wonderful job, it has put us back into the limelight, its got to the people that matter, and I suppose my main quote would be - *we were here last year, we are still here this year, and we will still be here next year.* (Yet some of the councillors who made these cuts are no longer in power or have been voted out of office.)”

The development of Future Choices has allowed people to take on different roles, grasp new and empowering experiences and work alongside organisations such as Grampian Opportunities.



...More information in Appendix

5. Independent Living Initiative in Aberdeen

Who:

19 people attended the presentation given by Heather Fiskin of the Independent Living in Scotland Project. Heather then stayed to hear what the group thought about an Independent Living Initiative for Aberdeen.

Heather was supported by a palantypist. She assists Heather by producing an instant word for word report which can be displayed on a screen. Communication support is important if people are to be able to fully participate.

The people taking part represented different groups including Aberdeen Action on Disability, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Disability Action, The Learning Disability Group in Aberdeen, Aberdeen Disability Advisory Group, DP Caledonia, Future Choices, Grampian Opportunities, Momentum Acquired Brain Injury Service and Mental Health Service.

What:

An Independent Living Initiative working group had been meeting, and a consultant had carried out a feasibility report on their behalf. Service user members of the working group met together to consider how to take forward an Independent Living Initiative in Aberdeen

When:

Wednesday 24/06/2009 from 10am – 3pm

Where:

Inspire Conferences, Beach Boulevard, Aberdeen

How:

We used pictorial building blocks to help us explore what people thought about developing an Independent Living Initiative in Aberdeen. We planned the working session to follow on after a presentation about the Independent Living in Scotland Project.

We asked:

- Where do we go from here?
- What are our next steps?
- Who needs to be involved?
- What resources do we need?

We learned:

People want an Independent Living Initiative in Aberdeen and are willing to give the time and commitment to help form such an initiative. People want to be involved and do not want it “done for them”.

Other Outcomes

Agreement was reached to set up a steering group to look at the way forward for an Independent Living Initiative in Aberdeen.

Independent Living in Scotland

Inspire*Involve*Invest

<http://www.ilis.co.uk>

“Independent Living means disabled people of all ages having the same freedom, choice, dignity and control as other citizens at home, at work, and in the community. It does not mean living by yourself or fending for yourself. It means rights to practical assistance and support to participate in society and live an ordinary life.”

The Independent Living in Scotland project in the report titled “Ready for Action” identifies the basic rights to independent living as:

- Information
- Peer support
- Accessible environment
- Accessible transport
- Barrier-free housing
- Suitable equipment
- Personal assistance
- Education
- Income
- Employment
- Health
- Peer advocacy
- Communication



...More information in Appendix

6. Momentum Acquired Brain Injury Carer's Support Meeting

Who:

5 carers and 2 staff who support the group

What:

The carers group is one of the groups supported by Momentum Transitions. Transitions is an outreach programme which offers support to people with a brain injury and their families throughout Grampian, delivered by Momentum in partnership with the Brain Injury Grampian (BIG) group. Transitions are also supported by NHS Grampian and by local authorities in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

By bridging the gap between hospital discharge and rehabilitation programmes such as those already offered by Momentum, Transitions aims to reduce the isolation often felt by people with a brain injury, particularly those living in remote rural areas. The programme's two community workers work throughout Grampian, providing a support network for both people with a brain injury and their families and carers, helping them to reintegrate into their communities and ultimately helping them move towards a more independent future.

When:

Thursday 25/06/2009 – evening meeting between 7pm and 9pm.

Where:

Momentum Pathways, Migvie House, 23 North Silver Street ABERDEEN

How:

We used a picture of flowers in a pot and asked people to write:
On the pink flower – “what do you get from coming to the group?”
On the blue flower – “what could be better?”
On the pot – “what support do you need?”

We learned:

Before we visited this group we had to remind ourselves that we wanted to know what made life better for carers. We did not go to find out what made life better for disabled people. What we found was that the carers spoke about what would make life better for the people they care for. When the people they care for have the support they need then the carers are supported too.

Group =

- Friendship, company, time-out, sharing experiences and situations
- Information, solutions,
- Peer support and self help
- Empathy and Understanding from staff / workers
- Consistency of group

What could be better?

- Information when leaving hospital
- Rehabilitation
- Housing
- Respite
- Continuity of carers
- Communication
- Regular review meetings with professionals
- Activities and mental support
- Self help group/ support group

Other outcomes:

Draft notes sent back to worker, to inform writing of funding application.



...More information in Appendix

7. Computers and Integration

Who:

We interviewed 19 service users and volunteers who attend Computers and Integration.

What:

Computers and Integration is a Voluntary Organisation. The aim of the service is to provide access to computers and learning for people in the area. The organisation has expertise in assistive technology which means they can offer their service to disabilities.

When:

February 2009 interviews, followed by 29/06/2009 (meeting with Russian delegates) - Day service interviews conducted Monday and Tuesday

Where:

Computers and Integration, 4 St James Place, Inverurie

How:

We used a questionnaire to gather information about the service on a Monday and Tuesday.

We were invited back on Monday 29 June to meet parents of young disabled people who came from Russia and were interested in learning about the services provided for disabled people. This visit was supported by a local branch of Soroptimist International.

We learned:

Members found out about group through various means including:

- Care manager
- Harlaw Centre
- Stand at town hall
- Word of mouth
- Family
- Friends
- Momentum

People, who attend, come back over a long period of time. It seemed that the social aspect of the service was as important as the learning.

Using a questionnaire we gathered information in a way that let us make charts to show results in a pictorial form.

We did not code the questionnaires, which means we could not go back and ask for more detail on the answers given. This was different from the discussion groups where we were able to check our understanding of what people said to us.



Consultation with Members and volunteers Computers and Integration

Question 1	Answers
1. How did you first hear about computers and Integration (CAI)?	
2. How often do you come?	Mon am/pm Tues am/pm Thurs am/pm Fri am/pm
3. How long have you been coming to CAI?	Less than a year Start date/ / 1-3 years 3-6 years 6 -10 years
4. What activities are you doing / have you done at CAI?	
5. What other Things do you do the rest of the week?	
6. Is there something you would like to do but can't?	
7. What stops you doing this? Money? Transport? No one to go with? Confidence?	
8. Have you ever done any training? Where? What in?	
9. Do you want /need any Training? If yes What kind?	
10 what support would you need?	Personal Financial Transport – other
11. Have you ever been a volunteer ?	If yes give details:
12. Have you ever had a job or work Placement?	If yes give details:
13. Would you like to volunteer, have a work placement or have a job?	If yes give details:

8. Friendship group

Who:

Five people regularly attend a monthly meeting of the “Friendship” group

What:

The group was first set up by Gordon Disability Action (now Aberdeenshire Disability Action) to bring together disabled people in a social setting to share information and act as a forum for consultation on issues of concern to people with disabilities. The main purpose of the group now is the social aspect. In the past the group secured funding to produce an access guide to help people identify where they could go to enjoy social activities. The guide was titled “Count Me In”.

When:

Tuesday 15/06/2009 - Evening meeting from 7pm – 9pm (the group meet the third Tuesday of each month)

Where:

Hopeville Social Club, Harlaw Road in Inverurie. The group finds the staff welcoming and supportive. There is wheelchair access, accessible toilets and club prices mean the cost of refreshments is affordable.

How:

The social setting lent itself well to an informal discussion. This was followed up by one-to-one conversations with individuals,

We learned:

Social groups can be small and self funding – but someone has to take the initiative and arrange the meeting place and time. Individuals take personal responsibility for getting to the group and funding their own participation. Activities can vary and are arranged one meeting at a time.

Group =

- Friendship group promotes self help

Other outcomes:

Following our visit, a “Voices for Change” member joined the Friendship group, but felt encouraged to invite another volunteer to join her on social outings on their own, and this has led to a personal friendship developing.

9. Grampian Opportunities

When we asked people what they got from the groups they were part of it made us think about why we choose to be part of Grampian Opportunities.

Making a difference

Being involved in a project from writing the application to coordinate the activity and collating the report has been hard work, but a rewarding experience. It has given me self belief and a volunteering opportunity which has increased my confidence. Working as a team leader has enabled me to create opportunities for others. I hope by valuing their contribution this has made a difference in their lives.

Denise Cromar, GO volunteer

The Voices for Change volunteer members said:

What GO means to us =

- Peer support and problem solving
- Friendships
- Non prescriptive
- Choices and directions
- Teamwork
- Respect
- FUN
- Purpose
- Training
- Go is more than a building
- Contacts and friendship
- Company
- Being accepted
- Helping each other
- Stakeholders in the organisation
- Being able to express opinions
- Being part of GO
- Atmosphere
- Open door
- A shared belief in people
- Positive attitudes
- Extended family
- Equality
- Openness
- Learn new skills
- Met new people
- Confidence
- Self-esteem
- Identity (accepting who you are and working with that)
- Opportunities – identifying what you need and where to find it



Appendix



Learning Disability Group of Aberdeen

Meeting notes Tuesday 21st April 2009 6:30pm - 8pm

Background:

Grampian Opportunities heard about this group because the chairman was part of The Aberdeen City Independent living Initiative Working Group which Grampian Opportunities is also involved in. The group is made up of service users. The group is supported by Aberdeen City Council and meets monthly.

Aims of the Group:

To help people with a learning disability cope with different aspects of everyday life. To listen to people's views and ideas and help give them a louder voice, and bring in regular guests and speakers who talk and share their ideas with the group.

What do you get from coming to this group?

- Enjoyment
- A voice
- Information
- Making Friends
- Have looked at leaflets and given comments on how easy they are to read
- Currently making a DVD which involves some group member using fun ways like "Talking like Mrs Thatcher to get a message over, described a sketch with milk jug, tray and teapot.
- Visits to make connections with others e.g. Newton Dee, appointments NHS and visits to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary and NHS24. Attended the Dementia Group carol concert.

How did you find out about and the group?

- Found out though another member
- Found out through another group (Access Group)

Question Raised about best size of group - has to be small enough to give people the chance to talk and have their voice heard if the group was bigger may need to look at different ways to involve people

What helps you to live independently?

- Staying in your own flat
- Cooking and the opportunity to attend cooking classes and take the food made home
- Friends

- Different living arrangements lead to a discussion on where people live and the staff support available to them.
- The opportunity to do things for yourself knowing help is there if needed is important and someone to talk to if needed
- A move from a group home to their own council property was seen as a good move on for one group member. Staff now come in the morning and are not there all the time

The message seemed to be that help was needed but you need right level and type of support

Would you change anything?

- Remind people to pick up rubbish (Clean safe environment)
- Transport to get out – this covers frequency of service and distance to bus stop/pick up point and how accessible it is
- Housing which is isolated - with no shops nearby and poor public transport can make it difficult for people to get their shopping and getting out

And if you could ...how would you?

- One member bought an electric wheelchair to help them get out because of the isolation of their home, however they feel there is limited in places to go
- Stopping Day Services was seen as a problem - although not all members used or wanted to use a day service
- Many went to college
- One member attended a day centre but was involved in volunteering type activities such as reception and coffee bar duty
- Centres and College were both seen as places to meet people
- People who do not want day centres to close have signed petitions
- The Learning Disability Group have Written to the Director of social work services to find out what is happening to services
- One group member who still attends a day service - did not know what she would be able to do if services changed
- Those who attend day centres now have to bring a packed lunch and missed the cooked meal
- The regular programme within the day centre gave little variety or choice of activity for people outwith the programme times.

Sharing of Information

- Inchgarth Community Centre is opening a lunch time drop in social club with a small charge for a meal. This will be on a Friday. It was noted that when people relied on carers coming in the days they could go to other things often had to fit in with this.
- Group members also shared information a meeting at the Beach Ballroom on Friday 24th April some of those who attended day centres had letters about this



Inverurie Job Club

Wednesday 13 May 2009

What does independent living mean to you?

- A. Being able to choose where you live and who you live with and having a choice in day to day decisions
- B. Freedom, with the opportunity to learn and have experiences
- C. Choices and learning different skills such as cooking and washing
- D. Being able to choose your own clothes, and wash and iron your own clothes
- E. Being able to help with the housework and cook for the family
- F. Helping in the home when mum is out working, helping keep things tidy
- G. Taking the next step in life and learning to clean and cook as well as wash and iron. Not being so lazy and doing more for myself. Being safe is important and having a pet gives me company but I might not remember to feed or look after my pet if I was living on my own.
- H. Learning how to live on my own and learning how to travel independently

...and what helps you live independently?

- Having friends
- Learning how to handle money
- Finding out who can help and where I can go
- Learning how to cook (Occupational Therapist, homemaker)
- Finding a job (Disability Employment Advisor – at the community centre)
- Aberdeenshire Council Employment Development Officers will go into the schools and talk to pupils. This is mainly for people with learning disabilities and it is not clear who helps people with physical disabilities
- Age 16 – 18 can be a gap in support but at 18 people can join the job club. This is usually for up to two years
- People who are older can join a personal development group. Aberdeen College used to provide a tutor but they do not have one just now so this group has stopped. The tutor who left was good.
- Adult learning
- The group help each other

What do you get form coming to the job club?

What do you like?



- Staff is good - Better than teachers
- Help me get a job
- Group get on well
- It gives something to do during the week instead of being at home
- Its entertaining
- Variety of work and exercises
- Doing funny role-play
- Having a Wii & playing tournaments - the fact there is a Wii here
- We all work together as a team
- Learn new things +skills
- Have good fun when we go out and about
- Good fun (for me anyway)
- Great support within Group
- Get to meet friends
- The groups nice
- Having funny role plays
- Staff are really good at helping us finding a job
- I do travel training
- The staff are nice
- I like lots



What could be better?

- Less Lunch Break
- Doing job club for 2 years instead of 3 years
- Length of the day – Half Day
- A bit less applications
- Don't like doing application forms
- Bit earlier and longer lunch breaks
- Later time a little for the morning
- Less Worksheets
- More worksheets
- Earlier time to go for lunch
- Doing application forms as they are too complicated to do
- Start later in the morning
- Bigger Building
- Make my placement shorter
- Doing same worksheets



If you could what would you change?

- Maybe think about moving to my own house
- Out for lunch as a group
- Getting a job
- More trust with credit card being allowed to carry it
- Don't want to leave job club as it is fun so I want to stay
- Get a job in Admin – Volunteering
- Cooking my own meals
- A little bit less application
- Find out about driving
- Get out more and see more places with job club
- Getting my own responsibility





Grampian Region Advisory Committee Enable (ACE)

Saturday 16th May 2009

Harlaw Centre Inverurie from 12:00pm – 3:30pm

Background:

Grampian Opportunities heard about the group through a committed individual who is a volunteer facilitator for the group. Enable is a national charity supporting people with Learning Disabilities across Scotland and local and Regional meetings happen every 3 months. Regional being: Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray. Members travelled from Aberdeen, Elgin and Ellon. On this occasion the Fraserburgh branch were unable to attend.

Research Method: A Group discussion

Aims of the Group:

The group is part of the Advisory Committee of Enable and Enable is a National organisation which is at the forefront of providing support to people with learning disabilities across Scotland. One member goes to Glasgow every 3 months to the National Advisory Committee Enable (ACE) and comes back and shares the information with her Elgin branch of the group. The Elgin Group are waiting to appoint a co-ordinator to support their work. The interviews for this post are to be held in Inverness and people with learning disabilities will be involved in the recruitment process and be members of the interview panel and Enable will employ the worker to support the Elgin group.

At the quarterly National meetings, red and green cards are used. Green says: "I want to speak," Red says "I don't understand" (These are a good communication tool) Local meetings are held every 3 months too.

How did you find out about and the group?

Many of the group could not remember how they found out about ACE meetings but in 1997 Lottery funding allowed one local group to employ a worker to set up groups.

What do you get from coming to this group?

The chance to come together to discuss what is happening in the different local branches and the opportunity to share information and talk about any problems and often solve each others problems

- Friendships
- It was noted that transport can cause problems for people to get to groups , there are buses but some people would need to take two buses and might need help to make the journey
- The other thing is people don't like going into a room by themselves where they don't know anyone. Furthermore because of the distance people have to travel the group are limited to meeting on a Saturday.

What helps you to live independently?

- Having your parents behind you was spoken about, and knowing you have to take the next step to prepare when they are not going to be there
- Members spoke about their homes.
- One person lives in sheltered housing where the warden checks every morning. When the warden is off, contact is through Woodhill House in Aberdeen. This person also has 5 hours a week support which is for cleaning and washing in her own home. There are different cleaners employed to clean the main building.
- Another person spoke about having 10 hours support. A Support worker is there when he returns home from his work placement. On a Friday he has a day off work and receives his support from 9am-2pm. He has an appointee to help him with his money. Some other members live in housing provided by Cornerstone, they spoke about workers being moved
- A key issue was: **Change in care and Support Staff** - Many of the group were not happy with the number of different staff they had to support them in their homes. They felt this was not always discussed with them and they did not always know or remember who was going to be there.
- An example was given of staff being able to shadow other workers before changing jobs, this was felt to be a good idea, but it was noted that neither staff nor individuals could decide who worked with which individuals or which staff members attend to your needs.
- Moving into accommodation away from the family home can be difficult for people to adjust and the process of settling may take longer.
- Another key issue was - **Making decisions for yourself**, this was felt to be part of independent living - some people stopped you doing what you want to do. However other people may help you get what you want. An example was given of someone looking for something on ebay that was affordable, but the person got it cheaper in a sale, in a shop.

Transport and getting around were identified as important. Most of the members had a bus pass and this helped but it was felt no-one encouraged people to use their passes to go to new places. Most people just use their passes to do regular journeys they know, for example going to their work placement. It was suggested people would have more opportunities if someone took the time to explain where they could go using their bus pass. Going somewhere new for the first time could be hard and help to go to new places could help people go to new and different places in their free time.

Places people go and things they do:

- The Bank
- Shops
- Wood RecyclAbility (Work placement)
- Helping in a charity shop
- College (relaxation and massage course)
- Some group members like sewing and making things but there is not always opportunities to be creative. Materials can be expensive.

Leisure time can be limited when you rely on paid staff who may work shift patterns, often there is no give or take and staff time constraints can stop people doing the things they want to do in their social life. - even when you want to go to a special event and a member of family is willing to look after you or your friends, care staff may not let you stay out late. This depends on individual staff and the rules can be different even in the same organisation some people need to maintain friendships but there are not a lot of opportunities to meet people you used to know well. People like coming to ACE groups because they hear what others are doing. Being with friends is important but you have to plan and put in the diary in the group home to be sure staff are there to help you. You may need to book 6 weeks before you plan to do something. It is not easy to be spontaneous.

Loneliness can be a real problem - 168 hours in a week but if someone only gets 10 hours a week support, this leaves a long time to do something on your own.

Would you change anything?

- Being listened to - members felt if there was something they didn't like, people did not always listen to them. Give and take was discussed. One member said even when she tried to negotiate she felt she was not listened to. And the other person just did what she wanted.
- Getting information, knowing who to ask if you did not know something was spoken about. Some people said they would ask staff and others felt they could

ask their friends. People in the group were asked if they could suggest changes if there was something they didn't like. Some houses had meetings where people can discuss things, but it was felt there were limited opportunities to make suggestions to really change something

- Care commission rules and regulations, individual care providers quoting the health and safety were all identified as being used as reasons to prevent people doing things. If proper risk assessments were done, then this should support people to do things, not used as a way not to help.
- The cost of staff is more than the time they are working. If you want to go out for coffee or a meal you also have to pay for the staff that are supporting you. If you go bowling or go to the theatre then you have to pay the carer's ticket too. This can be expensive and use all your personal money. The cost of this is not covered in your care budget. Some staff seem to take advantage and choose expensive things to eat. Nobody has had training how to manage staff to support them and what it's fair to pay. Some carers think going out means going places that cost money, but it doesn't always mean going for coffee. The attitude of some staff is not good, but again some people said they had not had training on what to say about this. People need to have the confidence to speak out, but it can be confusing having different staff do things different ways.
- Taking Medication- one person managed her own medication since she was a child but was not allowed to do this when she moved into a group home This was felt to be an example of where rules can take away someone's independence and stop them doing something they have always done themselves .
- Help with budgeting was needed, so that people did not get into debt, standing orders can help ensure bills are paid. One person was given a daily budget from staff and had to make their money last. People wanted to know more about their money and understand and not to be treated like children. It was agreed bills had to be paid and it was important to have money, to be sure you had a roof over you head and you could keep warm.

And if you could ...how would you?

There was no clear solution suggested but the discussion highlighted that people did not always feel able to influence how staff related to them. People want their voice heard





Future Choices

What does Future Choices mean to you?



Saturday 30 May 2009

- Future Choices means a lot to me – very helpful.
- A lot very helpful raising money need for transport money for a mini-bus.
- Great places for people to meet socialise and learn new skills.
- Future Choices means a better choice of life for people with different disabilities. I would like to see Future Choices having its own building where people can enjoy things they want to do and can be what they want to be.
- Getting out – Socialising, a reason for getting up in the morning, eventually I hope to be doing worthwhile activities to give my life purpose.
- Future choices means a lot for the disabled people - a chance in life and somewhere to go in the future.

- Future Choices gives a chance for disabled like-minded people to meet and speak to each other, Learn new things i.e. arts and crafts, history and other activities the members may wish to attend.
- Learn new things giving people a chance to use the internet.
- Miss going to Choices; miss having a reason to get up. Enjoyed using computers - Enjoyed going to keep fit
- Didn't go to Choices but got your fingers in different pies (being involved)
- Future Choices is my lifeline to sanity. I do not know how my husband and I would continue if we did not have the support of our friends there. It gives us hope for the future.
- Fun having a laugh, meeting other disabled people
- Getting out to meet people keeps my brain active, meeting new people. Able to participate in different activities. To socialise with other people
- To help motivate myself. Help other disabled people and give them a voice to stop injustices happening to disabled people → Hard work and Grey Hairs!
- It means a great deal to me as my daughter is a member and Choices has done a great deal for her – helping with her art + meeting like-minded people . Unfortunately Aberdeen City Council has taken away their building + their care workers. But Future Choices is working without Aberdeen City Council and good luck to them I will support them every step of the way.
- Advice, know how, Tips, Equals - others who understand, Acceptance, Accessible activities etc.





Independent Living in Scotland and Aberdeen Independent Living Initiative

Hosted by Grampian Opportunities Voices for Change Project Key points from morning session with Heather Fiskin, Independent Living in Scotland.

- Housing is often seen as independent living because it is quantifiable. Independent Living is in fact about everything, for example you can have a house and money but if you cannot get out of the house, you are not independent.
- Funders do not always understand what Independent Living is all about, so securing funding may not always be straightforward.
- None of the 13 rights of Independent Living can stand alone, for example, with good housing you need good transport. The basic rights are a chain and you need everything to work well together to allow someone to live independently.
- Medical assessment should be carried out by qualified doctors rather than by Care Managers. Care Managers should not have the right to find out medical information without your permission.
- The eligibility criteria of Aberdeen City Council's Community Care policy needs to be changed because if people are not high on the list of criteria, they are not entitled to the things that they need.
- One particularly famous quote from the disability movement is "nothing about us without us". Groups should not ignore people with different disabilities or from different groups i.e. ethnic minorities within society. People have different strengths and weaknesses so disabled and non disabled people need to work together.

- It was suggested that perhaps before disabled people can achieve the same rights and freedoms as other people, they may need to become a movement in order to have a voice and be listened to. Voices for Change may be part of this movement (note takers comment: “ Denise may be the Martin Luther King of the movement”).
- Young people are not often seen round the table as they are in our group. Young people can get involved in any movement or discussion about disability rights.
- Rhonda suggested that some children might not have the confidence to get involved in discussion. We should therefore provide a variety of different opportunities and ways in which young people can get involved and have the right amount of appropriate involvement to suit them.
- Councils and health boards may have a narrow minded attitude when it comes to funding care packages.
- The Scottish government could help councils by changing policy, to make the ways in which money can be used for disabled people less restrictive.
- People need better information.
- Mind sets need to be changed in order for people to have the right to say what they need rather than other people telling us what we want and need. Working with people, choosing what they want and having a voice to say what they want could be more cost effective. Money would not be wasted on services that do not fit people’s needs.





Momentum carers

Thursday 25 June 2009

Blue flowers... What you get from coming to the group

Friendship

Speaking to others who really understand

Sally and Rachel (the workers)

Support for both carer and client

Empathy and understanding

Time out

Comfort

Other people's problems / other people's solutions

Sharing similar situations – wouldn't talk to just anyone

Support for both client and family

Brain injury can be very isolating; the group had helped with sharing problems and finding out information.

Brain injury can be very diverse and having someone to find out about a range of different information

Sharing experiences

One to one and help with confidence

The opportunity for a trip away when you cannot afford to yourself

Social Integration

Help with benefits available

Support

Friendship

Information

Call on them anytime – they can find out information for you



Pink flower... What could be better?

More information on support when discharged from hospital

People to recognise the problems of brain injury

Housing

Respite

Continuity of carers

Communication

Respite

Help with brain injury related problems

Regular meeting with professionals

Activities for brain injured

Lack of support for carers and lack of respite/ long term care in Grampian

Having to fight for support

Rehabilitation

Pot... What support you need

More information on what support is available

Friendship from other carers

Family

Support workers

Care Manager

Psychology Department

Momentum

Transitions

Information

Support

Friendship

Help to deal with social work

Psychology – help with behaviour problems

More information available to aid people

Input from psychologist

Mental support

Discussion

- Time - Not enough time for carers to do the things they want to do!
- Paid carers should think about doing things that are stimulating and things that are cheap so that a social life doesn't always have to cost so much money.
- Professionals need to listen to what needs to be improved. People don't fit into boxes – needs are different.
- Isolation is an issue for carer and person with acquired brain injury (person with acquired brain Injury can be isolated and lack insight)
- Need a Brain Injury support group
- Professionals need to recognise more than physical or leaning impairment – need to understand the complexity. With Acquired Brain Injury everything changes, loss of life as it was and family relationships changed.
- Regular review meetings are needed but don't happen
- Need consistent support workers, who have more knowledge and better training about brain injury,
- Consistent support workers.
- Person with acquired brain injury needs stimulation/ intensive rehabilitation (could be better)
- Information provided later is frustration finding out that “they could have had.... If I'd known”. Finding doors is difficult.
- A lack of information at the start – someone to talk to, including peer support... Benefit of self help group with professionals
- Fear of complaining because of repercussions – not for self but for the person with the brain injury.
- The need for a care manager - one that understands the problems of brain injury. Can be difficult to get a care manager, and especially one who understands.
- Need care managers who are going to get things done. Some get more done than others. They need to be honest and trustworthy – and say if they can't do something.
- Nobody will come to you, you have to go to them and fight for your basic needs and rights.
- Breakdown when carers or care managers leave – no effective handover
- Have to repeat over and over what person needs, sometimes just give up.

- People coming into your home can be hard
- Nobody seems to check the quality of the care – examples of carers sitting with coat on, come with gloom, shower in house (without permission)
- Carer assessments did not seem to be offered
- When carer has only four hours for social activity and have to use public transport – it does not leave long for any activity.
- Information needed on social activities – what / where. Paying for carer's costs discussed and one carer described the money she made working for four hours was used for this. Some carers even when invited would not eat with the person – said not allowed, but it would be good if they ate with the person.
- More research into rehabilitation side of brain injury! How to better stimulate the brain to help people recover
- More information about what people are entitled and what their rights are!
- Better access or more access for public service etc
- Hydro therapy pool should perhaps be open at night so that people can access hydrotherapy!
- Is it the funding available?? Respite, Long term care, Housing and Rehabilitation services could all be better
- People like to channel you and stick you in to group e.g. mental health + physical disabilities
- People with Brain injuries need a bit of everything so they are stuck in the middle with nowhere to turn.
- Don't fit into a box!
- Somebody to speak on the same level
- Setting up of groups
- It has to be recognised that there is an **Absolute need** for specific brain injury groups outside the main momentum group!
- There's nothing specific for brain injury so people with brain injury fall between the gaps - Only specific professionals can deal with it or know about it.



Contact list

Learning Disability Group of Aberdeen

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Inverurie Job Club

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Future Choices

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Inverurie Friendship Group – contact Grampian Opportunities

Independent Living Initiative in Aberdeen

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Computers and Integration

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Email: cai.inverurie@btconnect.com

<http://www.computersandintegration.org.uk>

Harlaw Day Centre

Harlaw Road

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Tel: 01467 621885

Hopeville Social Club

34 Harlaw Road

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Tel: 01467 621478

Raeden Court (Margaret Blackwood Housing Association)

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Grampian **Opportunities**
Finding the way forward

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Voices for Change

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New Explorations

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