



# National Lottery Progress Report 2022

## Difference NE

Challenging perceptions of disability



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## **Introduction**

In July 2021 we began our National Lottery funded project, Delivering Difference. This is a 3-year strategic plan that will deliver on our ambition of changing perceptions of disability and tackling discrimination to make the north east a fairer, more equal place for disabled people to live, work and play. As a membership organisation and a Disabled Persons Organisation it was critical to us that our members helped shape the plan so that our work aligns with their needs and priorities. We therefore used a thematic analysis of discussions at our 'Celebrating Difference' launch event to identify those priorities and they became our 5 key strands of work: Building Capacity; Research and Development; Voice, Influence, and Participation; Campaigning; Training and Consultancy.

**Richard Boggie**  
**Development Manager**  
**Difference NE**  
March 2022

## **Building Capacity**

In order to deliver our planned activities, we first had to build capacity within the team. We successfully filled a new role of Communications and Events Officer, appointing Nic Cook to the post. Nic has quickly become a highly valued member of the team. She has been instrumental in planning and delivering new member events as well as new training workshops. She has also expanded our reach through some great social media work, and has developed her knowledge of human rights through participation in an action research project as a Community Researcher, organised by Just Fair.

## **Research and Development**

A primary activity of Difference is to conduct, commission and collaborate in research and development activity to inform our work and support our strategic goals.

We have to date:

- Commissioned a study by Dr Christopher Hartworth into the barriers that prevent disabled people going out.
- Contributed to research by the North of Tyne Combined Authority and Carnegie UK to inform their development of a Wellbeing Framework for the North of Tyne region.
- Agreed to be a partner organisation for a disabled PhD student whose research thesis will examine the notion of 'acting with skill'

and which will help inform public attitudes towards disabled people.

- Formed connections with other PhD researchers; Sunil Rodger and Natalie Bamford, exploring accessibility and city planning. Natalie has designed a pilot project for Difference Members to take part in. This project aims to access local knowledge citizens hold about Newcastle city centre that they may not know they hold, challenging existing models of consultation in planning processes, and how that pertains to accessibility.
- Worked with Dr Kate Fox to develop a project researching relaxed theatre performances and we hope to secure funding for this work soon.
- Organised a Participatory Action Research project, to take place in June 2022, in the form of our 'Disability at Work Summit'. This will bring together disabled and non-disabled stakeholders to explore barriers and devise collective action for building an inclusive employment culture in the North East.
- Involved members in a variety of consultative/focus groups to gather views and experiences on matters such as employment, climate action and urban design. This included our 'Celebrating Difference' launch event, where member feedback was analysed and formed the basis of our strategic priorities.

## Voice, Influence, and Participation

### Member Events

Last summer we marked Autistic Pride Day with our own virtual picnic. Writer, poet and presenter, Kate Fox, hosted a panel discussion exploring the experiences of neurodivergent people in the North East. Feedback from attendees was great – one charity worker from Sunderland wrote “This event really was a brilliant opportunity to learn about neurodiversity and have an opportunity to talk about autism. The panel of Speakers were awesome and gave a unique perspective about their own experiences. Brilliant learn and share conversations and really hoping that Difference NE will create more opportunities like this for members of our community.”

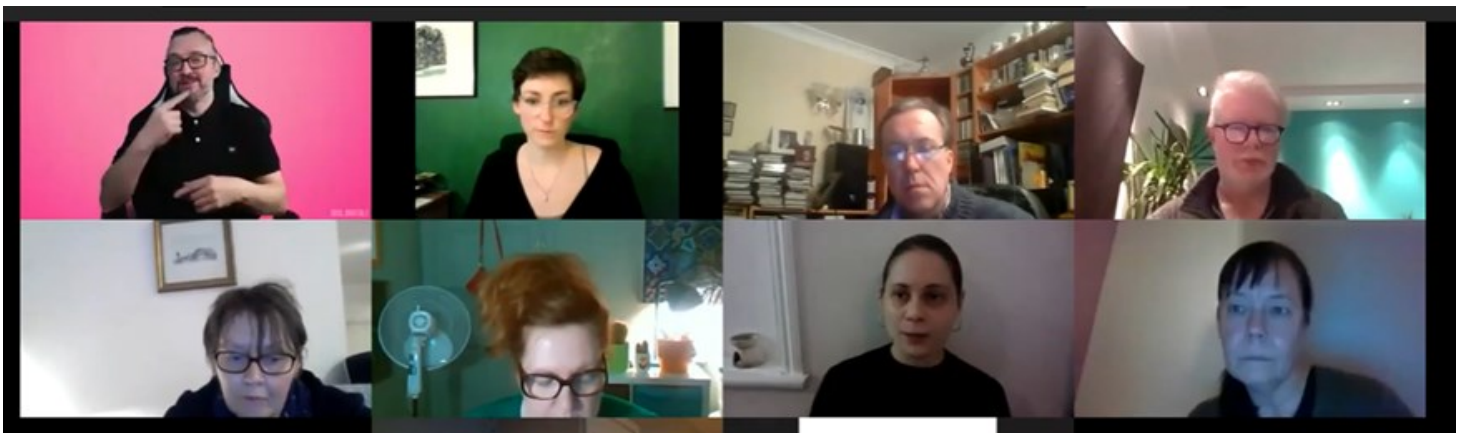




In November 2021 we launched our Disabled Climate Action Forum (DCAF), giving disabled people the opportunity to come together to share their views and experiences relating to climate action and climate justice.

Celebrating International Day of Disabled People on 3 December, we held a special online screening of ‘Writing the Missing – All at Sea’ by disabled writer, performer and activist, Lisette Auton. The film explores Lisette's own experiences of disability in a way which resonated with our members and was a fittingly positive way to mark this important day.

In February 2022 we held our latest online event, Creative Careers - a series of talks by disabled artists with North East connections. Artists Leah Clements, Aidan Moesby and Melanie Shee shared insights into the barriers faced by disabled creatives, and the strategies and resources they use to ensure that they get their work seen and heard.



## **Outreach Work**

We understand the need to promote diversity within Difference and have been seeking opportunities to engage with communities that will help us to better represent and support disabled people across the North East.

We have met with the Angelou Centre in Newcastle, which supports Black and minoritized women and girls. We have agreed to take part in a 'learning exchange' whereby we will provide training for each other's organisations and develop our understanding of how we can support each other's work, developing an intersectional awareness of the barriers that disabled people face in our region.

## **Website Development**

It is critical to Difference that our website offers the highest standard of accessibility. We therefore purchased a license for Recite Me, a piece of assistive software which enables end users to modify their visual display, colours, fonts, layout etc, as well as offering text to speech and a number of different languages.

## **Allies Network**

At the start of 2022 we launched a new form of membership. Our Allies Network was set up to encourage organisations and freelancers who want to support our work. It will offer opportunities for sharing, learning and development so that they can be more confident and proactive in tackling discrimination. So far, 29 allies have joined up and we expect this membership to grow as we reach more organisations with our work.



# Allies Network

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Organisations across the North East are coming together to challenge ableism and broaden representations of disability in their work by joining our Allies Network.

## Consultations

We have been active both in speaking up for the rights of disabled people and in providing opportunities for disabled people to make their own voices heard.

- We made a significant contribution to a project run by North of Tyne Combined Authority working with Carnegie UK to develop their Wellbeing Framework. Difference ensured that disabled people's voices were part of this development.
- We also fed our views into the regional planning for a new integrated bus strategy, with important new central funding.
- In December we took part in Newcastle City Council's annual budget planning consultations through Connected Voice. We provided feedback on their Council Plan.
- We are consulting disabled people across the North East on what barriers they face to engaging in climate action ongoingly as part of our Disabled Climate Action Forum.
- Nationally, we provided input to the Office for National Statistics as part of their consultation on the presentation of outputs from the 2021 Census.
- Our Manifesto for a Better Normal was used as evidence for Inclusion London's call for evidence for the civil society report as part of the UK state's examination by the UN Committee on the Rights of Disabled People.

## **Campaigning**

### **Accessible Cities**

Our main campaign over the past year has been to encourage local city planners to take more account of the needs and rights of disabled people in their plans. Our focus so far has been on Newcastle, as we have been aiming to influence their 2030 city redevelopment plans and the inclusion of disabled people in planning from the start, challenging less inclusive consultation processes. We met with disabled people to hear their experiences and concerns and shared these with city councilors and officials. We hope to develop a human rights-based tool which we can use to influence other local authorities to develop more inclusive planning approaches

### **DNACPR**

This year we have supported a campaign by a regional group of self-advocates, Stop People Dying Too Young. We worked in partnership with the group, Inclusion North, Learning Disability England, and the British Institute of Human Rights to produce an open letter to the Government's Ministerial Oversight Group working on a response to the CQC's findings about the use of 'Do Not Resuscitate' orders during the pandemic. The aim of the letter and the campaign is to get the MOG to include people with learning disabilities and autistic people in its membership so they can bring their expertise into developing the solutions.

## Disability Benefits

As part of the Disability Benefits Consortium, Difference has supported the campaign to put pressure on the Government to raise legacy benefits like ESA by £20pw, as was the case for Universal Credit during the pandemic.

## Digital Inclusion

Difference is an active member of Better ConNEcted, a regional campaign group working to promote digital inclusion. We have taken the lead on digital accessibility for the group, primarily through our training workshops (see Training section for details).

## How will you make your online meetings more accessible?

Make briefer points, and look into subtitles and closed captions on powerpoint

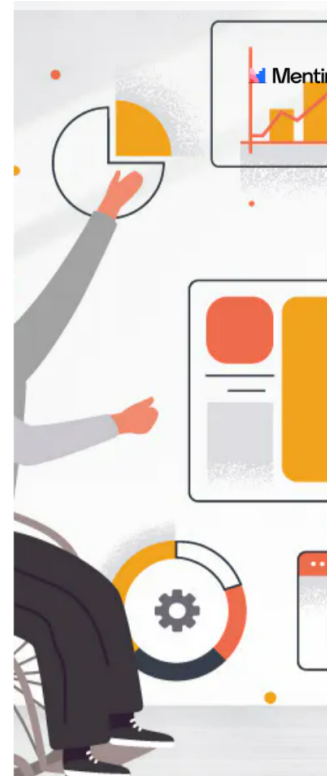
asking accessibility based questions prior to a meeting and utilising accessibility tools in PowerPoint

Asking prior to the meeting about accessibility support. Glossary of terms, subtitles, BSL provision available if needed for larger events

Anticipatory duty is key and open communication from the outset to

Definitely going to be asking people at registration what we can do to make it more accessible or if there's anything they need. Looking at PowerPoints more closely to make sure they're accessible too - looking at colours, font, alt text etc.

Press S to show image



## **Employment Mentoring**

We have developed an employment mentoring scheme to offer support to any members wishing to progress their career goals. All of our trustees and our Development Director have agreed to be mentors. So far, we have had one mentoring partnership. We will continue to promote the scheme and review towards the end of 2022.

## **New workshops**

We have recently extended our training offer with a new workshop on inclusive employment. The workshop examines what it means to be disability inclusive and what steps employers need to take to bring about equality in the workplace. We will be trialing the new workshop with a group from our new Allies Network.

**'Really useful and thought-provoking workshops with @differencenorth. I'd highly recommend these' - Academic Health Science Network North East and North Cumbria**

A photograph of three people sitting in an office environment. On the left, a woman with dark curly hair is wearing a black top and a bright orange skirt with a lace-like pattern. In the center, a man in a light-colored shirt is smiling. On the right, another man is partially visible, wearing a white shirt. The woman on the left is seated in a wheelchair. The background shows large windows with a view of a city building.

# Disability at Work

**Building an inclusive employment culture in the North East**

**June 2022**

**Difference North East**

## **Disability at Work Summit**

We had originally planned to hold a conference on the topic of disability and employment. However, we decided that we wanted an event that would be more participatory with a better chance of resulting in real change in our region. Therefore, on 14 June 2022 we are hosting a 'Disability at Work Summit', bringing together policymakers, researchers, employers and disabled people to work collaboratively to identify the barriers that affect disabled workers. This action research approach will help to develop new ways of fostering a more inclusive North East jobs market. The event will be attended by Vicky Foxcroft MP, Shadow Minister for Disabled People.



## **Training and Consultancy**

An important way in which Difference raises awareness, changes attitudes and promotes greater inclusion is through our training and consultancy work. This year we have:

- Designed and developed 3 workshops on Disability Equality, Awareness and Etiquette, Accessible Online Meetings and Events, and Accessible Online Content.
- Delivered training to organisations for the voluntary and cultural sectors, NHS, and local authorities.
- Been commissioned by VONNE to deliver workshops as part of their North of Tyne Digital Pathfinder Programme.
- Provided consultancy support to November Club, a Northumberland-based theatre company seeking to develop more inclusive practices.

This has been an area of strong interest for Difference. We were able to use a National Lottery grant to first commission an external organisation to deliver training, but also then develop our own expertise, and this has enabled the development of external income. We will be looking to grow this activity further over the coming months.

## **Access to physical and digital environments**

This priority has been the focus of much of our campaigning work through our Accessible Cities campaigning and also our work on digital inclusion.

## COVID-19

We continue to monitor the impact of the pandemic on disabled people in our region. As well as supporting the work of the 'Stop People Dying Too Young' group with their DNACPR campaign, we also worked with the Institute for Public Policy Research North on the launch of their 'Time to Act' report, which highlighted major inequalities experienced by disabled people in the North East.

We raised our concerns over the issues outlined in the Time to Act report in Parliament. Newcastle Central MP, Chi Onwurah, raised questions with both DWP and the Department of Education on our behalf.

We have also [raised areas of concern regarding the relaxation of COVID regulations](#) and the impact this is having on some vulnerable disabled people.