

CHAPTER 3

Developing a User-Led Project: creating employment opportunities for disabled people within the housing sector

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(From Barnes, C and Mercer G. (eds.) 2004: ***Disability Policy and Practice: Applying the Social Model*** , Leeds: The Disability Press, 35-50).

Introduction

One of the most significant factors undermining the rights of disabled adults to participate fully and equally in society is their systematic exclusion and marginalisation from the labour market (Smith 1992: 1).

This chapter examines the development of a unique and innovative intermediate labour market scheme that was the first of its kind in the United Kingdom. This Employment Project was designed to enable a small group of people with significant impairments to move from long-term unemployment into temporary paid work, specifically in the housing sector, with a view to securing a permanent job afterwards. It was sponsored by The Centre for Independent Living in Glasgow (CILiG) which had already established the Glasgow Disabled Person's Housing Service (GDPHS) in September 1999 to supply information and advocacy on housing and associated independent living options for disabled people.

The GDPHS Employment Project was planned so that the disabled participants were located in temporary positions in housing associations where, as part of their work experience, they gathered information on accessible housing in Glasgow. In so doing, they would also enhance the general aim of the GDPHS to support disabled people's housing needs.

We will begin by outlining the approach taken by the CILiG in developing user-led services and more particularly the GDPHS, before describing and assessing the implementation of the Employment Project.

This will include an extended case study of the work placement experiences of one of the disabled participants. Finally, we will review the main outcomes and overall progress of the Project.

Supporting independent living: a social model approach

The CILiG was launched in 1995 to offer a full range of independent living support, advice, training and advocacy services to disabled people who wanted to manage their own personal assistance packages. From the outset, the CILiG rejected the traditional view of an individualised or medical model of disability, with its focus on a person's functional limitations, and the conflation of 'disability' and 'impairment' that still characterises government policy, as is clearly illustrated by the approach taken in the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995. Instead, the CILiG actively promoted the social model of disability which defines disability as a societal construct emerging from the social and environmental barriers and discrimination experienced by people with impairments (Oliver 1990).

Combating institutional discrimination

The social interpretation of disability demonstrates obvious parallels with analyses of other forms of discrimination based on 'race' and gender. Moreover, despite the availability of legal redress in the last quarter of the twentieth century, and the growing acceptance of the level and extent of social exclusion, progress in overcoming such discrimination has been limited.

As was argued in the report sponsored by the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People *Disabled People in Britain and Discrimination* (Barnes 1991), institutional discrimination against disabled people is embedded in the institutions and organizations of contemporary society. It arises where the needs of disabled people are systematically ignored or met inadequately, and if 'agencies are regularly interfering in the lives of disabled people as a means of social control' (Barnes 1991: 3), in ways not experienced by non-disabled people. From this perspective, institutional discrimination:

incorporates the extreme forms of prejudice and intolerance usually associated with individual or direct discrimination, as well as the more covert and unconscious attitudes which contribute to and maintain indirect and/or passive discriminatory practices within contemporary organizations. Examples of institutional discrimination on social policy include the way the education system is organized, and the operation of the

labour market (Barnes 1991: 3).

Traditional notions of disability based on an individual or medical model have frequently been reproduced uncritically, and 'confirmed' in the approach to disability as a 'personal tragedy', so that people with impairments are demeaned as in need of 'care' and dependent on others (Oliver 1990). The effect has been to disregard or deny the relevance or merit of equal opportunity policies and practices to advance the social inclusion of disabled people.

Building a housing service for disabled people

The CILiG is a democratically accountable user-led organisation with 85 per cent of Directors and 70 per cent of staff identifying themselves as disabled people. Its philosophy and practice is firmly located in the social model approach of seeking ways to challenge disabling barriers and promote social inclusion (UPIAS 1976). This has been widely adopted by disabled activists and their organisations in Britain over the last quarter of the twentieth century. Another important early influence was Derbyshire Coalition of Disabled People's (DCDP) formulation of the 'seven needs' of disabled people (Davis 1990; Davis and Mullender 1993). These arose from detailed discussions among disabled people about an alternative social interpretation of disability and how this might be translated into 'practical action'.

There was considerable agreement on the significance of 'housing of good basic design, appropriate technical aids, and a flexible system of personal assistance' (Davis 1990:6). Similarly, it was argued that crucial life choices facing disabled people, such as moving out of an institution or away from their family home, depended on accurate information about, for example, national and local policies, benefit systems, housing providers, aids and equipment. However, such information had to be interpreted and used effectively, hence the importance of advice and peer counselling. In addition, achieving social integration depended on accessible built environment and transport opportunities. For DCDP, these areas comprised the seven 'primary' needs: information, counselling, housing, technical aids, personal assistance, transport, and access and housing. Taken together they 'put flesh on the social model of disability' (Davis 1990: 7). Needless to say, once these are met, a further level of 'secondary' needs materialises, notably education, employment and leisure.

Looking specifically at accessible housing, Glasgow has a complex and extremely fragmented housing sector with a high proportion of

flatted accommodation, particularly in older tenements. In 2002, over 800 disabled people in Glasgow were classified as a 'top medical priority' and more than 200 of this group had been waiting for more than two years for suitable housing. Moreover, Glasgow City Council (2001) reported that the average waiting time for a priority one adaptation was 329 days, and further that there was a shortfall of over 13,000 houses for disabled people of all ages and impairment groups. This large unmet demand was mirrored in the *Scottish House Condition Survey 1996* (Scottish Office 1997). It indicated that there were only around 24,000 dwellings (approx 1 per cent of total) in Scotland that could be classified as suitable for use by the 'ambulant disabled' although there were 124,000 'ambulant disabled' households. This clear failure to meet disabled people's needs was exacerbated because, for example, only 2,000 of the 5,000 wheelchair accessible houses were actually occupied by 'full-time' wheelchair users. More recently, the *Scottish House Condition Survey 2002* (Communities Scotland 2003) reported that the number of dwellings meeting the lowest level of the barrier free standard for disabled people had risen to 89,000 but this still only represented 4 per cent of the total housing stock.

An early issue for the GDPHS was that social landlords, such as the more than eighty Housing Associations in Glasgow controlling over 48,000 properties, were unable to supply a detailed breakdown of their housing stock, and the level and location of accessible and adapted units that they were managing. The most frequent reason given was that they did not have, or could not spare the necessary staff resources to gather and collate this information. Coincidentally, at this time, Government strategists were emphasising the important role that housing had to play in creating a fairer and more equal society:

Good housing has a vital part to play in promoting social inclusion, and although it cannot, on its own, provide a panacea for all the ills of social exclusion, a decent secure and affordable home for all is fundamental to the development of the sort of inclusive and participative society the Government wants in Scotland (Scottish Office 1999: para. 2.4).

Against this background, the CILiG prepared an application for European Union Objective 3 funding to develop a specialist housing information, advice and advocacy service for disabled people in housing need. It was the first democratically accountable, user-led organisation to obtain this type of European funding in Scotland. As a result, the Glasgow Disabled Person's Housing Service (GDPHS) was set up in

September 1999, and became operational in mid-2000. It initiated an information and advocacy service for disabled people by gathering and collating information on the accessible housing stock in Glasgow as well as producing a centralised register of disabled people in housing need. Once these two registers had been fully developed, the GDPHS was able to deliver a matching service to assist disabled people to find 'the right house for the right person at the right time'. Equally, it permitted housing providers to register vacant accommodation suitable for disabled people. By the end of 2003, the GDPHS held information from some 80 different housing associations/social landlords covering over 48,000 properties.

The GDPHS Employment Project

The Intermediate Labour Market model for moving people from long-term unemployment into permanent work concentrated on ways of improving their general employability. The focus was on a temporary (up to one year) contract with a comprehensive 're-engagement package' ranging from the direct work experience through to basic skills and vocational training, personal development and confidence building (Marshall and Macfarlane 2000). In order to avoid displacing those already in work, schemes have stressed activities not currently undertaken by the employing organisation. There has also been considerable emphasis on placements that will produce wider community benefits.

Typically, employment projects and programmes have drawn on a diverse range of local, national (e.g. New Deal) and European funding sources. The CILiG's application specifically targeted the European Social Fund and this resulted in an award of more than £97,000 in September 2000. Prior to making its bid, the CILiG commissioned a feasibility study and consultation exercise. These suggested that many social landlords were keen to develop and improve their services for disabled people, and to increase their opportunities for working in housing organisations. The CILiG developed the programme, secured the funding and employed the core co-ordinating staff.

The GDPHS Employment Project adopted a two-prong strategy:

- 1) It made available additional resources to social landlords to enable them to develop their policies and services for disabled people. This included the development of a city-wide database of adapted properties, plus improved referral and information networks to match those seeking accessible accommodation with relevant housing

providers. It also encouraged housing management and development policies that were more appropriate and responsive to the needs of disabled people.

2) It offered employment and training opportunities to selected disabled people in order to assist them to develop skills, experience and qualifications in all aspects of social housing. No distinctions were drawn against people with different types of impairment. Thus, the GDPHS participants demonstrated a broad range of impairments such as 'mental distress', head injury, hearing impairments (including a sign language user), visual impairments and physical impairments (such as Muscular Dystrophy, and Spina Bifida).

The GDPHS successfully negotiated twelve full-time placements based within housing associations in and around Glasgow. Each placement provider agreed to contribute £4,000 towards the cost of the project. Furthermore, in order to overcome the lack of incentive to leave relatively higher levels of welfare benefits, wage levels for those disabled people recruited to the Project were set at £212 per week. This amounted to an average annual salary of £11,000, which meant that all of the disabled recruits were better off financially in work than on benefits, by between £28 and £134 per week net. The Intermediate Labour Market model also stressed the significance of offering not only a temporary job but making available appropriate training and support to enable the disabled participants to move on to a 'regular' paid job at the end of their contract.

Furthermore, in order to satisfy the demand for wider community advantage, the Project expected disabled participants, as part of their placement, to gather and collate information on the numbers, types and locations of adapted and accessible houses. In this way, the project produced a unique synergy by creating employment for disabled people who in turn helped other members of the disabled population to find suitable housing accommodation.

Overall, during the course of their placement, participants:

- carried out a number of tasks/assignments aimed at improving the data on accessible housing throughout Glasgow;
- assisted the housing associations in which they were placed to develop more effective systems to match supply and provision of adapted housing; and
- were involved in a formal training programme in one of the

following areas: housing management, urban regeneration, administration, information and communications technology (ICT), and finance. The first participants began their work placement in early 2001.

Recruitment

A number of criteria were identified to select the first cohort of twelve unemployed disabled people for their one-year, temporary placement with a housing association. These comprised a combination of assessment of the candidate's suitability for the project (based on motivation, enthusiasm, previous experience and qualifications) and measuring the level of disadvantage they had previously faced in accessing and retaining employment (based on length of employment, access issues, and the type of benefits received). Those individuals who received the Disability Living Allowance at the medium or higher level (that is, on the basis of assessed degree of impairment) were specifically targeted because official statistics indicate that this category incorporated the most disadvantaged and underrepresented in the labour market (Martin, White and Meltzer 1989). To date, around two thirds of the project participants fitted this classification. While it was recognised that disability is not directly related to degree of impairment as measured by welfare benefits assessments, it was felt to be a reasonable 'proxy' indicator of social disadvantage in the present context.

All applicants were subjected to further rigorous checks in order to match the skills of the candidate to the specific requirements of the placement organisation, while also acknowledging the relevance of previous work experience, educational and training qualifications. The recruitment process spanned four main stages: the application and interview; a pre-selection or induction course; an interview with a placement provider; before making a final decision whether to enlist the individual on to the Project.

Personal Development

Once selected, each participant was offered financial support in order to pursue wider personal development and training. Examples of the type of course or activity chosen by the first cohort on the pilot project ranged from training in British Sign Language Level II, purchase of two personal computers for use at home by project workers, yoga classes, through to taking the European Computer Driving Licence. Indeed, all of those who stayed with the project for a complete year achieved a Standard Vocational Qualification at Level 2 or higher.

Aside from the added value of these activities, other benefits were unforeseen. For example, one recruit had been on a National Health Service (NHS) waiting list for a lightweight wheelchair for around 2 years which she could lift in and out of her car. Without it, her level of independence was greatly reduced. Yet within three weeks of starting on the GDPHS scheme, she was supplied with a suitable lightweight chair through the Department of Employment's *Access to Work* programme (see Thornton et al. 2001). This is designed to identify and address disabled people's needs in terms of equipment, adaptations or arrangements that allow them to gain, or remain in, employment. The Project ensured that the access needs of each participant were identified and agreed in partnership with the participant, staff of the GDPHS, the placement provider and *Access to Work*, prior to commencement of the placement. To date the Project has assisted in accessing over £100,000 worth of equipment, adaptations and support for the participants.

The Employment Project also contributed mentoring support to the workers and professional advice to organisations on the management of the placement. Again, if an employer required assistance to adapt their workplaces or acquire specialist equipment for use by a worker, the GDPHS was ready to assist with obtaining public funding.

Case Study: Sasha's story

Sasha (a pseudonym) is a 27-year-old Glasgow woman from an Asian family; she is Deaf and had never been in paid employment. She had completed an access course in administration at a local college one year before joining the GDPHS Employment Project. Sasha's family had actively discouraged her from working and this affected how she interacted with other people. She lacked confidence and social skills due in no small part to the 'cotton wool treatment' she received from her family. However, she was determined to get a job and ultimately wanted to work in an organisation that supported Deaf people.

Sasha's experience illustrates how a broad range of barriers both excludes disabled people from entry into the labour market and isolates them after joining the workplace. She had two placements in housing associations but these experiences could hardly have been more different. Her first post was in Glasgow city centre where she became a member of the housing services administration team. After discussions between Sasha, the GDPHS Employment Project staff, the placement provider, and staff administering the Department of Employment *Access to Work* scheme, all of her communication and access needs required for working in the housing association were addressed. These

comprised:

- a textphone and phoneflash;
- a pager (hooked up to the fire alarm system);
- sign language interpreters;
- a work-related signing course delivered to all of the staff that worked directly with Sasha (this was specifically designed, with Sasha's involvement, to teach basic sign language techniques); and
- a Deaf Awareness course delivered by RNID.

There was a settling-in period for the first couple of months but at this point everything appeared to be going well. Sasha was enjoying the experience of working in a 'real' salaried post, while the housing association staff had completed their work-related signing course, and seemed positive about working with a Deaf person and familiarising themselves with the diverse barriers that confronted Sasha in the workplace.

However, after about three months, Sasha began to express dissatisfaction with her relationship with the line manager. She also felt that there was a breakdown in communication with other staff members and that she was getting less and less to do. When questioned about this, her line manager said 'Sasha was not doing the job properly, so she was not given that work to do again'. Nevertheless, there had been no discussions about possible support or training issues that might allow her to overcome any difficulties or misunderstandings. For her part, Sasha reported that she was not aware of making any mistakes. How was she supposed to know that she was not doing the job properly if nobody let her know that there was a problem?

Thereafter, the work relationship deteriorated quickly. Sasha felt isolated, frustrated and excluded, and the early confidence that she had gained soon disappeared. She believed that she was being treated differently from other members of staff and that her support needs were not being met. At the same time, her line manager and other staff expressed growing dis-satisfaction with the placement and it was terminated.

Sasha was then re-located in a housing association on the south side of Glasgow. Again, joint discussions between the main stakeholders resulted in a training and support plan that covered:

- Disability Equality Training for all staff;
- a work-related signing course for all staff;
- training to make the most effective use of the time that Sign Language Interpreters spent at the placement;
- addressing access issues, installing all the equipment and completing other necessary adaptations and arrangements; and
- supplying Sasha with a yearly planner that detailed all aspects of her work experience, such as a work plan, team meetings, training days and locations.

In contrast to her first placement, this second experience remained positive throughout her stay. Sasha began as a member of the finance team, where she was attached to a more experienced member of staff. When that person was absent from work for a considerable period, Sasha took on her role. When this individual returned to work, she was moved to a different department, and Sasha was offered the post on a full-time basis. As a measure of the rise in Sasha's confidence, when informed that she was to be recommended for this higher-grade position, she immediately approached the director and asked for (and received) a significant pay rise! At the time of writing (mid-2003), over a year has passed and Sasha continues to occupy this post.

How can two housing associations of similar size, deliver such different work experiences? First, on both placements a plan was drawn up that identified issues in three key areas: access, support mechanisms and staff training. Nonetheless, several important differences emerged. With respect to access, while there were concerns about equipment, adaptations and related matters in both placements, there was less awareness of the barriers confronting Deaf people in the first placement or commitment to overcoming them.

Second, it was largely left to Sasha to sort out everyday issues. There was little encouragement for staff to discuss how the placement was going, let alone exploring collaborative action to maximise the support for Sasha. In contrast, in the second placement, a joint action plan was drawn up between staff and Sasha to make the most effective use of the time when a sign language interpreter was available, for example, in covering meetings, information, support and training issues. It was also evident that the staff and management in placement two showed more recognition of, and willingness to respond positively to, Sasha's obvious lack of work experience and wider isolation from 'mainstream' society. The many possibilities for a breakdown in communication between

herself and other staff were therefore dealt with quickly rather than ignored. The regular review meetings set up between Sasha, the GDPHS Employment Project staff and the placement line manager permitted an earlier identification and closer monitoring of any concerns and allowed more scope for prompt intervention to address these difficulties. It is perhaps worth adding that the second placement housing association had a very good reputation for delivering an inclusive service to tenants as well as encouraging good employee-management relations.

A third area of difference between the placements emerged in staff training and development. In the second workplace, staff were expected (and embraced the opportunity) to participate in Disability Equality Training. While staff in both locations took part in a work-related sign language course, those in the second placement showed a greater appreciation of the importance of practicing and improving their new language skills by signing with Sasha on a regular basis. This difference in the level of commitment was further confirmed by the decision of ten staff to undertake and complete a British Sign Language Level 1 course.

The overall impression derived from Sasha's experience in the first placement was that there was an expectation that she should 'fit in' with established work routines. The pattern of institutional discrimination was both overt and covert and revolved around the ways in which Sasha was treated differently and unfairly because of her impairment. When staff began to question Sasha's performance, the management's claim to promote inclusion was overtaken by arguments that having a Deaf worker created 'problems' for the organisation. Instead of exploring the nature of these difficulties, management decided that the 'solution' was to ask Sasha to do more menial tasks (because these required the least amount of supervision) or to ignore her presence in the workplace. No feedback was given that she was not doing the job in the way or to the standard expected. This progressive exclusion from regular work tasks and communication reached the point where Sasha felt demoralised and extremely pessimistic about her prospects for finding any other paid employment.

Conversely, placement two was a far more positive experience from the outset. In the early meetings with senior staff members it was obvious that they were more sensitive to the issues and barriers facing a Deaf person in the workplace. They viewed the Employment Project as a development opportunity for existing members of staff and the organisation as a whole, as well as providing a positive work experience

for Sasha. The management and staff were committed to involving Sasha in all aspects of the work experience and were very open to learning about and implementing new forms and techniques of communication, while also stressing her responsibilities and role as an employee. They treated Sasha as a regular member of staff with different access needs and embraced the opportunity to develop as an organisation, with her co-workers happy to talk to Sasha on everyday and work-related matters. Sasha quickly felt that she was being welcomed and treated as a fellow worker. She was carrying out a demanding role within the housing association, but received appropriate levels of support until she was competent enough to carry out the job as required. When issues arose or mistakes were made, there were appropriate communication channels and advice to address these promptly and efficiently. After all, the Employment Project was set up to promote the inclusion of disabled people in the workplace, by building their confidence and self-belief.

Sasha's experience also demonstrates the importance of co-operation between the Project Team and the placement associations. Continuing communication and exchange of experiences proved difficult in placement one: indeed, management staff members were reluctant to involve the Project Team in monitoring the experience and performance of the disabled trainees, until it was too late. Instead, the placement was viewed as an additional burden, and efforts were made to minimise potential access, support or training issues that might arise. Such instances raised basic questions about the commitment and attitude of staff individually and collectively in the provider organisation to the Project's aims. Yet, for the most part, the majority of the discriminatory practices entailed indirect rather than overt hostility. Conversely, a major reason for the much more positive outcomes achieved in Sasha's second placement was the very different attitudes of the staff and their preparation for the placement and working with a disabled colleague. This included a comprehensive training plan, together with a framework for monitoring its implementation.

The GDPHS: an evaluation

Recent independent evaluations of Intermediate Labour Market projects suggest that some have achieved positive outcomes of over 60 per cent of the participants progressing into permanent employment, with an overall average of 53 per cent in 1999/2000 – a figure slightly in excess of New Deal adult training programmes (Marshall and Macfarlane 2000). Significantly, over 90 per cent of those who obtained a job were still in work six months later, a much higher figure than that achieved by

comparable 'return-to-work' programmes.

In the first two years of the GDPHS Employment Project, twenty-six disabled people, with a range of impairments and an average length of unemployment of eight years, were recruited. Of this group, fifteen successfully completed their European Computer Driving Licence and fourteen undertook a training qualification in Housing Administration. Fifteen participants moved into full-time employment (representing 58 per cent of the intake) and four into full-time higher education (15 per cent). Moreover, seven individuals from the first intake who moved into full-time employment were still in work one year later.

These positive outcomes have been reinforced by preliminary economic calculations of the costs and benefits of the Project. These suggest major financial returns over its two-year life span, at both the local and national government levels. These are as a result of the reduced costs of welfare benefits, lower wastage in housing adaptations, higher levels of income from rents and Council Tax, and additional income tax and national insurance contributions.

A further key feature of the GDPHS Employment Project was that it was overtly framed as an alternative to existing mainstream provision that drew on social model thinking. But how far, and in what ways, has it differed from a mainstream housing service? The central elements of the GDPHS comprised:

an analysis of disabling social and environmental barriers to the social exclusion of people with impairments, and ways to tackle and overcome them (such as the 'benefits trap', access, communication, attitudes of employers, access to training);

- respect for the variety of individual support needs (not 'one size fits all');
- recognition of the dignity and expertise of disabled participants – including their own assessment of their support needs;
- an emphasis on quality rather than quantity in terms of 'outputs'; and
- addressing the basic shortcoming caused by the lack of involvement by disabled people in housing provision that leads to inappropriate and inadequate services and attempting to bring about organizational change in structures, process and culture through the participation of disabled people.

Together these elements outline an ambitious policy or service for the target (disabled) group. However, while the Employment Project has been delivered within a theoretical framework firmly based on the social model, its practical implementation has highlighted a number of contentious issues.

One concern has been the tension between a collective, structural approach and one located at the individual level. In order to prepare disabled people for work, action must be directed to individual needs as well as directing attention to more structural concerns such as improving the accessibility of workplaces to include disabled people. We need to do both. Also, within a social model analysis we must recognize that it is individuals with impairments who experience structural/ institutional barriers. The impact of these external barriers on individual self-esteem and confidence can be destructive and generate further internal barriers (oppression) so that even individual disabled people begin to believe the criticism from others that they are 'not up to the job', or 'just can't cut it' (Mason 1990). In these circumstances, support from a peer group (or user-led organization) is crucial in helping to diagnose the problem, and explore alternative remedies.

A second area worthy of note is the importance of flexibility in seeking organisational change. There are limits on how far and how quickly dominant cultural norms and values around work can be challenged, ranging, for example, from work patterns, task definition and allocation, through to modes of dress and communication. A specific example would be the information and advice as well as the communication support required to enable people with learning difficulties to participate meaningfully in decision making process at the workplace.

In addition, funders demand clarity in the identification of the target group as well as confidence that the recipient organisation can demonstrate that it will give 'value for money' in how the funding has been used. In the case of the GDPHS, this required evidence of the assessment or screening of disabled people so that they fitted the target criteria in terms of the degree of their impairment. Notwithstanding such concerns, employers should not need the 'sweetener' of cheap (project placement) labour to employ disabled people: they should ensure that disabled people have equal opportunities to find paid employment and flourish in the labour market.

Conclusion

Disability, within a social model approach, is a socio-political issue that

concerns society as a whole. It should not be considered an issue only for disabled people, but something that potentially will affect anyone with an impairment. Disability is created by the failures of people, organisations and social systems to anticipate and/or respond appropriately to the everyday support needs of people who have an impairment. As the GDHPS Employment Project in general and the case study of Sasha's experience illustrate, institutional discrimination against disabled people is deep-seated and wide-ranging, but positive moves towards inclusion are possible with adequate support and training, aids and equipment, information, advice and peer counselling. The contrasting experiences of disabled participants in their work placements reveal ways in which the attitudes, everyday practices and routines of non-disabled people/employees constrain equal opportunities for disabled people. This picture reinforces the significance attached by organisations of disabled people to promoting the concept of user involvement in the design and delivery of services. This is based partly on the right to self-determination and partly on the belief that it leads to more effective, higher quality, services.

For its part, the GDPHS has now become an established part of the local housing service landscape. It has developed databases of disabled people's housing needs and preferences of the profile of available and planned accessible and barrier-free housing in Glasgow. These greatly help disabled people in their search for appropriate accommodation, while also facilitating the task of social landlords with accessible housing in finding suitable disabled clients. Additionally, the GDPHS has branched out to provide training and consultancy for housing providers, notably Disability Equality Training, and briefing courses on the DDA and its implications. In summary, the GDPHS now comprises a successful one-stop shop for disabled people in housing need, located in an accessible environment, and which is supported and managed by disabled people working for the CILiG – a user-led organisation of disabled people.

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