

Social Audit Report 2018- 2019 for Going For Independence CIC (GFI)

Company Registration date October 20th 2008 No. 6729549

For financial year 1st November 2018 to 31st October 2019

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| Part 1 | Description of the company's activities and impact |
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Going For Independence (GFI) – our core business

The Going For Independence CIC was established in 2008. Our main aim is to enable and empower individuals to live independently and safely with the best possible quality of life.

We facilitate connections between individuals and Independent Occupational Therapists and provide impartial advice and information about equipment, gadgets and home / work adaptations (including Electronic Assistive Technology and Telecare).

The company continues to link to and collaborate with a number of key national organisations and with local organisations in the North of England that share our vision.

Over the last couple of years we have been able to provide direct services for people who are Blind and visually impaired to help to reduce social isolation and to help people to learn new skills.

Political and Financial pressures

2018 to 2019 was a year of significant change for us as we extended our Management Board to 6 Directors, and with their support it made it possible for us to then apply for grant funding. Cuts in local authority service provision for older and less able people meant we needed to review our work to make best use of our skills and experience. Our income was supported by commissioned work for organisations in the Tees Valley Region.

GFI continues to run with low overheads and benefits from being in a position to offer pro-bono and voluntary work to keep costs down.

During 2018-2019 the GFI CIC has benefited the community in the following ways:-

1 Social Activities in the Community

Throughout the year GFI was commissioned by the following organisations / charities to run activities designed and tailored for their specific client groups:

Volunteering Matters - for an Asian Elders Ladies group
- for a Dementia and their Carers group

Focus on Vision - for people with Macular Degeneration

Aging Better in Middlesbrough – specific activities for older people

2 2017-2018 Awards for All Lottery Project

At the end of our Social Activities project in November 2018 we consulted with our user groups and decided to apply for a bigger grant for a two year Reaching Communities Lottery project, to work

specifically with people who are Blind and visually impaired, a demographic that is often overlooked. This application was successful and is ongoing, having started in May 2019. The project is called **Building friendships and learning new skills – Social Activities for Older and Isolated People** and is a programme of monthly group workshops where people come together to try new things, reducing their isolation and building confidence.

3 Sensing the Wild Project

At the same time we developed a new project in partnership with the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust (TVWT) called **Sensing the wild – connecting visually impaired people to nature**, and made an application to the Heritage Lottery for an 18 month project which was also successful. In this project the TVWT leads an indoor workshop about nature and then a guided walk in a local park or wood for four groups of people from across the Tees Valley region, in each of the four seasons. This project is ongoing until the end of November 2020.

Through both of the above projects we are able to reach people in the community who can find the specialist information we provide on independent living timely and helpful.

3 Wellbeing Game development

Throughout 2019 GFI worked with contacts and graduates at Teesside University on the development of a table-top Board Game called “Discuss”, using technology so that it can be played inclusively by people who are Blind. This included the beginnings of a design of a mobile phone App with audio dice functions. We registered a new spin-off company called Across-the-Board Games Ltd, a company with a social purpose, which was then able to apply for a Teesside University Fellowship Accelerator grant followed by a Fuel grant, both of which were successful and which have enabled work on a demo model of the App and a prototype of the game. Work is ongoing through 2019/2020 to take this further.

4 Social Enterprise in Residence at Teesside University

At the end of 2019 our links with the university led to us being asked to be Social Enterprise in Residence which gave us an office on campus and involves us in mentoring for students on the values of social enterprise, lectures for the university, blogs and presentations. This work will develop further in 2020 and is a great platform for promotion of GFI and creating businesses with a social purpose.

5 The year ahead 2019-2020

Our Directors contribute voluntary time to all of our work which proves to be good value for money and we have great feedback from our participants to inform our project evaluations. Being located in the north of England, we hope to build on our success and to continue to provide much needed services in the local communities across the Tees Valley region.

Part 2 – Consultation with stakeholders

Our two Lottery projects mean we continue to communicate directly with a range of new stakeholders in the community across the Tees Valley region, including volunteers who work with us. Development of the “Discuss” game involves direct consultation with volunteers and consumers which is ongoing as we improve the prototypes in response to feedback.

GFI has developed a wide business and professional network locally and nationally including new links made with Teesside University, businesses in the region, older and disabled people, young people and children with disabilities, families, friends and carers, Occupational Therapists and health and social care professionals.

Summary

We have had a very exciting year through 2018/ 2019 and have been able to raise our profile significantly. Our thanks are extended to National Lottery Players for making it possible for our two projects to run. As we move into 2020 the Covid-19 virus pandemic will impact on our work. We will have to change our face to face activities and we expect to lose income from our private sales, however we are confident that we will successfully complete our projects, in accordance with Government guidance and with support from our National Lottery contacts. We hope to find ways to develop new services to meet peoples' needs.

Over the year we have employed three people bringing jobs into the area and continue to share our knowledge and experience with a wider audience.

Our flexibility and voluntary work gives us the ability to work in innovative ways, and our new links with Teesside University will help us to spread the word to graduates about including social value in their future work and businesses.

Pam Bennett - MD Going For Independence CIC