

Champion for Disabled People

Report on Expenditure from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

To assist the Leader and appropriate Cabinet Members by advising on service issues which support and encourage active, independent and healthy lives for disabled people and to raise the profile of disabled people and their needs in the development of policy across the Council.

It has been a privilege to act as the Champion for Disabled People for the past 12 months. In that time I have been fortunate to visit a range of events and groups representing and supporting disabled people across Lancashire, in some cases to assess groups who had applied for grants or to represent Lancashire County Council, for example I was honoured when asked to launch the Lancashire Safer Towns Scheme. I regularly attended the Hyndburn Disability Forum and the Hyndburn Blind Society meetings as an observer.

The groups I visited following grant requests and were successful in their bids are listed below. There were other organisations who made requests but after a visit did not fit the criteria. I have attempted to cover a broad range of groups however the majority have been those working with people with learning difficulties or dementia.

Activities Supported from my 2017/2018 Budget:

Visually Impaired Forum (Lancashire) £800 – Event in Morecambe for the blind and visually impaired

This is an umbrella group that covers visually impaired groups across Lancashire, it consists of volunteers and visually impaired people and acts as a conduit for various groups to share information and ideas, the funding of £800 was used to hold a celebration event in Morecambe to thank all those who work so hard for the community.

Ponies for People (Rossendale) £600 – Interactive pony sessions

This facility is unique in Rossendale as a riding centre that offers dedicated sessions to the disabled, originally it was reserved for children with mental health issues, but now caters for all ages across a range of disabilities, including those suffering from dementia, the grant requested was for specialist riding equipment.

Crossroads Memory Choir (Rossendale) £1,198 – Djembe drums and Christmas meal

The choir consists of people from Rossendale who suffer from Dementia and Alzheimer's, it has become an established medical fact that music and singing can benefit sufferers of these afflictions.

The choir meets once a week and attracts members from all over Rossendale and beyond, they also perform concerts to raise funds. The grant requested was to purchase a set of Djembe Drums, these are african kettle drums and are felt ideal for this type of group, plus a Christmas party attended by over 50 choir members, volunteers and carers.

Hyndburn and District Blind Society £750 – Refurbishment of counselling room

The Society is based in Accrington and provides counselling, training, support and fellowship for anyone from the area who has either become recently visually impaired or is a long term sufferer. They also hold weekly drop in sessions in their premises, the funding of £750 was used to refurbish one of their counselling rooms.

Sporting Challenge (West Lancashire) £1,100 – Sporting activities

Sport is extremely important to people with learning disabilities to keep them active and fit. Unfortunately, it is rare that such a person can go to these activities alone and it is often difficult for parents/carers to take them.

Sporting Challenge uses trained volunteers to organise activities such as ten pin bowling, indoor bowls etc. They collect the participants from home and escort them to the activity site and supervise the events. The funding of £1,100 was used to cover the hire of facilities for the activities and assist with the cost of transport for an outing to Southport for a large group of young people and their carers.

Dansworks Bright Futures (Rossendale) £500 – Dance studio

Dansworks is an established dance studio in Rossendale, recently the proprietors realised there were no facilities for children with disabilities to enjoy and benefit from dance activities. They explored the possibilities and realised that along with minor amendments to access they were not sure how to get the word out of what they were trying to do. They asked for a grant to carry out minor works and advertising, this was agreed and has proved to be a successful venture very much enjoyed by those who attend.

Piccadilly Gardens Day Support Services (Lancaster) £1480 – New laptops

Piccadilly Gardens is located in a small market garden centre, it provides support, employment and education for people with learning difficulties from age 18 upwards. It also provides a variety of services to its clients including working in horticulture and the small garden shop. Their IT equipment had become somewhat antiquated and the grant allowed them to purchase two new laptops for admin purposes, and a number of I Pads to be used by clients to record the day to day work they are carrying out including photo montages for further education purposes.

McDonald School of Dance (West Lancashire) £500 – Dance sessions

This group delivers music and dance sessions to encourage young people with mental health difficulties to help express themselves and enhance their self-esteem. It is organised in such a way that trained volunteers collect the young people and return them home which gives their parents and carers some respite each week.

I had the pleasure of spending an evening in their company and managed to avoid embarrassing myself by not showcasing my dance steps. A grant of £500 was given to fund dance sessions and dance equipment.

Pukar Disability Resource Centre (Preston) £1,455 – Portable computer equipment

The Pukar Centre is based in Preston and whilst it offers its advice across the Disabled community in Preston and focuses mainly on the minority ethnic community. The trustees requested the funding for new laptops allowing both visitors to the Centre to access the internet for educational and welfare purposes, but also staff visiting clients in their homes. The service provided allows the disabled residents to enhance their value to themselves and society.

Hyndburn Stepping Out £500 – Waterproof walking jackets

This group provides organised walks throughout Hyndburn, using certified walk leaders. The walks take place all year round, 4 days a week and cover distances for ½ a mile to 5 miles (I took part in the 5 mile walk). The purpose is to provide those who may become housebound through disability the opportunity to take supervised exercise in the company of others. A request of £500 was granted for a supply of weatherproof identifiable jackets for the walk leaders.

High Fives Children's Centre – (Chorley) £300 – Activity days

High Fives is a group formed by a group of parents of children suffering with a range of Autism and Down Syndrome. They started off a self-support group, where parents could share information and support around their children's condition. It grew to a position where there was enough children and parents to organise play days which allowed children with this condition and their siblings to play together. The funding of £300 was awarded to fund an afternoon at a commercial soft play and sensory centre. I was privileged to spend an hour watching the children interacting with each other at the Centre whilst parents had the opportunity to relax knowing their children were fully supervised by trained volunteers.

Rossendale Rays Swimming Club £831– Easter Party

Rossendale Rays are an established group who use swimming as a way of engaging with children with Downs Syndrome and across the Autistic spectrum. The group is run by parents and they have a strong fund raising committee which funds the swimming pool costs and equipment. When I met them it was agreed to provide funding for a children's Easter party where the members of the club could mingle with their siblings and friends.

During the year I have focused on groups that work on a voluntary basis and have a solid income stream so the grants I have awarded allow them to provide something over and above. Finally I have been at pains to stress when I have been thanked for the grant that I am simply the conduit for funds from Lancashire County Council Tax Payers and I am privileged to carry out the role.

***County Councillor Peter Steen
Champion for Disabled People***

Schedule of Expenditure for 2017/18

County Councillor Peter Steen - Champion for Disabled People	
Applicant	Amount of Grant
Visually Impaired Forum (Lancashire) – Event in Morecambe for blind and visually impaired	£800
Ponies for People (Rossendale) – Interactive pony sessions for individuals with mental health issues	£600
Crossroads Memory Choir (Rossendale) – Djembe drums and Christmas meal	£1,198
Hyndburn and District Blind Society – Refurbishment of counselling room	£750
Sporting Challenge (West Lancashire) – sporting activities for people with learning difficulties	£1,100
Dansworks Bright Futures (Rossendale) - dance studio for children with disabilities	£500
Piccadilly Garden Ltd Day Support Service (Lancaster) – New laptops	£1,480
McDonald School of Dance (West Lancashire) – Dance sessions and activity costs	£500
Pukar Disability Resource Centre (Preston) – Portable computer equipment	£1,455
Hyndburn Stepping Out – Waterproof walking jackets	£500
High Five Children's Centre (Chorley) – Activity days	£300
Rossendale Rays Swimming Club – Children's Easter party event	£831
TOTAL SPENT	£10,014