



Annual Report 2020/21

About us

Adapt (NE) is a registered charity, a company limited by guarantee and a social enterprise which is managed by a trustee board of volunteers with a wide range of areas of expertise. We are a community-based organisation providing services to people in North East England with the aim of promoting an inclusive society.

We aim to improve the quality of life of disabled people who have sensory, physical and learning disabilities or mental health problems; also people who are disadvantaged in being able to access services because they live in a rural location. We work closely with the voluntary and statutory sectors to achieve these aims.

To become more self-reliant, we have developed a range of services, including provision of an enterprise hub and community cafe, whilst still holding on to our primary aims. By using our services, other organisations are assured of quality attention whilst at the same time helping us in our work.

Review of the Year - Liz Prudhoe, Director

As we look back on April 2020 to March 2021, it feels quite incredible what we achieved, from a position of moving lots of our services online and by phone and shutting down some of our most used and valued services. As we all recall the first lockdown to tackle the coronavirus was March 2020. We were asked by Northumberland County Council to work with Northumberland Communities Together which was put in place to support individuals through the pandemic. We were of course happy to get involved and we did this in a number of ways which supported people across Northumberland.

We moved the services we could deliver online and by phone to provide a seamless service with staff working from home. This ensured there was a continuous delivery of Healthwatch Northumberland throughout the pandemic, supporting people with information and advice. Northumberland Independent Advocacy Service was moved to a digital and telephone service. Our advocates working from home could join meetings online and speak to people who required their support via different mechanisms and also talk to people on the telephone. Staff also when necessary met with people face to face following all Covid-19 risk assessments and ensuring PPE was used.

A new service we had started to deliver in January 2019 was the Living Well Coordination Service for West Northumberland. This also moved to a telephone service and the staff working from home contacted over 1400 people who at that time had been advised to shield.

Unfortunately our transport services were stood down. However, in the early days of the pandemic we provided a food shopping and delivery service as some people had been unable or were waiting to get an online supermarket code for delivery. We were also able to step in and provide transport for people who had hospital outpatient appointments that were going ahead, but had been unable to get patient transport via the ambulance service. This was primarily for appointments at eye clinics and were for people across Northumberland.

Our community cafe, Cafe @ Burn Lane, also had to close in line with government instructions. However two of our staff volunteered for local lunch clubs which had to stand down and we provided and delivered the meals throughout the first initial lockdown. These were well received and enabled for some people a little human contact.

Working with Northumberland Communities Together and Hexham Communities Together we took calls from the public across Hexham and linked them to volunteers to collect prescription and undertake food shopping.

We also worked closely with Northumberland County Council and partners across Northumberland to facilitate a hardship fund for people impacted by Covid-19 which was donated by Bernicia Housing Foundation. The whole fund was £100,000 with £20,000 for West Northumberland. We produced a referral process and were able to respond quickly. Over £10,000 of the fund has been awarded. We were happy to undertake this work and cover the staffing costs to ensure all of the donated money will go to individuals who need it.

I wish to record my thanks to all our staff who worked hard throughout this very difficult and different year. Our drivers, who when unable to work, were happy to help in anyway they could. Our café staff who again were unable to work, supported people through volunteering their time, and our project staff at Healthwatch Northumberland, Advocacy and the Living Well Coordination Service who worked from home throughout the year, to ensure services were available to support people across Northumberland.

A word from Lorraine Hershon, Chair

We have had another successful albeit challenging year at Adapt (NE). While we have seen restrictions on the cafe opening this year, Adape (NE) has been in the position to extend its services working with Northumberland County Council at a time when many organisations shut their doors. As a trusted partner of the council, Adapt (NE) has gone from strength to strength, despite uncertainty. Financially we have had another solid year; much of this however was a result of the foresight some years ago to purchase the Burn Lane site. This has been of great benefit in the uncertain financial climate, and it allows us to generate income where other charities have failed to do so.

The coming year will remain challenging for us all, but I must commend all the staff in their continued work, much of it from home, and I am sure we shall continue to be in a solid secure position next year.

Northumberland Independent Avocacy Service

Northumberland Independent Advocacy Service is a confidential and free service for adults, who for a range of reasons may benefit from additional support. Services are delivered by trained Independent Mental Health Advocates (IMHA) and Independent Mental Capacity Advocates (IMCA), based at our head office in Hexham and at our office in Pegswood.

An IMHA is a specialist mental health advocate. The changes to the Mental Health Act meant that as of April 2009 there is a legal duty to provide IMHAs for eligible people.

We received 442 referrals over the year, including 41 referrals for the NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy Northumberland service which supports people who wish to complain about their NHS treatment. Referrals can be broken down as below:

NHS Complaints Advocacy Service:	41	Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy:	20
Independent Mental Health Advocacy:	192	Care Act Advocacy:	24
General Advocacy:	10	Relevant Persons Representative:	122
1.2 Representative:	24	General Case Advocacy:	9

Case Study

We received a referral from a social worker for advocacy under Care Act for Penny*, a 33-year-old female with autism, learning disability and selective mutism. The referral came to us because although Penny's mum was able to advocate for her, Penny didn't always engage with her. It was felt someone independent would benefit Penny, who had recently moved to a new bungalow where she receives 24 hours a day support.

The new bungalow meant that she would have new support staff as it was a package of care, and it was felt that the new provider could meet her needs more appropriately. Penny was struggling with the transition which had been on hold due to the pandemic. Advocacy involvement was sought to help Penny express her views during reviews of her care and support needs. The case was allocated to Jo, one of our advocates with specialist training in providing advocacy under Care Act.

Jo met with Penny five times between December 2020 and May 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Penny is unable to verbally communicate, and Jo was unable to get her views using telephone or video calls. Jo risk assessed the visits and completed a lateral flow test beforehand. She wore a face covering and used hand sanitiser and was careful not to touch surfaces whilst keeping a distance of two metres between herself and Penny.

Penny is a selective mute and communicates by squeaking once for yes and twice for no, so Jo planned questions that required a yes or no answer. She was also able to communicate using some Makaton, of which Jo has some experience. Penny can read and point at answers she agrees with, so Jo also wrote things down for her and used some communication cards. Jo established that Penny would have liked to continue to live in her bungalow but keep the previous staff that she was used to.

As this wasn't a possibility, Jo also discussed other options with her. Penny was clear that she didn't want to move again and would rather continue to live there with the new staff. Jo was also able to establish that she felt the transition was going too quickly for her and that she would like it to slow down.

Jo fed Penny's views into the review and was able to raise that she would like the transition to be slower. She also suggested that Penny may benefit from having a pictorial rota of staff so that she got used to the new faces. The Multi-Disciplinary Team conducting the review were extremely positive about Jo's involvement as Penny engaged with her very well. They asked Jo to send some information to them so that they could continue to use some of the tools that had been beneficial in establishing Penny's views. **name changed for privacy*

Volunteering

Due to the pandemic we paused recruitment for volunteers, but more recently as the situation has started to ease, we welcomed a new volunteer who started with us in October 2021. This role provides support two half days a week in the General Office and to the Finance Administrator.

We have also recently recruited a new Getabout Volunteer Driver from the Haltwhistle area who will join a team of Getabout Volunteer Drivers based in different areas of the county including Morpeth and Berwick upon Tweed. These drivers provide transport for people who have difficulty getting around Northumberland to attend various appointments.

In the coming months it is envisaged Adapt (NE) will welcome additional Getabout Volunteer Drivers to join the team from various locations across Northumberland.

Healthwatch Northumberland



Healthwatch Northumberland is the independent champion for NHS and social care across the county.

Healthwatch was introduced under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and is part of a network of 152 local Healthwatch, supported at the national level by Healthwatch England. As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to public feedback and improve standards of care.

During the pandemic the Healthwatch Northumberland Board wanted to make sure that members of the public had different ways to get in touch with us, while we could not get out into communities. They were very concerned that not everything was done online. We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and social care services and to get reliable information about services.

During 2020/21 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social and print media. In different ways we have reached approximately 70,000 people. We are particularly pleased to have worked with Northumberland County Blind Association where we helped people keep connected and feel less lonely while regular services were suspended.

We published 10 reports which detailed public experiences of the COVID-19 vaccine programme, care home visiting, GP access and mental health services for young people. In the summer we got back 'on the road' and heard from nearly 800 people through our Annual Survey and have started our regular Here to Hear drop-in sessions in different towns and villages. Full details of our work are on our website or come and see us at a Here to Hear session.

Living Well Coordination Service

The Living Well Coordination Service was set up in January 2020 and began taking referrals from an initial group of three West Northumberland GP practices in February 2020. This was, of course, only a few short weeks before the first COVID-19 lockdown.

After working from home began in March 2020, the three Living Well Coordinators managed to quickly shift gears to provide telephone-based social prescribing support to those referred into the service. The service was rapidly rolled out to all fourteen of the West Northumberland GP practices, and specific COVID-19 support was also offered to the practices in the form of check-in calls to shielding patients.

During the shielding period, the service successfully contacted over 1400 clinically extremely vulnerable patients, in addition to taking individual referrals. During the full 2020/2021 financial year, the service received 300 individual referrals from across West Northumberland. The demand for the service, and the NHS England emphasis on social prescribing as part of their personalised care agenda, allowed for expansion of the team during 2020/2021 with the team growing from three to seven members of staff and the structure being changed to create a Team Leader position.

Over the year, referrals were received for individuals ranging in age from 18 to 99 years old and support was offered on a wide array of issues. Most prominent of these was emotional wellbeing, with the pandemic and lockdowns impacting considerably on both mental health itself, and the available mental health support. Social isolation, bereavement, housing issues, financial difficulties and carer fatigue were also frequent referral factors.

Looking into the next financial year, further changes have been made to the service to include self-referral and partner agency referral pathways from April 2021. The minimum age of referral was also dropped from 18 to 16. With these changes we hope to be able to offer support to an even broader range of West Northumberland residents as the service continues to develop.

Core Services

Transport

At the beginning of the year due to the national lockdown our transport service was stood down.

However as restrictions eased, dial a rides restarted and we were delighted to welcome passengers back on to the services.

Slowly transport services gained momentum as people regained confidence to go back out into the community.



Getabout Scheme

We received 34 requests within the year for help through Getabout. At the very start of the pandemic we were contacted by a gentleman in Berwick aged 72 who required transport for his 93 year old father who was due to have a day procedure at North Tyneside Hospital in North Shields. The patient did qualify for patient transport however due to the pandemic this was cancelled. However, we were able to arrange transport to enable the patient to have his treatment.

As the year progressed and as health services restarted we were able to provide through Getabout a number of journeys for patients from the north of the county who needed to access ophthalmology services for primarily glaucoma treatment, provided by Newcastle Hospitals at their Cramlington hub.

Hexham Enterprise Hub

We were very concerned for our tenants through the pandemic however we are delighted to report they all weathered the national lockdown and we welcomed two new tenants - Insync Physiotherapy and Rosie Corner Clothes Bank.

All units are currently full and we have a waiting list for people who are interested in leasing a unit.

Disclosure and Barring Service

We had since 2010 offered firstly a CRB then a DBS checking service, however, unfortunately due to the COVID-19 pandemic we have had to cease providing the service.

Wheelchair Loan Scheme

We continue to provide this service across West Northumberland and is well used.

Accounts 2020-21

The income for 2020 / 2021 was £922,095 and expenditure £883,218 providing a surplus of £38,377.

In what was a very difficult year we are satisfied the charity remains in a strong position for the future.

Cafe @ Burn Lane

As was the case for all restaurants and cafes we had to close our doors in March 2020 as part of the national lockdown instruction.

However, we were able to use the kitchen on a weekly basis to provide meals for people who had attended both Allendale and Corbridge lunch clubs. We provided over 30 meals each week throughout the first national lockdown. We also provided packed lunches for children who were attending summer activity sessions.

The café welcomed customers back in September 2020. We redesigned the café adding screens and expanding the seating area into what was the meeting/resource room. Customers returned to the café and told us they appreciated the outside space and how the café was well spaced out and had the additional benefit of the screens to support social distancing. Many of our regulars told us how much they had missed coming into the café and that they had missed the social aspect and the lovely food.

What you told us

Advocacy

I felt very supported throughout my time with the service. I gained a lot of support from advocate and felt like I was always listened to.

She listened and was of great help when I was very low.

They were there when I thought I had no one.

My advocate was in regular contact with me and listened carefully and considerately to all my concerns; I really appreciated the use of Teams for these conversations.

Transport

Our driver was superb. Some of our group are in their 80s and 90s and had not been out for a long time. We thoroughly enjoyed our trip out in the country for afternoon tea.

You are running a marvellous transport service. It helps me keep my independence as I can manage without carers when using the dial-a-ride buses.

Cafe @ Burn Lane

Thank you for the lunches through lockdown, we really enjoy getting them each week - they are always delicious.

Lovely friendly cafe, great food and coffee.

The staff are brilliant and we love the meals and cakes.



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