

DIAL Solihull

Disability Information and Advice Line

Alice Singleton, Chief Executive of DIAL Solihull, joined the user-led disability advice charity three years ago and quickly discovered that a comprehensive review of governance, services, systems and policies was needed if the organisation was to become ‘commissioning ready’ and meet the growing needs of disabled people and their carers in the Borough.

It was shortly after the new board of trustees completed a full service review that DIAL identified the need for external help to implement some of the changes necessary to position the organisation for key contracts. After mixed success in sourcing support, Alice came across the Solihull Community Enterprise for Success programme.

“I learnt about the support on offer through the SUSTAiN alert, which immediately gave me a sense of reassurance knowing the programme was designed for organisations like ours, and it was right on our doorstep,” says Alice.

DIAL was able to access a menu of business support services delivered by professional business advisers and trainers who understand the challenges and demands faced by many frontline VCS organisations whose services are under increasing pressure during these austere times.

“Over a period of six months we attended practical workshops which were very relevant and timely for our needs. The first session on business planning helped me to recognise my strengths and equipped me to work with one of my trustees on drafting DIAL’s business plan - without feeling out of my depth!”

The flexibility of the programme also enabled Alice and her team to access tailored support to review and update a wide range of policies from working with volunteers to IT. “We had help to prepare and issue a new fit for purpose employee handbook, which will accommodate our needs as we start to grow and extend our services in the future.

“The full cost recovery session was a real eye opener as it guided us through the process of calculating the true cost of our services, rather than using a ‘finger in the air’ approach when writing bids. The session on partnership working made us realise that although we’re a small charity, we have specialist knowledge and expertise which is of great value to others.

“Tasters on social media and social impact have confirmed that we must make better use of these tools, and the networking opportunities afforded by the programme have been an unexpected bonus. We’re certainly better prepared for commissioning and have no hesitation in recommending the support to other charities and VCOs in Solihull.”

Solihull Community Enterprise for Success is a free programme of support for voluntary and community organisations in Solihull who wish to grow their business for the benefit of the community.

For more information visit www.solihullforsuccess.com

“I learnt about the support on offer through the SUSTAiN alert, which immediately gave me a sense of reassurance knowing the programme was designed for organisations like ours, and it was right on our doorstep.”

Alice Singleton, DIAL

Key Facts

Mission: To help and support disabled people and carers in Solihull, so that they can stay active members of the community.

Key services: DIAL offers free, impartial and confidential information and advice for disabled people and their carers. Each year the charity handles 4,000 enquiries and helps clients claim over £1.2M in benefits that they were entitled to but had not claimed.

Business challenge: To become commissioning ready

Established: 1986

Legal structure: Registered charity

www.dialsolihull.org.uk

“The full cost recovery session was a real eye opener as it guided us through the process of calculating the true cost of our services, rather than using a finger in the air approach when writing bids.”

The Solihull Community Enterprise for Success Programme assisted DIAL with Business Planning, Partnership Working, Full Cost Recovery, Measuring Social Impact, Social Media, Policy and Handbook Development.



EUROPEAN UNION
Investing in Your Future
European Regional
Development Fund 2007-13