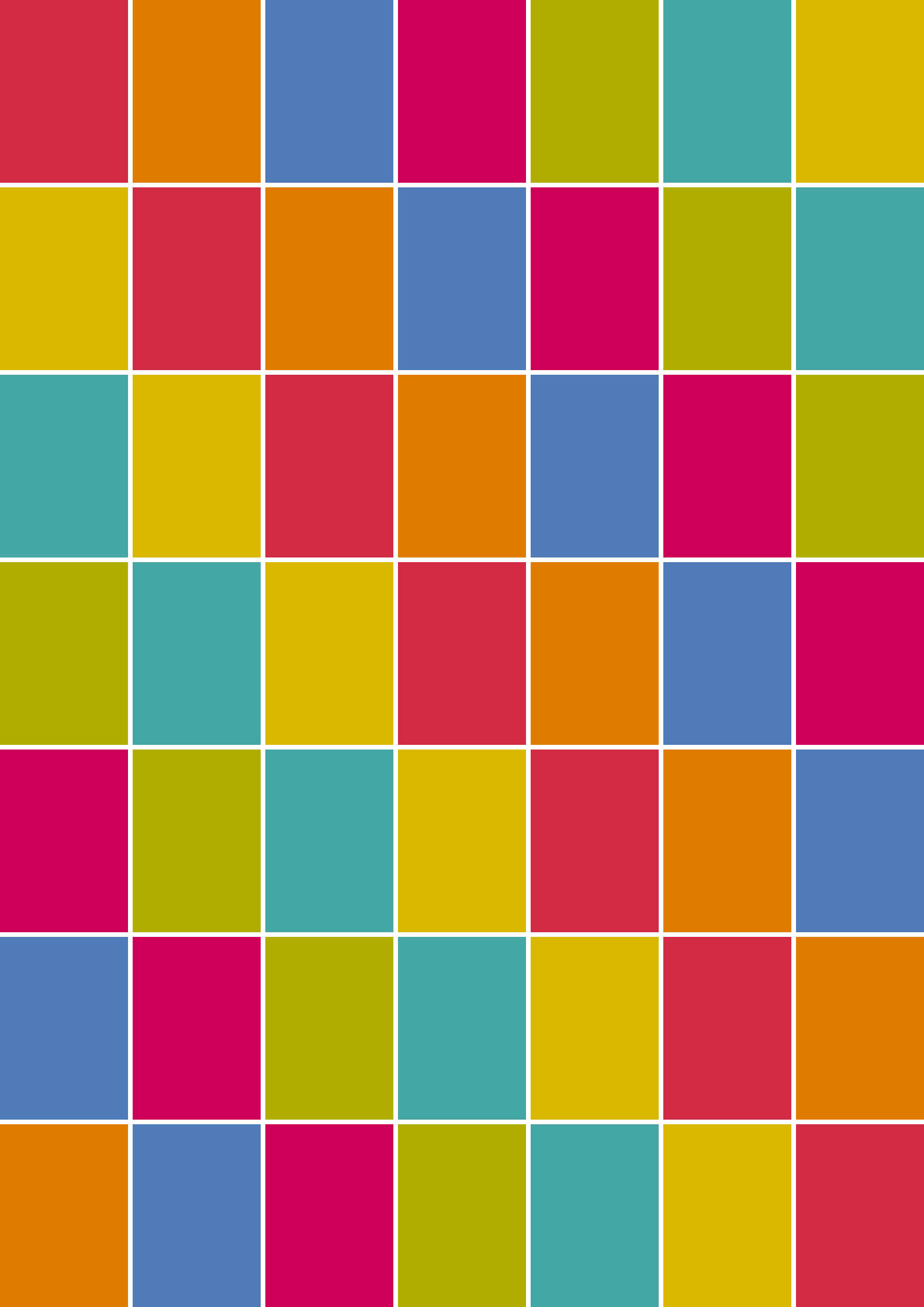


Connections that matter

The impact of Grapevine's work on people with learning disabilities and their families





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Grapevine thanks all its funders and partners, which include the Equality and Human Rights Commission, British Institute of Learning Disabilities, Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, Big Lottery, Lloyds TSB, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and Coventry City Council.

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The impact of **Grapevine's** work

One thing about Grapevine's work is simple.

We know that very few people live happily in isolation. Most find what they need to make a happy, meaningful life in communities. So strong communities are critical – perhaps never more than now when the government says it wants to play a smaller role in people's lives.

The more people contribute, the stronger the community. So Grapevine helps people with a learning disability and their families build on what they've got.

What people do for themselves and others is powerful. But using this power – even knowing you have it – is not easy if you are struggling with slow and unresponsive services, day-to-day hardship, low expectations and stigma. This is where Grapevine can help. We work with people to get over those obstacles and have stronger and safer lives.

This report tells you about the impact Grapevine has had on the lives of people with a learning disability and their families. We describe real stories of change achieved by local people for local people – with a little help.



The only thing that makes a difference

I think most people never forget the first time Grapevine came into their lives. For me it was attending an event to hear about the success of Grapevine's Connecting People project. I was struck by the warmth of all those involved, the way everyone was included, the careful thought that had gone into making sure everyone got something from the event – all done to the sounds of a live steel band. Grapevine made it look effortless but, of course, underneath everything was a profound commitment to a set of values, the determination to put these values into practice and remarkable skill.

The stories in this impact report show that, when people first came across Grapevine, they were probably lonely, isolated, angry, frustrated or bored. Even in short periods of time, the relationships and connections they have made have been life-changing.

The ideas driving Grapevine's work are wonderfully simple and beautifully expressed: seeing the world through other people's eyes, building relationships with people who aren't just paid to care, helping people experience a life that grows and changes, making sure that people with learning disabilities are not just seen as having needs.

Grapevine's work demonstrates the deep truth that it is not only possible for one human being to make a real and lasting difference to another, it is often the only thing that ever does.

Matthew Smerdon
Deputy Director, Baring Foundation



**Grapevine has seven clear beliefs.
They are behind everything we do.**

1. Choice and Control

When we are in charge of our lives, we are more likely to feel happy, be productive and plan for a positive future. Too many people with learning disabilities live a life dependent on others.

Colleen

Our sister, Colleen, used to live with others supported by social services staff. Her life was very small. She seemed to be in limbo. She just existed.

She would get frustrated and then she'd strike out. Staff wouldn't take her out because they thought she was a 'danger to the public'. Being kept in made her even more frustrated. This terrible situation went on for twenty-eight years.

But things have changed. Now, Colleen has an Individual Budget to spend in a way that works for her. She part-owns her home (72% of it). She attends her local church. She's involved in card-making classes, horse riding, a women's group and a music activity group, which she helped to set up. Grapevine Advocacy helped us to change everything.

Mia from Grapevine took time to get to know Colleen and helped us all to

see what was important to her and what had to change.

It wasn't always easy. But Mia supported us at meetings with social, healthcare, housing, financial and legal professionals.

If Colleen could answer the question 'How did Grapevine Advocacy help?' we think she'd say: 'I trusted them. They helped me to make sense of a complicated problem. They didn't judge or hurry me. I can smile at last.'



Impact

In 2010, Grapevine helped 58 people with learning disabilities to get the information, representation and support they needed to deal with a crisis.

Grapevine advocates supported people to deal with, for example:

- * financial and other types of abuse
- * family conflict
- * legal proceedings, particularly against parents with a learning disability
- * getting the right help from slow or unresponsive services.

Grapevine's citizen advocates provided a network of long-term support to help people avoid crises. For example, couples hosted dinner parties in their own homes and talked about how to make and keep good relationships.

Grapevine asked 23 people about their experience of getting Advocacy support. At the beginning, 17 said other people made all the decisions or the most important ones. After three months, 16 thought they made most or all of the decisions themselves.

Two Grapevine projects focus on speaking up: Advocacy and Self-advocacy. For more information, see pages 22-23.



Grapevine has been awarded the nationally recognised Action for Advocacy quality mark.



If Colleen could answer the question 'How did Grapevine Advocacy help?' we think she'd say: 'I trusted them. They helped me to make sense of a complicated problem. They didn't judge or hurry me. I can smile at last.'

2. Standing together

Often, paid professionals think they know what's best. But at Grapevine, we stand together with the people we support – we don't take over. We try to see the world through their eyes.

Prashant and Danielle

Prashant and Danielle had lived in the same street for years but had never spent any time together. They got to know each other because they both love food and sports. Together, they go out for pizza, go swimming and regularly drop in at each other's houses. There's a lot of laughter. Their relationship, based on natural care and understanding, has grown steadily. Prashant says Danielle is one of his best friends.

Prashant's dad, Vik, says:

'Grapevine has been a good discovery for Prashant. He has a great relationship with Danielle. Before, his only social outlets were school and the youth club, which is based in the school. So he had no opportunity to get out and make new friends.

Spending time with people he met through Grapevine and the Youth Council is a really different experience. These are other young people moving

into adulthood. Together, they go out and use what's around in the community.

Confidence-wise it has helped a lot. He goes out and communicates more. Our family has learned new things too - like how to support Prash with his Personal Budget. For this, we get support from the All Means All Project.'



Impact

Close relationships are what we all need to give us a good start in adult life. The **Get In Project** helps young people with and without learning disabilities to become friends.

So far, ten pairs of young people like Danielle and Prashant have support to get to know each other so they can enjoy an ordinary teenage life.

The Project has helped others to join mainstream school youth clubs and youth forums. Kyle and Prashant, for example, have joined the Youth Council.

In total, the Project has supported 61 young people.

A mixed group of young people run the Project. They are learning how to consult, budget, action-plan and evaluate how well it's working. They made a film together about staying safe when you are out and about. You can see it at:

www.grapevinecovandwarks.org/stay-safe-film.aspx

In 2010, the Project's achievements helped Grapevine become one of the first winners of Coventry Partnership's Community Cohesion Award.



'Confidence-wise it has helped a lot. Prashant goes out and communicates more. Our family has learned new things too - like how to support Prash with his Personal Budget.'

3. Connections that matter

Grapevine supports people to build relationships and networks with people who aren't just paid to care. Many people with learning disabilities don't have the support of strong networks.

Enisa

Enisa, a woman from Albania, wanted her own life in Coventry. She had had a trial week in a flat with low level support. But she only saw care agency workers. It was lonely.

She told Heather, Grapevine's community connections worker, that she wanted her own friends. Like most people, she just wanted to feel like she belonged. Heather and Enisa got to know each other. They went to live music nights, singing groups, dress-making, art classes, bars and cafes. It became clear that Enisa valued the company of other young women with Eastern European heritage.

At a Grapevine club night, Heather overheard the bar staff talking. One of them had an Eastern European accent. Heather struck up a conversation and Bidu, a Romanian woman studying at Coventry University, was very open to meeting Enisa. It turned out she and Enisa shared a love of arts and crafts.

This interest led to friendship with Diana, a Romanian fine art student and Bidu's friend. The trio's relationship has grown steadily.

They have celebrated Enisa's birthday, been to the Leamington Peace Festival and enjoyed nights out at Chinese restaurants. Enisa has found warm and interesting friendships with people on her own terms.



Impact

Real independence is based on having connections in a community.

The main problems facing those we helped were:

- * few friendships and natural supports
- * little support or opportunity to know what to do in everyday places and situations
- * a lack of meaningful activity in life.

In 2010, 30 people got one-to-one help to build strong social networks like Enisa.

At the beginning of Grapevine's support, only 20% said they sometimes saw people they cared about.

After six months, 40% said they had relationships and the opportunity to develop new friendships. All but one person increased and improved their social connections.

Three Grapevine projects provided the one-to-one help people needed to make connections: the Support Service, the Get In project and the Connecting People Project.

For more information, see pages 22-23.



An overheard conversation between bar staff at a Grapevine club night led to friendship between Enisa from Albania and Bidu and Diana from Romania. The trio's relationship has grown steadily.

4. A life that grows

A good life is a life that grows and changes – it has memorable moments and some challenges. For too many people with learning disabilities, relationships and activities stay the same – often for decades.

Cleo

Cleo is 15. She used to spend her free time at home. She didn't go out and socialise and didn't get enough exercise. Mostly she did things with her mum. Cleo desperately wanted to be involved with others her own age and do ordinary teenage things.

Grapevine worked with Cleo, her family and others who know her well to create a support plan. This helped Cleo to figure out what needed to change so she could lead the life she wanted. Once the plan was done, things started to move.

Now she has a Personal Budget. She chose her own support worker and has an impressive range of personal interests: weekly horse-riding, Zumba dance and fitness classes; bowling, cinema and swimming at the weekends; a black youth theatre group and regular tap-dancing lessons.

She knows how to make the budget go a long way. For example, she pays for entrance tickets for her friend, Renika, who supports her to go to places like the theatre or gym. (Cleo and Renika, a university student, are supporting each other to get fit.)

There were a few hiccups on the way to getting the budget but Cleo and her family have not looked back. Dawn, Cleo's mum, says 'Grapevine's help has been fantastic. Cleo can do things without me now. We even get the chance to miss each other.'



Impact

Without a plan, it's impossible to make important changes in life.

In 2010, Grapevine projects:

- * completed support plans for 13 young people like Cleo on Coventry's Individual Budgets pilot for children
- * produced 15 person-centred plans for young people leaving special schools. Eight have 'high support needs' and are in local authority care. Read about Jordan's person-centred plan: www.grapevinecovandwarks.org/jordan.aspx
- * helped 14 young people and their families from black and minority ethnic groups to understand or take up Personal Budgets
- * ran quarterly meetings for families and BME support organisations about their experiences of 'personalisation' and Personal Budgets
- * provided a support-planning and advocacy service for young people in transition from special school to adulthood
- * helped families prepare and submit support plans to the social work team featuring personalised, family- and community-based solutions that can be cheaper than professional care.

Two Grapevine projects help people to plan:
All means All and Person-centred Planning.
For more information, see pages 22-23.



'Grapevine's help has been fantastic. Cleo can do things without me now. We even get the chance to miss each other.'

5. Everyone can contribute

Everyone has something to offer. People have talents and abilities and Grapevine can help them find other people in communities who will welcome their contribution. Too often, people with learning disabilities are just seen as having needs.

Hayley

When Hayley first met Heather, a Grapevine community connections worker, she was shy. She stayed at home most of the time. She didn't do much but she knew what she wanted – a social life and the chance to 'give something back'.

Heather spent time getting to know her and discovered a 'lovely, positive, bubbly young woman'. Hayley joined Grapevine's social groups – D:vine and Inside Out – and Heather supported Hayley to build a friendship with Jasmine. The two now meet regularly for girly lunches and nights out.

Hayley revealed an interest in volunteering with the Brownies. Heather's friend was already a Brownies volunteer and helped them get started on finding a local group. Now, Hayley is an important member of the Brownies team and supports the 5-10 year-olds in all their activities.

A recent visitor commented 'Hayley has such a positive rapport with the girls, always showing an interest, always praising. No wonder the girls look up to her.'

Hayley doesn't rely on Heather anymore. Her confidence has grown and she does more things independently. She has gained lots of new skills that will stand her in good stead in the paid-job market.



Impact

People with learning disabilities have a huge range of skills and talents that they are waiting to share with others.

In 2010, with Grapevine's help, 50 people with learning disabilities were able to change the way others think about them and give something back as:

- * trainers of over 400 health care staff, hospital health care assistants, GPs, practice nurses and managers, paramedics, midwives and A&E staff
- * film club hosts – reviewing films for other young people
- * a hospital radio DJ
- * a Brownie pack volunteer
- * a volunteer at University Hospital Coventry doing art classes on one of the wards
- * a vegan café volunteer
- * a choir member
- * a Girl Guider
- * representatives of young people with learning disabilities on Coventry Youth Council.

Four Grapevine projects focus on helping people to make a contribution: Get In, Self-advocacy, the Support Service and the H Team. For more information, see pages 22-23.

In the 2010 Self Assessment Framework, NHS Coventry picked out the H Team as an example of best practice and innovation.



'Hayley had become introverted. She had no friends and was losing confidence.

Joining Grapevine has been a very positive experience. It is great for us, as a family, to see her having a new life outside our home.'

6. Learning on the journey

We need the chance to learn from our mistakes. Living through life's twists and turns makes us stronger. Most people with a learning disability are stopped from having interesting experiences because others worry about the risks.

Dave

Dave has done some interesting things in his time. It was when he left day services that things took off. A six-week job at Marks and Spencer lasted nine years! Dave says 'It was a challenge but then it became monotonous'. Even so, Dave says M&S is 'a great employer that treats disabled people properly'.

Then it was on to a job at Values into Action (VIA) running human rights workshops. Grapevine supported Dave to get to the interview but he was soon travelling to London independently. Dave likes to be busy and, when the VIA job ended, Grapevine helped him to get involved in his neighbourhood. He did this with gusto: he ran a consultation event, joined the residents' association, produced the LETS scheme newsletter and set up a fairtrade enterprise.

Then it was back to paid work - as a Quality Assessor for Grapevine. Dave interviews people in Coventry who live in or attend services. Dave has a great eye for clues about what a service is like. He helps write up the reports and submits them to the Council.

To people who want to work, Dave says 'You've got to get out there and look for it and don't be afraid to get support to help you'.



Impact

Dave and his colleagues in Grapevine's Quality Group inspected eight services in 2010.

Their recommendations have begun to trigger important changes in services around Coventry. These include:

- * plans and outcome-focused reviews that reflect people's dreams and ambitions and are written in easily understandable formats
- * the introduction of regular service-user meetings with minimal support
- * formal involvement of service users in interviews
- * increased responsibility for day-to-day running of services
- * increased presence in the mainstream community
- * support for people to renew old friendships
- * mealtimes that are more inclusive for staff and residents
- * making use of people's talents in deciding activities
- * people having keys to their own homes
- * people are registered and supported to vote.



To people who want to work, Dave says 'You've got to get out there and look for it and don't be afraid to get support to help you.'

7. Passions

Grapevine is successful because of our passion – we believe in what we do and we believe in what people with learning disabilities can do.

Peter

Peter is a passionate music fan. He listens to music, buys music, talks about music. In the time he has been a member of Grapevine, Peter has developed his DJ skills playing at its monthly club nights at Taylor John's House.

He wanted to take his DJing further and told Gordon, one of Grapevine's community workers, about his ambition. Gordon looked for places in the community where Peter could develop his interest. Peter joined Coventry Hospitals Radio at Walsgrave and, after broadening his experience and skills over the summer, will be co-hosting a show in the autumn.

Gordon said Peter's confidence in his abilities has grown since getting involved at the station. He has started to develop friendships with other committed volunteers, people who share his passion for music and radio.

Another volunteer, Sweet P, has really connected with Peter and they will be working together behind the scenes, making sure programmes go out without a hitch. They will also co-host a show together. Peter's experience has inspired Sweet P. In the future, he wants to become involved in other community radio projects in Coventry.



Impact

Taking the time to get to know what people are really interested in is the key to helping them find their place in the world.

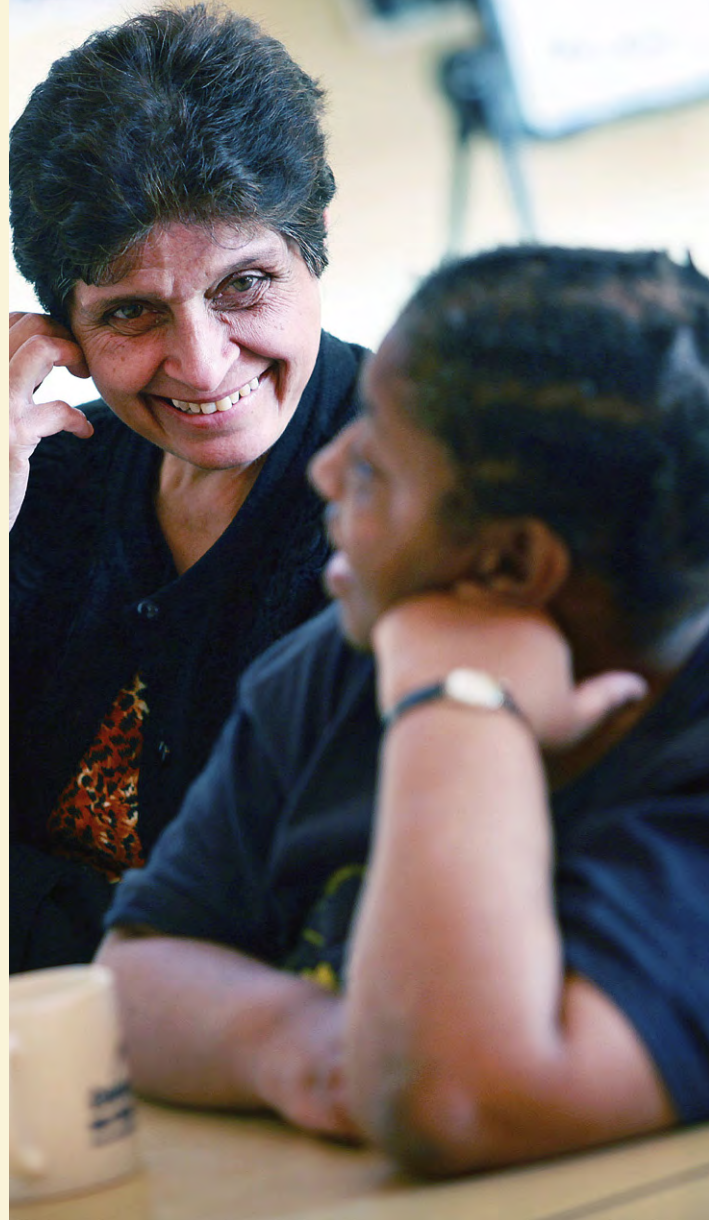
The main problems facing people Grapevine helped were:

- * little meaningful activity in their life
- * few friendships and natural supports
- * a lack of support and opportunity to understand what to do in ordinary everyday places.

In 2010, 32 people had one-to-one help to build a life based on their interests and talents. This is what some of them did:

- * became regulars at the gym and jive classes where they met new friends
- * became a dog walker for the Cinnamon Trust
- * ballroom and line dancing
- * joined Singing for the Terrified
- * became a member of an internet comic book fan forum where they made a firm friendship
- * volunteered with Coventry City Football Club helping to coach teams in the community.

Three Grapevine projects provide one-to-one help for people to find and express their passions: Connecting People, The Volunteering Project and The Support Service. For more information, see pages 22-23.



Peter, a passionate music lover, now volunteers as a DJ at Coventry Hospitals Radio. Getting to know Peter has inspired Sweet P, another Radio volunteer, to get involved in more community projects.

Grapevine projects

All Grapevine projects work on the seven principles described in this report.

The projects:

ADVOCACY helps people to get their voice heard if, for example, they want to move home, have a formal meeting or have suffered abuse or neglect. You can see a film about Grapevine Advocacy:

www.grapevinecovandwarks.org/advocacy-film.aspx

SELF-ADVOCACY Our team supports people to find their own voice, to campaign and have more of a say in their services.

ALL MEANS ALL offers advocacy and planning support to young people and families from Black and Minority Ethnic groups aged 14 to 25. There is an external evaluation report about All Means All on the Grapevine website:

www.grapevinecovandwarks.org/all-means-all.aspx

CONNECTING PEOPLE helps people to build strong networks of friendship and support by connecting them to others in their community.





GET IN helps young people with a learning disability get out more, have a say in their city and enjoy an ordinary teenage life. Grapevine youth work is highlighted as a cameo of good practice in anti bullying research by Cambridge University funded by the Department for Education. You can see the report at:

www.grapevinecovandwarks.org/cameo-of-practice.aspx

PERSON-CENTRED PLANNING offers planning support to young people and families getting ready to leave special school.

QUALITY CHECKING is a team of people with learning disabilities. Grapevine supports the team to inspect homes and day services and make reports to City Council Commissioners.

THE H TEAM is made up of people who have learning disabilities. They support others to have better health. They offer healthy lifestyles training; easy-to-understand information leaflets on health subjects; training for health services staff; health buddies to help others to speak up.

THE SUPPORT SERVICE offers a drop-in service that helps small groups to organise nights out with their friends. We help young people to organise club nights in Coventry and offer intensive one-to-one support to people who want to make connections in their community.

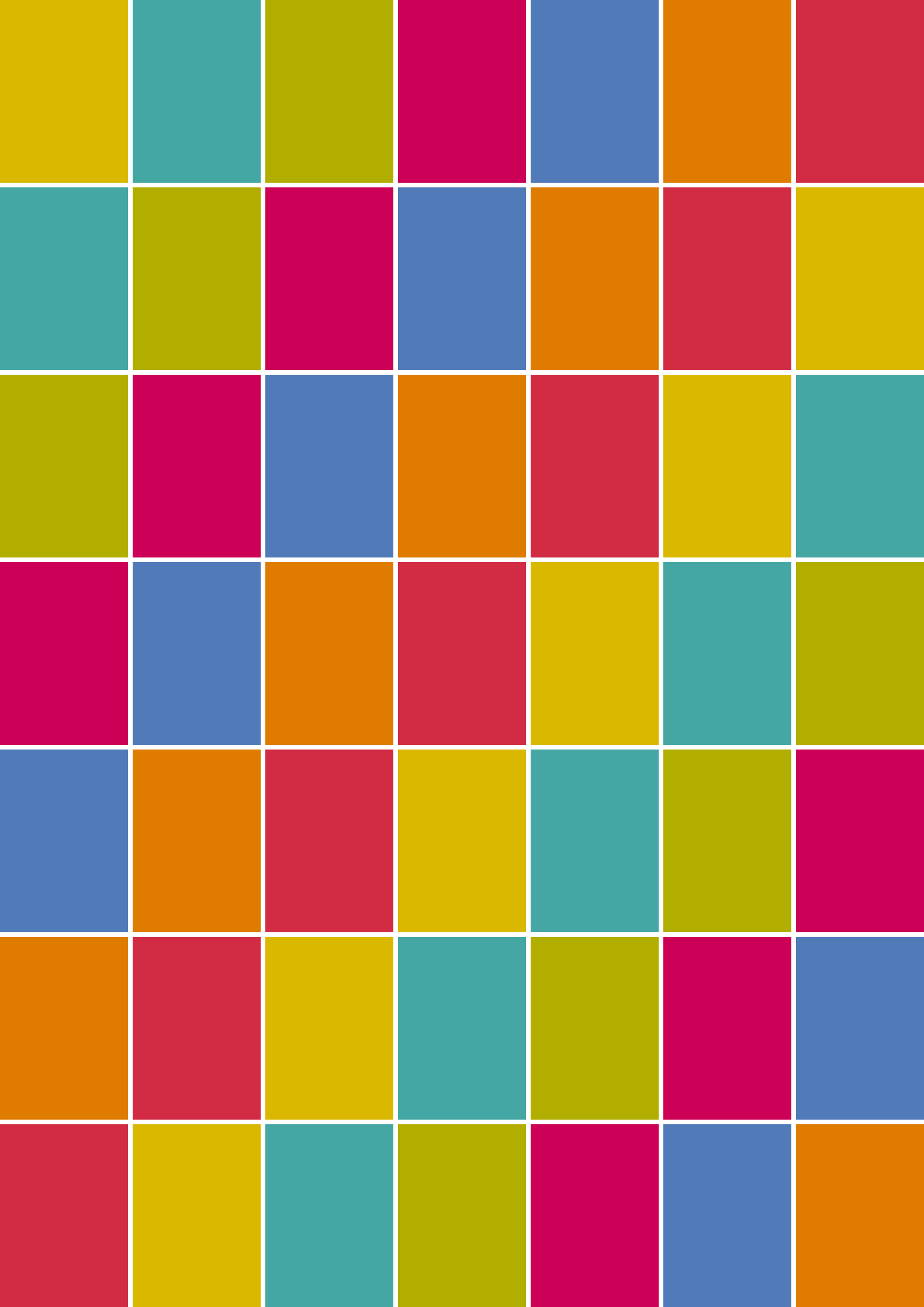
THE VOLUNTEERING PROJECT supports people to follow their passions and stand up for what they care about as volunteers around the city.



www.grapevinecovandwarks.org

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