

# New Forest Disability Information Service



*Annual report April 2000 - March 2001*

## ***New Forest Disability Information Service*** **Annual Report 2000/2001**

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### Chairman's Introduction

Welcome to the annual report for our second year. In it, you will find descriptions of the type of practical help and information we are providing for clients week by week, be they disabled individuals, relatives, carers or professionals, either resident in the New Forest or holiday visitors.

The graphs and tables on the following pages illustrate clearly the growth in the number of clients using our service and also, significantly, the increasing number of hours spent on case work, as clients bring increasingly complex issues to us now that our reputation and credibility are rising.

Again, we have been very prudent in managing our money and have ended the year with a pleasing small surplus.

My thanks go to all the staff, both paid and voluntary and my colleagues on the Management Committee, for all their dedication and hard work.

*Joan Mulkern*  
Chairman

### Service Manager's Report

This has been a very exciting year for the Service, constantly moving forward with new projects, consolidating upon goals already achieved and striving for even higher standards and expertise of service delivery.

There have been sad notes too: one of our stalwart volunteers had to leave due to increasing ill health. We do wish him well and thank him for the huge input he made during his time with us. New members have joined the team during the year and we have had many training sessions and meetings to try to involve everyone in the planning and running of this much needed service.

This has been an even busier year than our first year, in terms of the number of clients. Interestingly, we have found clients returning with much more complex enquiries that have taken a lot longer to bring to a satisfactory conclusion. A most rewarding experience for the information team – and the client!

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Liaison with Social Services, Health Services and voluntary sector organisations, has enabled us to gather information on areas of need and in September we launched our Home Visiting Service, for clients unable to travel to the office. Through securing an Opportunities for Volunteering grant we were able to train volunteers and staff in visiting clients in their own homes and helping them apply for disability benefits. This service has been very warmly received and has achieved an extremely high level of success in gaining the full benefit entitlement for our clients and makes the service truly accessible to everyone.

October saw the expansion of our office opening hours to every afternoon of the week, 1pm-5pm and the first and third Saturday each month from 10am to 1pm. Saturday proves an important time for working people to visit us and we achieved a successful outcome with a benefit application for a client who could not visit us at any other time. We thank Leonard Cheshire and the Centre Co-ordinator for our accommodation.

During late summer and autumn we organised a huge promotional campaign, visiting remote areas of the New Forest and attending fetes. This has given us a number of lasting contacts in village stores, halls and Post Offices. We thank all the kind people who so willingly agreed to display our laminated posters and brochures.

My personal thanks go to each of our hard working information team for all their dedication, support and total commitment, which is so vital to the high quality service we provide.

As we move into the coming year we are busy planning and preparing for our first outreach service, to be opened in Hythe in April 2001, which will give us a very exciting start to the new financial year...

*Jacki Keable*  
Service Manager

## ***Help at hand***

### **Case Study 1**

Mr X, who is in his early fifties, had been a builder since he was 16 years old. Years of stooping had damaged his lower back and he was forced to stop work. He applied unsuccessfully for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) three times and went in desperation to see his GP, who referred him to NFDIS.

During his first visit to us, Mr X was advised to keep a diary of everything he did during a week and that his wife should also keep a diary of all the help he needed over a 24-hour period. On their return visit, their full, accurate diaries were used to help fill out the long, detailed application form.

Some two months later, Mr & Mrs X returned to NFDIS with the news that this, his fourth application for DLA had been successful: Mr X had been awarded the highest rate for mobility and the middle rate for the care component of DLA.

### **Case Study 2**

A family living in the north of England had had one of the best holidays ever, but... it was spoilt. The family had to keep phoning home, to find out how their elderly mother was, who for the first time ever, had not been able to go on their annual holiday with the rest of the family. It was at her insistence that they left her at home, because she now needed a lot more help, after having had a stroke. The stroke had left her partially paralysed and she now relied on mechanical aids to help her bath or shower.

On their way home, the family popped into the New Forest Visitor Centre and picked up some leaflets, including one about the New Forest Disability Information Service.

Some time later the family phoned us to ask if they could hire equipment for use whilst on holiday in the New Forest, as they had enjoyed their last holiday here so much.

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We supplied the relevant information, so that they could hire the necessary equipment for their visit. We received the usual phone call thanking us for our help and praising us for sending “a most comprehensive list” to her. She said we had just recruited our first representative in the North: she would tell everyone about us!

Sometime later we were visited by this lady and her elderly mother, who were on holiday here. They could not thank us enough. They had hired the equipment and were absolutely thrilled.

*Paul Woodroof*  
Information Officer

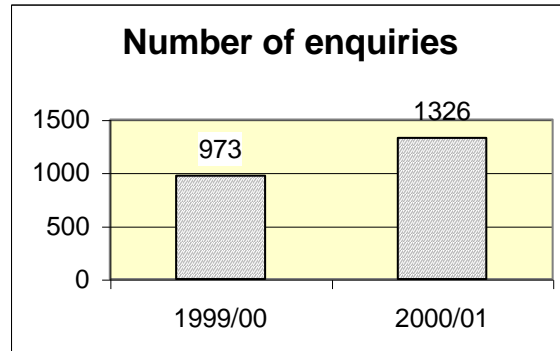
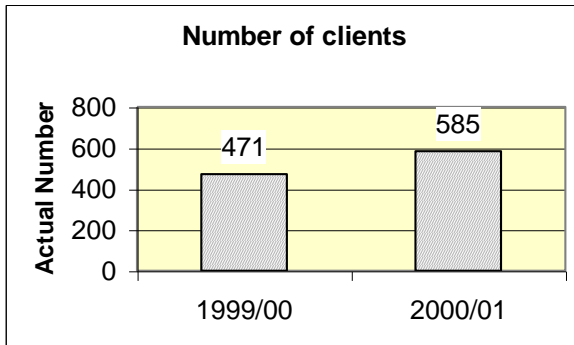


Members of the NFDIS Staff at Bashley Fete July 2000  
Running the raffle and promoting the service.

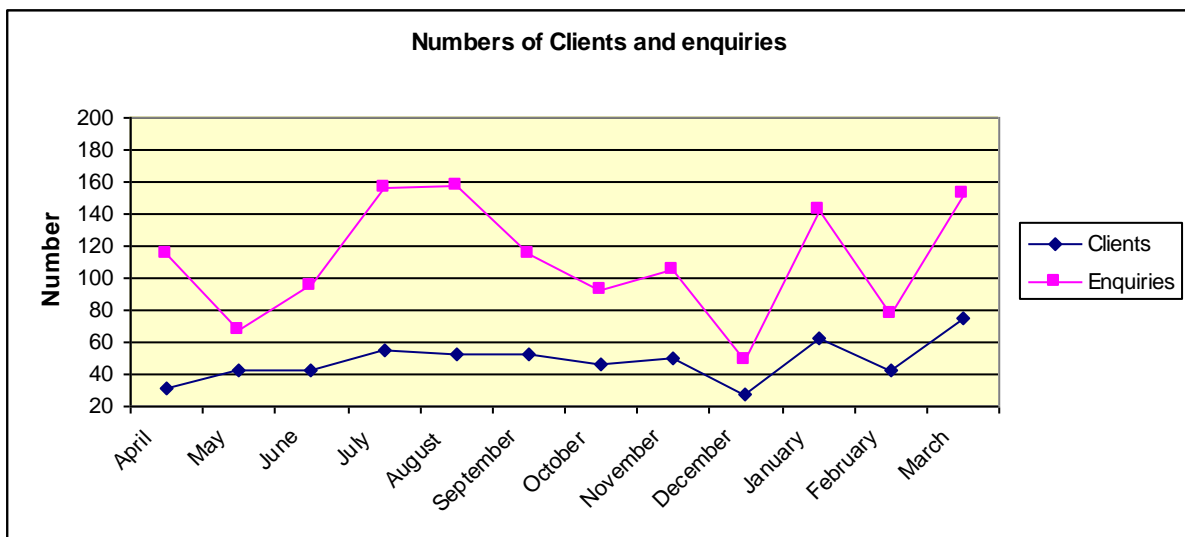
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## Clients assisted during the year

We record statistically not just the number of clients who make use of our service, but also how many enquires or issues they raise, because typically, one client will raise two or more separate issues (see the two graphs below).



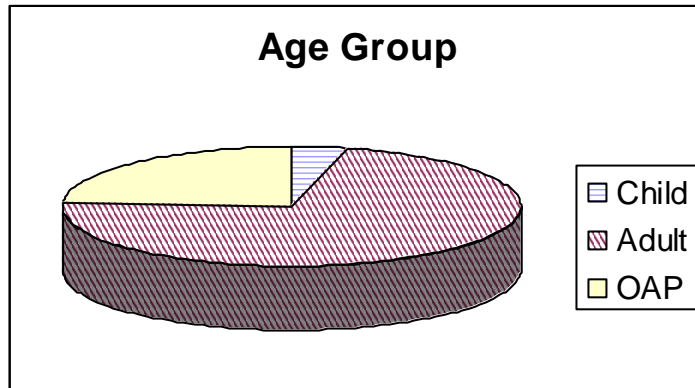
During the year, the level of clients contacting the service fluctuated quite a lot, similar to our experience in our first year (although it should be born in mind that some are four-week months and some are five). A peak was seen in the summer, with holiday visitor enquiries and there were lulls over the Christmas/New Year holiday period and in May with the Bank Holidays (see graph below).



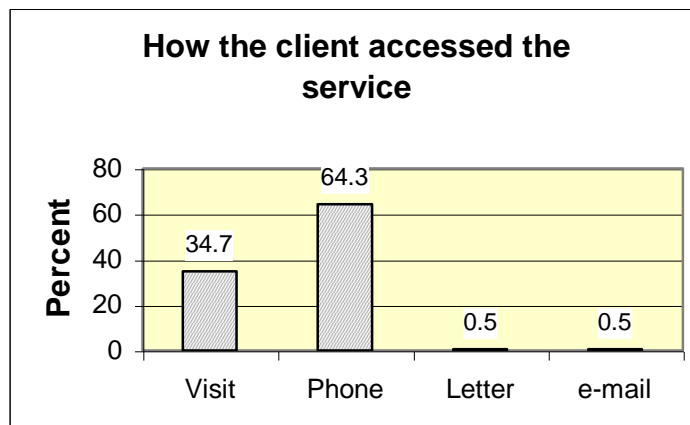
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The age group of clients was predominantly adults (16-60/65 years), although almost a quarter (24%) were OAPs and 4% of enquiries were for children.

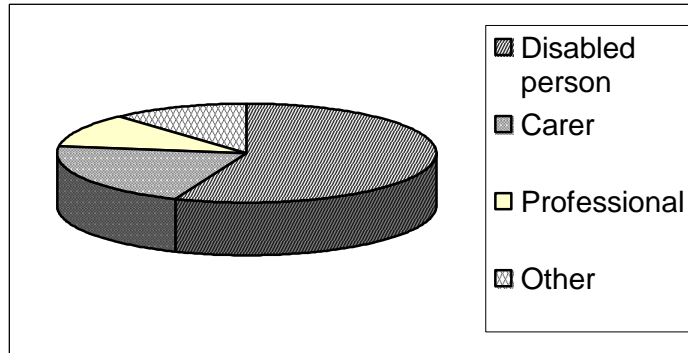


The most popular means of accessing our Service was by phone (376 calls or 64% of the total) with two hundred and three personal visits made to the office (35%). This represents a change compared with last year, when 43% of clients visited us in person and only 55% telephoned. We believe this is a result of our more extensive promotion work in more remote areas of the Forest, from where telephone access is the most practical option. However, we still receive a far higher level of visits than many other disability information and advice services.

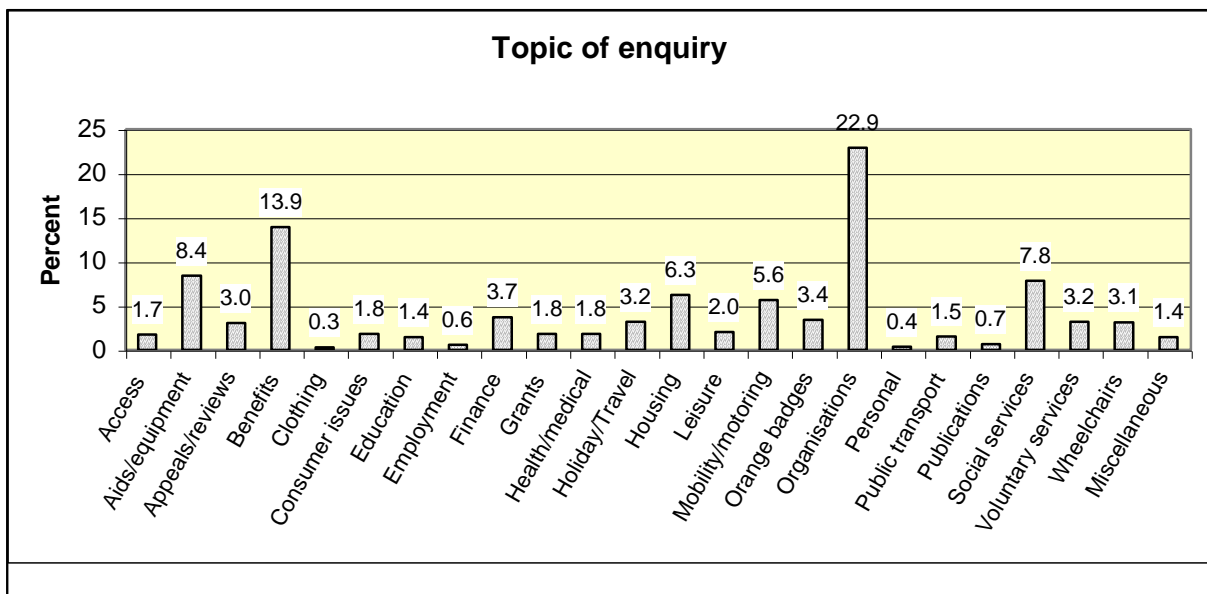


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Again, as last year, our clients are predominantly disabled people themselves (329 people or 56%), demonstrating that we are achieving our objective of empowering disabled people (see pie chart). 21% were carers and 11% professionals (from social and health services).



The breadth of topics of enquiries is vast, ranging from consumer issues to education and transport, illustrated by the small percentages but the large number of topics. Similarly to last year, almost a quarter (23%) of enquiries were for useful organisations which supply support, services or social contacts, followed by welfare benefits (14%) up 3% on last year and aids and equipment (8.4%).



What is not apparent from figures alone, is the increasing length of time which is being devoted to certain clients, as we are tackling larger more complex issues, for example appeals for welfare benefits.



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## **Treasurer's Report**

The Information Service has now completed a second successful financial year, ending with a balance of £9,082 in funds, coupled with a reserve in a separate account to finance six months running costs if required.

Our expenditure total of £21,029 included:

- ♦ all the additional costs of setting up a new outreach service in Hythe
- ♦ increasing our staffing levels, to meet our clients demand for information and assistance with Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance forms
- ♦ provision of a Home Visiting Service affording people unable to leave their homes access to our support and advice.

Prudent costing of expenditure for both staffing and equipment is a credit to those staff involved in budget control and has enabled our programme of expansion to be completed for this year.

The income from grants and donations totalled £30,112, underpinned by the generous grants from the Community Fund (National Lottery) and Opportunities for Volunteering. Leonard Cheshire continued to support our accommodation costs and office space, together with a cash donation. Many local organisations and the local council also gave generously to support our work within the New Forest community.

Our thanks go to all our financial supporters, together with our assurance that we shall continue to provide a high quality service and be ever watchful of our budgetary constraints.

*A Blacklock*  
Hon. Treasurer

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## **Thanks to our funders**

Our grateful thanks go to the following organisations for contributing to our fund in 2000/01, in particular our major funders, The Community Fund, R.A.D.A.R. Opportunities for Volunteering and Leonard Cheshire.

Ashurst and Colbury P.C  
Brockenhurst P.C.  
Burley P.C.  
East Boldre P.C.  
Fawley P.C.  
Hale P.C.

Hythe & Dibden P.C.  
Marchwood P.C.  
New Forest D.C.  
New Milton T.C.  
Nimble Figures Craft Fayres  
Sway P.C.

We also thank Ashdale Healthcare for sponsoring our brochure.

## **Trustees of the charity**

Joan Mulkern (Chairman)  
Annie Blacklock (Treasurer)  
Marie Morgan (Member)

Alan Morris (Secretary)  
Nikki Haswell (Vice-chair/Fundraiser)  
Mike Robson (Member)

### ***Address of Registered Office:***

16 Old Milton Road  
New Milton  
Hants. BH25 6DX

### ***Bankers:***

Barclays Bank plc  
Station Road  
New Milton

### ***Independent Examiner of the accounts:***

John Pendrill

Registered Charity No: 1075000