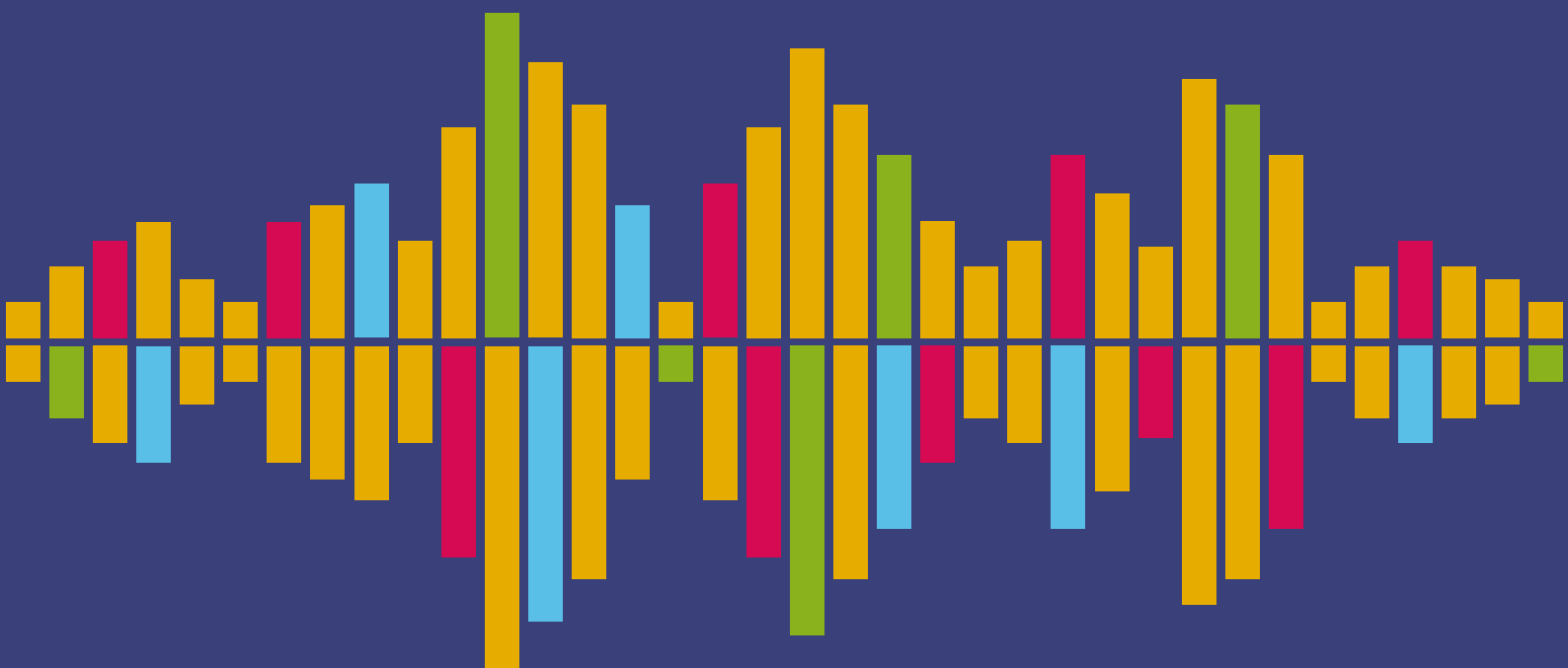


# Our 2021 Annual Impact Report



**Talkback**

DEVELOPING A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES



Talkback

DEVELOPING A WORLD OF POSSIBLE

# Whatever we do, one thing remains true. People are at the centre of it all. It is a privilege to be part of so many life journeys.

It is hard to remain positive some days, as the news is gloomy and the sense of things going backwards is sometimes overwhelming. However, every day I get to see the great work done by our staff and members and the huge steps being taken. Despite the challenges of 2021, we had an incredible year at Talkback, and it is our pleasure to share this Annual Impact Report with you all. There are many highlights and here are just a few.

29% of the young people in our employment BBO contract have got work. Our Accessible Workshop has grown to 22 members and is producing some amazing woodwork and increasing self-esteem. Our young people are really succeeding in the college environment. We've added three new employers to our work experience programme this year and we've delivered over 30 placements in tough times. We've also launched our Energise weight loss programme, that works hand-in-hand with the fabulous team of NHS dieticians, and our new Talkback Advice Bureau which is open in High Wycombe as a drop-in centre. Both have been incredibly well received.

Whatever we do, one thing remains true; people are at the centre of it all. It is a privilege to be part of so many life journeys. To see people going to university, getting jobs or learning new skills. For myself and my team, it is more rewarding than we can ever truly express in words. Our members always try new things and they are supported brilliantly by our staff and their parents and carers who, in my book, are all total heroes. Day in, day out.

I am immensely proud to be in the position I am and thank all my colleagues for everything they do. I hope you enjoy reading more about our year together.

Onwards to an even better 2022

Best wishes to you all

Jeremy Hay  
CEO, Talkback



# Equip supports young people through all stages of education and combines this with life skills, employability skills, social skills, confidence building and work experience.

37

new students  
**joined us in September**

73

students  
**currently enrolled**

24

students attended  
**work experience placements**

At Talkback, we are focused on developing the individual and helping them meet their aspirations. After all, why should all young people not be able to dream and achieve great things. Too many labels placed on young people stop them achieving. So, we want all our students to just be seen as people, and not people with learning disabilities or autistic people. They should be given the same opportunity and chances as everyone else. After all, they don't want special treatment. They just want the same opportunities for jobs, life and love. And that's what we work tirelessly to make happen.

We completed the academic year with 67 students in July 2021. 40 of these students returned to Equip in September and they were joined by 33 new colleagues. Outside of the college environment, we continue to develop our work programmes. We've added three new employers, bringing out total to six. We are, of course incredibly grateful to these organisations for their unwavering support.

We also launched a new summer programme to help with the anxiety of moving from school to college. 13 students attended and all of them have stayed at college.

And our community groups continue to thrive. During the year we have run 19 separate groups each and every week, providing people with a place to talk, share and grow friendships.



**Personal Development and Skills is a programme that has been designed to enable people with a learning disability and autistic people to build confidence in managing their own lives.**

**03** | ▶ **new work experience groups started**

**18** | ▶ **members currently in work experience**

**17** | ▶ **new members have joined us this year**

We've been thrilled to add three new work experience groups to our programme. In Frieth, 11 of our members have been working at the Lady Ryder Memorial Garden getting their fingers greener than green. In Aylesbury, four of our members have been working in a variety of roles at the Healthy Living Centre. And In High Wycombe, three members have been working at The Mustard Seed cafe, based at All Saints Church. We are grateful to those three organisations for their support.

During the summer we ran our Transitions Course, in partnership with our Equip Programme. This consisted of a wide range of specific activities such as Art, The Accessible Workshop, Sport and even Gaming. The programme was incredibly popular.

One great example of our work was our Christmas performance of Dick Whittington that concluded the year. Due to Covid 19, it was the first performance we have managed to put on since 2019. Performed by 13 of our members, it was simply fantastic. Sadly, we could not have an audience apart from some of our own staff. But next year hopefully all of this will be behind us. Yes, a panto joke...

Over a period of just three months, the whole group worked together to bring the script and scenery to life. The result was a hilarious, well-crafted performance which showed that, despite the challenges of the past year, the group can still pull off a winner. It was great so see the confidence, pride and enjoyment that being part of this group brings to its members.





# Our Talkback employment service focuses on helping our members into the world of employment. Whether that's by gaining work experience, part-time work or full-time, paid employment.

**04** new members on supported employment

**50** participants in Building Better Opportunities

**10** members currently in work experience

**16** of who now have full-time jobs

**07** members in full-time paid employment

**15** more will enter work in the coming year

As part of our drive to create meaningful life journeys for our members, we work closely with other Talkback services to ensure there is a clear pathway so that they can achieve whatever they want to. We also run a Building Better Opportunities programme which is job club for those who have no financial support and is funded by the European Social Fund. We have had 50 participate in this club of which 16 have full time jobs, even during the pandemic. We will see at least another 15 into jobs this year.

We've had a busy year developing both new and existing partnerships with employers. Amongst the highlights are a closer relationship with Aylesbury DWP, that has allowed us to refer supported employment candidates for roles on the government's Kickstart scheme. We've had our first "transition to work" candidate start a work placement with Vale of Aylesbury Housing, who have been very impressed and are now actively looking to take more of our members.

We now have three members volunteering at Cliveden National Trust as part of their gardening team. And we are also expecting opportunities for members to work in their café when it opens in Easter 2022. This has also led to a number of other opportunities we are exploring with the National Trust, at Waddesdon Manor and Hughenden Manor.

And, of course, we are always looking for other organisations to work with.



## I wanted to say a very big thank you to Talkback team for all the support you have given my son over these very difficult months.



The Cameo zoom meetings have been one of his lifelines and we are so very grateful to you all for the time and thought that has gone into these sessions. He has said that it was good to talk to people and meet new people. He has learnt new things from all the talks and doing the challenges. He says he really enjoys the group. He is back at his house now, but was living with us for over a year when he returned, having become very anxious prior to the first lockdown.

When he became involved with Talkback I saw his confidence grow and observed him learning new skills. The challenges he was encouraged to do, without any pressure, added a new dimension to his changed world. Taking photos of trees while out walking, which then helped his IT skills when he wanted to email them through to you. He did more cooking and was keen to have a go at everything suggested.

Since his return to his house, he has continued to join the sessions and I was so surprised when he sent through a picture of a drawing he had done. For someone who has poor fine motor skills and would avoid anything involving pencil control this was amazing and I can only put that down to the encouragement he received from Cameo.

I must also mention those online discos which were brilliant. I would never have thought that we would be enjoying a boogie in our lounge with so many other smiley faces! Such enthusiasm from the staff and all those attending. My greatest pleasure was to see my son having such a wonderful time and know how good it was for his mental well being.

I wanted to share this with you so you all know what a difference you have made and would be grateful if you could pass this onto all the staff involved.





# Sport offers autistic people and those with learning disabilities the chance to live a healthy life, make friends, develop self-confidence and learn new skills.



members working with  
**England Netball learning to play netball**



members on  
**Badminton Skills Programme**



members on a  
**Sports Coaching Development Programme**

Our Sports Academy has had an incredible year, despite the challenges of Covid. We began the year in style with new equipment for a range of sports through a funding programme with Sport England. This allowed us to transition from virtual events to face-to-face sport once more.

We've been working with a number of partners throughout the year to bring high quality sporting opportunities to our members. We teamed up with England Netball to introduce a Blended Netball programme that trained staff and members and enabled them to play matches in the latter part of the year. In Badminton, we developed a skills programme with Wycombe Badminton Club, led by the fabulous Alistair Jones, and 33 members learnt to play and enjoy a new sport.

We also ran our first ever Sports Week in August. The Talkback Olympics were a celebration of sport that saw our members participate in a wide range of different sports. It was well received and each year we will now have a themed annual sports event.

We're delighted that four of our regular sports academy members have begun the journey towards becoming qualified coaches. And we ended the year by launching a new tennis programme thanks to support from the Dan Maskell Trust.



New for 2021

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## We are forever focused on creating new opportunities for our members and new programmes for the wider community.



We were thrilled to launch The Accessible Workshop in 2021. It's a Social Enterprise Initiative that enables our members to build work skills and gain an understanding of how their skills and talents can be used to effect positive social change.

It covers a wide range of woodworking and practical skills. It teaches people how to plan and project cost and to market and sell. The groups work to clear and structured plans, with each project treated as a commissioned piece of work. From basic safety awareness around the home, through to repairing, creating, upcycling, and developing employment skills; The Accessible Workshop creates realistic progression pathways. The workshop currently has 18 members, but we have big plans to significantly expand this in 2022.

## ***ENERGISE***

In November, we launched Energise, an initial pilot designed to help people with mild learning disabilities lose weight and live a healthy life. Based in Aylesbury and High Wycombe, we launched with an initial membership of 20. The programme consists of 12 weekly sessions and was designed in partnership with BHT Dietitians. It covers a wide range of topics, such as eating balanced meals, portion sizes, healthy snacks, triggers to eating and eating out. Members are encouraged to set their own clear goals and are supported with numerous resources. These include personal folders, performance trackers, easy-read handouts, recipe collections and exercise videos on Talkback TV.

The results so far are very encouraging. 1 in 2 members have lost weight and the use of videos on Talkback TV has increased significantly. The programme runs until March 2022, but we are hopeful that a successful pilot will mean it becomes an ongoing part of our work.

## **TALKBACK ADVICE BUREAU**

This idea came from our members in our Management Group that advises the CEO on areas that impact them most. The anxiety caused by having no help with forms, through to dealing with the council and banks can be overwhelming. With support from funds from Bailey Thomas, Paradigm Housing and Red Kite Housing we are now running drop in surgeries at the Front Room Café (which is a great place and who have been so supportive) in High Wycombe and we will be opening in Chesham and Aylesbury in 2022.





## **We continuously challenge mainstream thinking. Always working to ensure the voice of those who, all too often, remain ignored, is heard**

We continue to run engagement groups across Berkshire and Milton Keynes where those councils are really keen to get people's opinions of those who have lived experience of learning disability and autism.

We engage with over 50 people a week through these groups and are also working on healthy living and wellbeing, relationships and advocacy skills.

We have also undertaken some research work into domestic abuse with Buckinghamshire Council which is leading to significant changes.

“

Since joining Talkback's Your Voice Come And Meet Each Other (CAMEO) group things have gone from strength to strength. My confidence, which I thought had been lost forever, has started to return and I am doing things I never would have thought possible before.

”

Today, we're launching a new campaign

## #20yearsofneglect

20 years ago, the government published a whitepaper called Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century. It promised widespread and systematic reform. But, two decades on

**Nothing has changed**

Talkback

**Housing:** Valuing People White Paper, Commitment 1

**2001**

"We will complete the reprovision of the remaining long-stay hospitals to enable the **1,500** people still living there to move to more appropriate accommodation in the community by 2004."

**2021**

There are now **2,500** people living in these places.

#20yearsofneglect

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**Employment:** Valuing People White Paper, Commitment 2

**2001**

"Our objective is to enable more people with learning disabilities to participate in all forms of employment, wherever possible in paid work. And to make a valued contribution to the world of work."

**2021**

The **6%** rate of employment for people with learning disabilities has not changed.

#20yearsofneglect

Talkback

**Fulfilling Lives:** Valuing People White Paper, Commitment 3

**2001**

"We will outlaw discrimination against people with learning disabilities on public transport."

**2021**

In the last five years, disability related hate crime incidents reported to the British Transport Police, increased by 24%. Last year, only **1.6%** of reported crimes resulted in charges.

#20yearsofneglect

Talkback

## **At Talkback, we campaign on behalf of the people we work with. Acting as the voice of those who, all too often, remain unheard.**

Throughout the autumn months, we were busy raising awareness of how, despite years of promises from the government, nothing much has changed for people with learning disabilities and autistic people. Back in 2001, some two decades ago, the first white paper that had been written in 30 years about people with learning disabilities was released by the government. Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability in the 21st Century, promised widespread reform. At face value, its suggestions were to be welcomed, even if they were somewhat overdue.

The reform was centred around four key principles: rights, independence, choice and inclusion. In addition, the paper highlighted some of the many challenges faced by those with a learning disability. These included poorly coordinated service provision; too little support for carers; a lack of control and choice for people; limited housing and employment opportunities; and inconsistencies in expenditure and service delivery.

Our 20 years of neglect campaign, aimed to show what had been promised, yet had failed to materialise. To date, we've looked at housing, employment and fulfilling lives and we're thrilled to say we've had a fantastic response from people and other organisations. Our social media campaign has had a wide range of engagement. Many people and organisations have commented on our posts, many have shared them, and many have got in touch with us to see how they can help.

It's clear that many other organisations also feel frustrated at the lack of any progress when it comes to equal rights for those people with learning disabilities. It has also highlighted a more pressing need to improve the current social care policy and how organisations in this field need to work together to call for change. It feels like we are building momentum, and we will continue to campaign until there's real change.

# Talkback

## DEVELOPING A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES

Dedicated to the memory of Etienne Ostercamp who inspired us all with his positive approaches to living life and who will be sorely missed by all of us

## CONTACT US



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