

# Going For Independence CIC Social Audit Report 2012-2013

## Part 1 – Description of the company's activities

### About Going For Independence CIC and the work that we do

To be able to manage their lives independently following an illness or accident, people need be able to access the right information and support as soon as possible to help them to maximise their ability to regain, retain and maintain that independence.

GFI has now been running for five years and during 2013 the company has developed additional partnerships and links with a number of key organisations that share our vision for people to be empowered to live independently with choice and control over their lives.

### Our core business

GFI's core business is to enable individuals to be able to access independent advice and information about equipment, gadgets and home / work adaptations (including Telecare) to help them to live independently and safely with the best possible quality of life. To this aim we run a helpline and a Directory and represent our stakeholders on numerous panels and groups.

### Impacts from the change in the welfare state

Throughout the UK the effects of the financial downturn continue to be felt and welfare reform with its new assessment levels for benefits and the introduction of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is dramatically changing how people of all ages with disabling conditions manage their lives and access work and leisure.

Charities are losing core funding and although not-for-profit organisations are still emerging (whilst many are closing) it is not easy for them to access financial business support funding and there is significant competition for grants. Going For Independence is currently not attracting a lot of interest in its purchased services however its free Helpline and Directory continue to be popular, providing information, support and guidance for people finding themselves facing life changing situations and looking for solutions for both themselves and their families and friends. Our charitable work, therefore, is growing, as fewer people are eligible for state support.

### Services with and for specialist charities

Going For Independence is well placed as a not for profit organisation to offer bespoke services and awareness training for organisations and businesses which want to improve the support they provide for their customers. With our specialist Associates we are developing a series of training courses aiming for better outcomes for older people, covering social inclusion, sensory impairment, mobility and health, adapting to change, equipment and adaptations.

GFI is a founder member of the new national charity, the Centre of Excellence for Sensory Impairment (COESI – [www.coesi.org](http://www.coesi.org)) which focuses on supporting people with sensory impairments who are often forgotten although their vulnerability and potential loss of mobility are serious issues in terms of social isolation. GFI continues to work with national charities including Assist UK and Ricability, and is developing joint work with local charities in other areas of the UK.

## **Office Move**

The Going For Independence office is now well established in the NE and the business overheads are lower as a result. Through contacts made locally through Middlesbrough Council, the MD of GFI has become involved in local and regional strategic meetings concerning the development of independent living services in the area where there are problems relating to population spread, lack of work opportunities, limited transport networks and social disadvantage. We are continuing to work with our contacts and outreach in the London area and developing links with organisations in other regions nationally.

## **Technology Strategy Board (TSB) and the Long Term Care Revolution**

The MD of GFI was successful in applying for a place (restricted to 25 participants nationally, recruited from a wide range of experienced and highly qualified people from business, finance and university backgrounds involved in developing innovative ideas and new technologies) at the TSB Sandpit workshop held in September 2013 for the Long Term Care Revolution. The aim of the intense brainstorming week was to find new ways to change the current seemingly inexorable route that takes too many people into long term residential or nursing care, a huge demographic issue for government and of course for the people involved and their families.

Underpinning this drive for a new direction was the need for people to be able to take control of their lives, stay healthy and live independently – the core values and principles of Going For Independence!

Out of this event has come the potential for GFI to work in partnership with a technology company to develop a new way of assisting people following an accident or illness. An application has been made to the TSB for funding to run a 9-month pilot in 2014 to test the theories in practice, and we will hear if we have been successful in December 2013. This is a wonderful opportunity for GFI to use its considerable knowledge and experience in a meaningful way and to share techniques for managing independent living with a wide audience. As a CIC we will demonstrate value for money for the government in this venture.

## **The GFI CIC has benefited the community in the following ways:-**

During 2013 we provided help and advice to over 40 people on the helpline, directly assisting family members and individuals, and we have delivered talks about equipment, independent living, social enterprise and income generation to over 100 people at conferences, through meetings and at seminars in the voluntary sector. In November 2013 the MD will speak to 200 students at Teesside University about its work and that of the COESI Charity.

The MD of GFI is a Director and Trustee for the Centre of Excellence for Sensory Impairment and the GFI Team provides free management services for the COESI website and along with GFI, represent the organisation at local and regional meetings, ensuring that issues of accessibility are considered at all times.

The GFI Directory is aimed at helping people to find an independent equipment assessor (both Occupational Therapists and Trusted Assessors) and related / complementary equipment services (<http://directory.goingforindependence.org>). We are supporting the development of the Independence Brokerage Service CIC and are putting a link to the GFI Directory on their website to enable more people to get independent advice about equipment and adaptations.

Our social enterprise offers free directory entries for Trusted Assessors, OTs, Independent Living Centres, Adaptation companies, Equipment services and associated businesses and our membership is growing. The national charity Assist UK signposts people to this directory from its online equipment sales portal. We will be investing further in its development and promotion in 2014.

## **Part 2 – Consultation with stakeholders**

The company's stakeholders include older and disabled people, young people and children with disabilities, their families, friends and carers, Occupational Therapists and health and social care professionals. GFI services cover the whole of the UK, and we have an Advisory Group made up of members representing both organisations and individuals.

During 2013 GFI has continued to work with its volunteer Advisory Group who we communicate with through newsletters, online consultations and emails. We value the insights, knowledge and experience they bring for the benefit of the services we provide.

### **Summary**

The Going For Independence Community Interest Company is a successful organisation which has the ability and flexibility to continually develop in innovative ways to ensure that it provides relevant services for people, helping them to live their lives independently with choice and control. We look forward to an exciting year ahead in 2014 as GFI prepares to take our message to a wider audience and to make a significant difference to people's lives through our work on the Long Term Care Revolution!

Pam Bennett - MD Going For Independence CIC  
October 2013