



# 2023

## Impact Report





# Welcome

As we reflect on the past year, the trustees and I are overwhelmed with gratitude for your unwavering support of Independent Lives and the community of disabled people, support needs recipients, and carers we serve. Your dedication and commitment have been the cornerstone of our success, enabling us to continue our vision of creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Together, we have achieved remarkable milestones, from providing essential domiciliary care support to offering respite services for carers, and empowering individuals through information and advice on Direct Payments, all of which have helped to improve outcomes for disabled people. Your contributions have not only transformed lives but have also strengthened the fabric of our community.

Looking to the year ahead, despite the challenges we have faced we remain focused and filled with excitement and optimism for the growth and opportunities that lie ahead. With your continued support, we are poised to expand our reach and deepen our impact. As we remain steadfast in our commitment to excellence, inclusion, innovation, and person centred approaches, we are confident that we will continue to break down barriers and create a more equitable and empowering environment for all.

Thank you for being an integral part of our journey and for championing the vision of a society where every voice is heard, and every individual is valued. Together, we will continue to shape a world where diversity is celebrated, barriers are dismantled, and everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'C' followed by a horizontal line.

**Chandos Green**  
Chair of trustees



# Welcome

Welcome to our 2023 impact report. I'm so pleased to be able to share with you our yearly update on all the good work that Independent Lives has been doing. For more than twenty years, Independent Lives' staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly to make a real and lasting difference in people's lives and 2023 has been no different.

Over the last twelve-months we continued providing Direct Payment support services across West Sussex, East Sussex and Croydon, and began work on expanding the support we can offer in East Sussex in the coming months. Our Direct Payment support services have also been greatly enhanced by a programme of improvements to our online Direct Payments resource – PA Pages. More on this later.

Our care and support services have continued their hard work providing person centred, quality care to people in their own homes. The support our dedicated care staff provide allows people to live their lives with choice and control and make a difference each and every day.

2023 also saw us expand into new and innovative areas. We ran a successful project providing support and devices to digitally excluded disabled people, launched our first Friends of Independent Lives membership study and began a new research project into the effects of the cost-of-living crisis on disabled people.

You can read more about our impact below but for now I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone who makes Independent Lives the vital charity that it is. I'm immensely proud of the work that we do and excited to see where our innovative work will take us next.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RSmicle', written in a cursive style.

**Rebecca Smicle**  
Chief executive

# About us

Independent Lives is a user-led charity working to change the lives of disabled people, people with support needs and carers. We provide a range of frontline services which support people and their communities.

## Our vision

Our vision is for a fair society where everyone can participate and have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

## Our values

Working together we achieve real change in the lives of the people we support - so that we can all participate in our communities and have greater choice, control and freedom. Our values are:

### Excellence

At Independent Lives, we believe in integrity, accountability, and transparency. Our passion drives us to go above and beyond, delivering high quality, people led services which change lives.

### Inclusion

We celebrate our differences and believe that embracing diversity makes us stronger. We want to create a world based on respect and understanding where every voice is heard.

### Innovation

We believe in the power of great ideas. We are unafraid to be bold or to ask why. Through forward thinking, creativity, and the freedom to express ourselves we can shape a better world.

### Person Centred

We believe in treating people with dignity, compassion, kindness, and respect. By valuing people's lived experiences and recognising their unique circumstances, we can be an organisation that really makes a difference.

# A year in numbers

Every year, Independent Lives supports thousands of people through choice and control allowing them to live their lives independently. Last year was no different - take a quick look below at our impact through numbers.



**7,118**

We provided information and advice 7,118 times to 2,217 people.



**1,949**

We received 1,949 applications for employment on behalf of Direct Payment employers.



**51,182**

Our care service provided 51,182 hours of person centred care in people's own homes.



**69,260**

We visited people to provide care 69,260 times allowing people to live with choice and control.



**6,000**

Our carers respite service provided more than 6,000 hours of respite across 2023.



**16,130**

We processed 16,130 payrolls allowing Direct Payment employers to live independently.



**1,268**

We ran 1,268 adverts helping people recruit the best personal assistant to support them.



**136**

We set up new bank accounts for 136 people helping them to manage their Direct Payments.



**456**

We delivered expert training to 456 personal assistants and Direct Payment employers.



**100**

Our engagement programme, Friends of Independent Lives reached more than 100 members.



**325**

We processed 325 DBS checks allowing Direct Payment employers to safely employ personal assistants.

# Care and support

In 2023 we provided care and support services to hundreds of people, allowing them to live independently while maintaining their dignity and respect. All of our care is person centred and focussed on individual needs.

Our highly trained and hardworking care staff delivered more than 50,000 hours of care to people in their own homes. We work to find out what matters most to the people we support and find ways to deliver care which helps people maintain their independence, while achieving their aspirations and hopes.

Providing that level of care and support requires tremendous efforts from our office staff and with their support, we worked on improving our systems and processes in 2023. This means that going forward, we can spend more time on what really matters, helping people to live independent lives.

Our carers respite service provided more than 6,000 hours of support across the year. The service allows carers some much needed respite time as we take care of their loved ones. The staff and our minibus, Malcolm, took customers on a wide range of days out which included visiting Chichester Cathedral, Warnham Nature Reserve and a pantomime in Worthing.

We also worked together to promote Breast Cancer Awareness, Random Acts of Kindness Day, Dementia Awareness Week and Carers Rights Day. Our staff joined others across the organisation to take part in Worthing Pride along with a decorated Malcolm.

As part of our winter campaign to tackle isolation, we organised hampers for all of our care service customers. Supported by a grant from the Asda Foundation, we created and delivered fifty hampers to people filled with essentials and treats.



# Direct Payments

2023 was a year of growth and innovation for our Direct Payment support services. As the demand for our services grew, we looked at innovative ways we could support more people and spent time developing our online resource – PA Pages.

PA Pages supports Direct Payment employers to recruit personal assistants, book training, and search a wealth of information and advice. In 2023 we launched an online chat service allowing people to speak directly to one of our trained advisers, as well as made improvements across the site allowing people to quickly and easily find the support they need. Work is underway to further expand the site with even more information and advice and a new streamlined payroll and banking sign up process.

During 2023, we were pleased to be awarded a contract to become the primary provider of Direct Payment support services in East Sussex, expanding on the support we began delivering in 2022. The contract begins in 2024 and our staff have been hard at work getting everything in place ready for the year ahead.

We developed a fantastic new training suite in our Worthing offices where we can offer essential training to personal assistants and their employers as well as making sure our staff are trained with the most up to date skills and knowledge. We are also exploring new locations where we can offer training closer to people's homes making it more accessible than ever.

Our staff have worked hard to ensure that our services remain responsive to the needs of the people we support. One example of this has been our work alongside West Sussex County Council to support people struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. We were able to allocate nearly £30,000 in household support vouchers helping to relieve some of the burden currently faced by families in West Sussex.





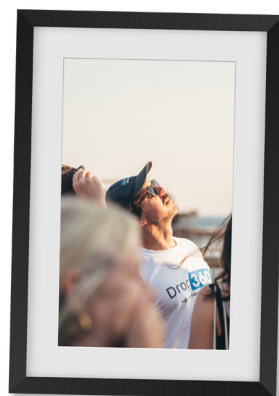
# Fundraising

In June 2023, thirty brave Independent Lives supporters took part in our amazing Drop 360 event, abseiling from Brighton's iconic i360 to rapturous applause below. The event raised more than £10,000 for Independent Lives and will help to make a real difference in people's lives.

We didn't stop there though. Throughout the year, fundraisers took part in inflatable obstacle courses, craft fairs and street collections while working with community partners to help spread disability awareness and the work of Independent Lives.

Our winter fundraising campaign - Remember this December, helped to highlight the unique challenges that isolation can bring to people's lives, and we continued our fundraising with a festive Santa Dash on Hove seafront.

Thank you to everyone who took part in an event or donated along the way. Your help and support mean the world to us and help us fulfil our vision and deliver our vital work.



# Campaigns and projects

As well as providing frontline support services to people, Independent Lives run a range of projects and campaigns aimed at raising disability awareness and promoting independent living.

## Community research

In 2023, Independent Lives began working with the NHS on a research project aimed at better understanding the impact that the cost-of-living crisis is having on disabled people and carers.

Community researchers and a volunteer steering group, all with lived experience, have joined researchers across the south east to deliver a research project which really aims to understand people's experiences from the ground up.

## Disability pride

To celebrate Disability Pride Month, Independent Lives held creative workshops online and in the Worthing area in June 2023, giving participants the opportunity to share their experiences and creativity with the local community. The words and stories shared as part of these workshops were turned into postcards and shared locally.

## Membership study

In early 2023, Independent Lives launched its Friends of Independent Lives membership study. Through the study, we asked Friends of Independent Lives members about the things that were important to them and the issues that were most affecting them as disabled people or carers.

## Digital exclusion

Large numbers of people in the UK lack basic digital skills, impacting their ability to live independent lives. This group of digitally excluded people are particularly prevalent among disabled people.

Independent Lives has been working to improve the digital skills of the people we support, offering one to one and group support sessions as well as access to devices and data.

# Looking forward

Independent Lives supported thousands of people in 2023, and through the hard work of our staff and volunteers, we grew the charity, supporting more people in more ways and finding new solutions to the challenges people have been facing. 2024 has already started in the same vein and, despite the challenges being faced by our beneficiaries, Independent Lives aims to grow as a charity and derive more good for more people.

As we expand our Direct Payment support services into East Sussex, we will continue working to ensure the best experience for those we support while we make our services as streamlined as possible, ensuring that we use our resources where it matters most.

Work is underway on a range of new updates for our digital platform, PA Pages, with a new payroll and banking online sign-up system launching shortly as well as updates which will support Direct Payment employers to get the information they need as easily as possible.

As the cost-of-living crisis continues, a huge burden is being placed on disabled people. With this in mind, we will soon be launching our cost-of-living research alongside the NHS and other voluntary sector organisations. Simultaneously we will be looking to expand our engagement opportunities and look for new ways that volunteers can become involved in what we do.

Independent Lives is a community charity, and our work is shaped, not just by our staff and volunteers, but by our beneficiaries and the communities in which we operate. We would like to thank everyone who has made Independent Lives an impactful organisation over the last twenty years, and we look forward to continuing our journey as we move into 2024.



I would just like to say that I found all your carers excellent and truly outstanding. They are kind, considerate and obviously extremely skilled and professional. Thank you for your care.

**Care service customer**



Thank you so much for all your help we couldn't have done any of this without you and we really appreciate everything that you have done. You've been fantastic. We would never have sorted this out if you hadn't stepped in.

**Direct Payment employer**



My mother is able to live in her home, as she wishes, because of the support given from Independent Lives and West Sussex County Council. You are helping elderly people to live and feel the best they can and function as well as possible.

**Direct Payment employer**




Thank you so much. Mum came back buzzing from her first day with you, I know she will have fun which means I can work without worrying about her.

**Carers respite customer**

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Charity No: 1153815

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