

## **WHY PARITY?**

### **The Gap in Services for People With Multiple Disabilities**

The people who use Parity's services have, typically, a very significant physical disability, and a learning need. These can also be accompanied with other sensory impairments.

Most are unable to communicate using speech and need substantial support to express themselves.

Individuals with multiple disabilities have historically been on the margins of society totally excluded from their local community and deprived of dignity and respect. On reaching adulthood all the support they received as children in education and health disappears. They are left with little support to achieve a quality of life either in physical well being and intellectual stimulus.

The shortfall in provision of services for young people with multiple disabilities in the region was identified in a research study carried out by Parity in the mid-eighties.

### **Personalisation and One-to-One Support at Parity**

Parity's services have been developed to specifically focus on each individual, taking into account the person's holistic needs as a human being. In the UK, social care is moving towards greater personalisation, choice and quality. Personalisation means that individuals receiving support have choice and control over the shape of that support.

Since the start of its services in 1990, Parity for Disability has pioneered one-to-one support for each person and a programme of activities tailored to the individual. Each person using Parity's day centres undertakes activities related to learning, developing independence, and recreation that are agreed through close consultation with themselves and their family or carer.

*"In setting up the services, we looked at the whole person, and addressed what makes quality of life. We focused on what a person's physical and psychological needs are. We wanted to ensure that the individual continued to have opportunities to learn, to develop, to have relationships. These things can get neglected."*

- Parity Executive Director Alison Cooper

The charity employs keyworkers on a one-to-one basis and staff must demonstrate an empathy with disability issues and the person-centred approach. The keyworker develops a relationship with and understanding of the individual.

*“As a society we believe all people have a right to a basic quality of life. Consider what this means for someone with a very significant physical disability who is unable to communicate by speech and relies on a skilled person to understand their ideas and wishes. If we really believe in equality, then, for people with profound levels of disability, it will only be achieved when we can offer them one to one support.*

*“All the people who use Parity’s services have high levels of disability. If someone is not actively supporting that person they will largely be just sitting there, totally isolated and ignored rather than exploring their potential and exercising control.”*

- Parity Chairman Paul Roper

As the personalisation agenda evolves, and activities and resources in the community become more widely available, there will continue to be a need for a local base from which people with multiple disabilities can access different opportunities.

Presently, students using the day centres and the teens taking part in Parity’s Easter and Summer Activity Schemes are encouraged to plan trips out in the community, whether it is lunch at a local pub or an expedition to London. As public transport options improve people with multiple disabilities are able to plan more and more ambitious journeys, expanding their horizons and pushing access boundaries.

For those managing individual budgets, Parity is able to accept direct payments for any of its services. Some of Parity’s staff are also available to work outside 9 to 5 hours.

Parity ensures that it stays in tune with and responds rapidly to the changing individual requirements of each person using its services.