



Click and Chat Community 2022-2023



WECIL Click and Chat Community 2022-2023

The story so far...

Our Navigators service/ Check in and Chat community were both initially established as short term measures during the COVID pandemic to support Disabled people to navigate the crisis and keep connected.

After what was intended to be a 6-month piece of work starting in October 2020, we quickly saw the value in the work and new way of working and following a series of short term funds and some self-funding, we were ecstatic to be successful in securing our Reaching Communities funding for the Click and Chat Community which would enable us to really embed the 'Navigator's Approach' across the organisation and

continue to support Disabled people in the way that best suits them.

As a 'systems thinking' organisation we had for some time been exploring better ways to serve our community. We have historically been regulated by grants and contracts which led us to be driven by KPI's and restrictions over how, why, and when we could support a Disabled person. We know that people are complex



individuals who do not fit into a set of pre-determined outcomes. We hear so often about the systems surrounding people failing and not helping them by not listening to what matters to them. We also know that this way of working wastes much time, energy, and money, what we would call 'waste work', as well as often re-traumatizing people while their situation becomes more urgent, they fall into crisis, or they become disillusioned and give up.

The flexibility of our Lottery Community Fund grant has meant we can work with people in a holistic way, understanding their bigger picture.

So often we hear that people appreciate just being listened to. We are not prescriptive about how much time we can spend with a person, where or how we meet with them or what the expected outcomes of our work will be, and this leads us to having a greater understanding of what the needs are and what the real resource is (time, money,

expertise) to work with someone in an accessible, holistic way.

As a team we continuously meet, review, and discuss what we are learning, what are the common themes emerging from requests for support, where resources needs to be allocated and how well we feel we are achieving what matters to our community.

We were lucky enough to build a very capable team of Navigators from existing staff who moved into the new team. The benefit of this approach was being able to mobilise quickly and having the experts at the front. Each of our Navigators has a specialism however is also multi-skilled.

They know WECIL well and have worked on various services meaning that anyone who picks up a piece of incoming demand either a phone call, online referral, or

email, can immediately start working with it. This could mean bringing another expert or Navigator in to support but ultimately this should mean a seamless experience for the Disabled person, building a trusted relationship with a member of the team and not needing to repeat their story multiple times. All our team have a lived experience which they bring to the role, either as a Disabled person themselves or as a carer or parent.

This is an important aspect in relationship building, having well placed empathy, and understanding the frustrations and challenges our community face when trying to navigate the complex systems that surround them. This can also be challenging for our staff as there is a lot of emotional investment in the work, so we have been cautious to prioritise outlets for staff support and supervision.

At the start of the grant, we got together as a team and discussed what was working currently, the way we wanted to work as a team and with our community, and used this information to design a set of operating principles which we wanted to work within.



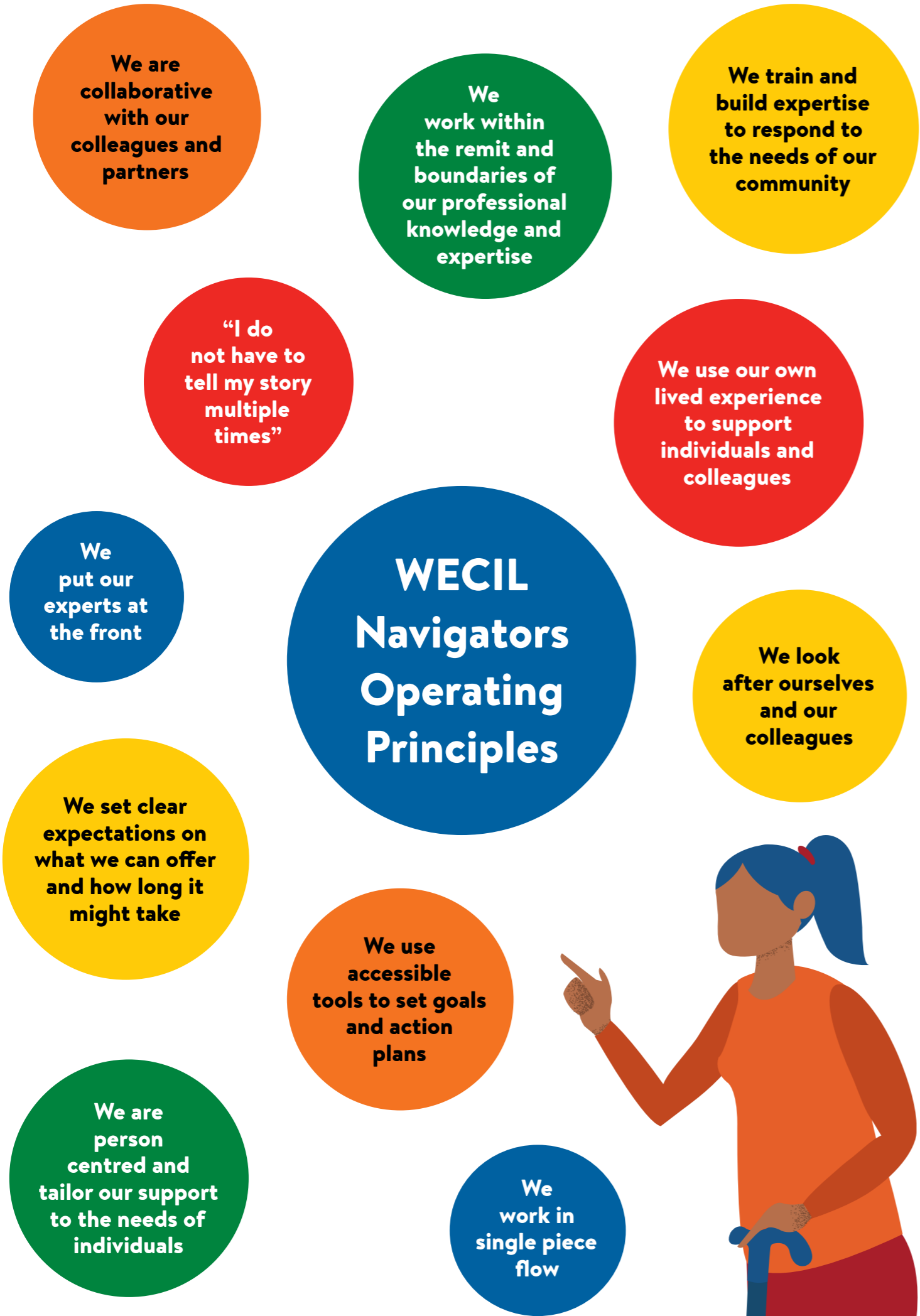
Working

- Clients are feeling helped
- Some staff feeling more engaged
- Connecting well to different organisations
- Responsive (generally within 48 hours)
- Returning customers shows quality of support
- A steady flow of demand
- We are working well as a team
- Lots of relevant training undertaken by staff
- We are well integrated into different teams
- Communication is good within the team
- Able to link into the advice team for support
- Collaborative safeguarding work
- Multi agency meetings
- Time to give to people
- Email systems working well

Not working

- Clarifying support options and managing expectations
- Transition for clients from reception
- Referral form needs updating
- Website needs updating
- How we formally close a case with a client
- We need a directory of support options
- We need to formalise our process
- Not receiving direct phone calls (intercepted by reception)
- Clarity needed over our remit
- Unmet demand – people who aren't accessing support
- Need a structured feedback mechanism
- Person centred support plans and goals need to be defined
- Marketing in multiple formats including different languages

The difference we're making...



As we reflect on the year gone by, it's amazing to see what we have achieved. Whilst our community is still experiencing the negative impact of the COVID pandemic, we have ended up playing a key role in Bristol's Cost of Living crisis response.

The team have adapted to the current demand as well as maintaining our values and operating principles.

- Built an experienced, passionate team of 5** who are encouraged to self-organise to remove traditional command and control management structures which we know do not support our chosen way of working
- 518 Disabled people, parents of Disabled children and carers** have had access to their own navigator for a range of support options
- Over 2000 interactions** carried out supporting people who receive a Direct Payment via the support line
- Raised over £85,000** (annually) in benefits income for Disabled people (There is currently a delay in receiving benefit decisions however we expect this figure to be much greater).
- Continued to support 652 families with Disabled children** to access activities, support and Disability benefits
- Have helped 36 isolated Disabled people** access a befriender for weekly support calls
- Secured over £4000 in small grant applications** to help Disabled people access home adaptations or Disability related equipment such as mobility scooters
- Distributed £8500** in food vouchers

How we've changed what we are doing...

We have rolled two of our advice lines into the team to provide a more seamless experience for people needing to access WECIL support by ensuring someone with expertise will answer the phone.

Monthly meetings take place to map demand and review where the need is and the trends we are experiencing so we remain fluid as a team.

We are using this mapping to train staff according to demand – for example, we have gone from 1 – 3 staff trained in benefits advice and support based on increased demand.

We have secured a place on Integrated Care Systems Locality Partnership to ensure the voices of Disabled people are heard and considered in Health decision making structures.

The team have worked collaboratively across the organisation supporting existing WECIL users and other staff and teams to achieve the best outcomes for our community. We have a whole organisation meeting weekly to communicate on cases and ask for/ offer support to colleagues.

We have built on our excellent culture of safeguarding owing to the involved relationships that emerge from the service. This was represented in our recent staff survey where safeguarding practices and support scored full marks from all staff.

We are working alongside Bristol City Council on a Direct Payment review pilot where our experienced navigators will review the effectiveness and appropriateness of the Disabled person's current Direct Payment as well as looking at support planning options to ensure Disabled people are able to meet their desired outcomes.

We have built strong relationships with other support organisations- we don't just signpost, we support people to access other services!

We received additional funding from Bristol City Council Advice budget which brought in more resource to our benefits advice team from October 2022 until the end of March 23 (3 days additional advice work backfilled from existing staff) to help meet the increased demand of the Cost-of-Living crisis.

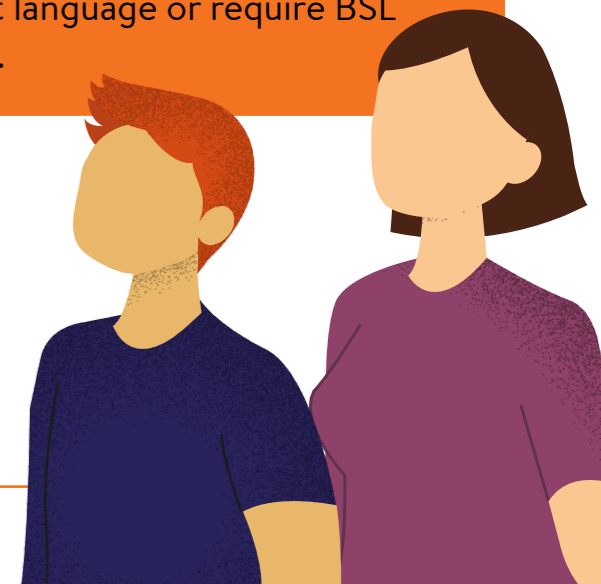
We applied for and successfully received £24,222 from Quartet to recruit a Community Connecting Navigator who is ensuring that Disabled people can access the Welcoming Spaces initiative and that we are supporting Welcoming Spaces with their accessibility and inclusion.

Received £10,000 from Household Support Fund which we are distributing in £50 supermarket vouchers directly to Disabled people we work with to help tackle food poverty.

We have updated our referral form, processes and website to ensure easy access to the service.

We are focussing on building links with black and other minoritized community led organisations to ensure our reach is representative of our community.

We have invested in interpreting service to ensure we can support people who do not have an English as a first language or require BSL support.



Challenges and learning

We have encountered challenges with a new database making recording and reporting on data challenging. We are working with the developers to improve the database for our needs and to ensure we have useful information to continue to develop the service.

A key part of our project was the development of an accessible AI chatbot tool. This has been delayed during YR1 due to needing to update our procurement policy whilst also following the procurement process. We are now excited to be starting the development of the AI Bot in YR2.

As we have approached this project with an open mind free of too many restrictive measures on how we work with people, this has meant at times we encounter issues with boundaries both from staff and clients. Sometimes clients have become somewhat reliant on our support wanting us to get involved in many aspects of their lives. We have approached this by drawing up a statement for clients and by prioritising specific outcomes to begin with, clearly contracting with

the client in a way that is accessible to them. In terms of staff, there have been instances where staff have felt emotionally involved or impacted by the work. We have reviewed cases in supervision sessions, team meetings and have invested in reflective practice sessions with an independent psychotherapist to ensure staff have enough outlets for support. We are also currently arranging boundaries training for all our people facing staff.

The complexity of client cases has noticeably changed, especially in relation to mental health challenges, impacts of COVID and cost of living. We have needed to upskill in mental

health, trauma informed practices and working with people who are experiencing thoughts or expressions of suicide.

We have experience increased demand due to the cost-of-living crisis (100% increase in advice referrals since last year).

Understanding that there are some issues we just cannot support with e.g., legal matters and disputes but we can help someone access the support they do need.

There are issues working with social care and other providers where they are also struggling with low staffing and resource issues.

We are investigating options for independent evaluation and although this has not commenced yet, have been working with University of Bristol and other community partners to explore different and effective ways to evaluate our work which considers the complexity of the client journey.



Our impact



95%

of users rated their overall experience 5/5



87%

said they felt very in control when working with us



98%

said they now had better access to the advice and support they needed



93%

said they felt their access needs have been met (3% unsure)

How we are involving our community...



Click and chat community has evolved through people telling us what matters to them. We regularly review feedback provided to us and discuss cases to know how we could be doing better and to understand how well we are meeting what matters. We are launching a series of Community Conferences to be run each quarter starting in May. The conferences

are open to any WECIL user and a chance to meet the team in person, find out what is happening at WECIL, provide feedback to us so we can know how well we are doing and create opportunities for our community to become more actively involved in the design and delivery of services through co-production.



Feedback



Although my original request wasn't able to be met I have managed to join a group for SEND parents that I wouldn't have known about if it wasn't for WECIL, I have managed to send off another child of mine's DLA forms which I was not going to do as I didn't feel like I had enough evidence etc. however WECIL helped me fill them in.

I have also joined 2/3 of my children up for Bristol Gympanzees and met with someone from Bristol disabled services that offered to fund my middle child with a 1:1 should she want to join in any after school club.



Having a service that makes you feel safe. The service is invaluable. Having a space to discuss issues and know someone is listening.

I think you do a first-class job. Everyone's a very good communicator and listener and very helpful.

Keep working the way you are, keep listening to the people that talk to you and just keep your main focus on what you do as you do it very well. You are doing something very worthwhile, I think your attitudes are great.



I felt that my navigator not only understood the physical aspect of my situation but also the psychological and emotional impact. There were issues that were explored that I would not feel free to express to people. My navigator has a way of drawing things out, without being invasive, judgemental, or abusive. In fact, it felt cathartic to unload some of the things that I normally guard against others knowing.



My navigator made an application with a charity and it was approved. I have now chosen a mobility scooter and my navigator has ordered it from Amazon, who will deliver it to my home address. I am extremely grateful for the hard work and support with this.

Basically, you helped me sort out all the practical things and emotional support as well which was actually the main thing for me. You understand me.

It is wonderful having a navigators service in place. Feel listened to. A navigator service should be worldwide, everyone should have one.



The service I received. Help with the forms and with English which is not my first language. Help to know what to do to make new PIP claim. My navigator was very patient and helpful. I was struggling with my health and with the forms. The voucher was lovely and has really helped.



They really enjoyed the life coach our navigator found for us and as a result they are happier where they are living and they are finally making positive changes that they have been putting off for years. And they are looking forward to the future more than in a long time. And their relationships with everyone has improved. They've made positive changes out of the challenges they had.

WECIL were there for me when no other organisations were available to support me. I didn't feel so alone, I could not have done the PIP form without WECIL.

You have empowered me to do other things and follow through on things particularly with the housing situation and called environmental health to check on flat and outside area. I had the confidence to do this. I have called other agencies such as housing and pensions. Raised my level of mental health in a good place. Much more calm. Home visits were extremely helpful.

Yes, it was so lovely that you turned up at the meeting with the advocate and meeting at Old Market. You have been such a support on the phone. You've been fantastic, I've felt really supported, that's really helped, at times it's been really difficult. You've been an enormous help.

My telefriender has given me motivation and encouragement. The calls have been a great help and of importance. She's helped me work out what gives me personal fulfilment. I couldn't ask for anyone nicer or more helpful for a befriender. I'm very grateful. I feel I'm listened to, it's a two way street.

Carry on doing what you are doing. Please do not shut down. I feel so empowered and listened to. You are the only people that have supported me. I cannot thank you enough.





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