Winner:

Southdown Housing Association

Stay Up Late Campaign and Heavy Load

Judges’ comments:

"Absolutely brilliant. What a spectacularly obvious thing to challenge! Everyone should be able to stay up late if they want to."

"I was so inspired to read this entry! Such a fundamental choice for any individual to ‘stay up late’ and to enjoy punk music at the same time has to be a great thing, I hope Heavy Load get to tour wider afield!"

"This was the submission that made me smile as I read the ideas and the results. The Stay Up Late campaign is infectious in its simplicity. It was great to see something that was both fun and had a serious policy focus - engaging both service users and challenging practitioners."

"Catchy funny campaigning method insisting on individual freedoms on equal terms."
Paul Richards, Support Worker at Southdown Housing Association, bass player with Heavy Load and co-founder of the Stay Up Late campaign

**Summary:** We started a campaign called Stay Up Late to challenge the practice where a lot service users have a 9pm ‘curfew’ due to inflexible staff rotas. This means that people with learning disabilities are missing out on a full social life and not able to enjoy gigs, meet their friends, go to the theatre etc.

> How did you become involved with Heavy Load and the Stay Up Late campaign?
> It started about 12 years ago, one of our service users wanted to start a band so a support worker sent round a memo for others to get involved. I wasn’t in the band to start with, I was working as a support worker for Southdown - the original bass player broke his arm by falling off a bar stool so I stepped in and it went from there!

> What was the inspiration behind the idea?
> It was really simple, we were frustrated at seeing people with learning disabilities leaving gigs just when we felt the evening was getting going. We talked about the idea and we could see this was something that could potentially take off and something that was much needed.

> How did you get the ball rolling?
> We played a few gigs at local organisations via Carousel (a Brighton-based organisation that works with people with learning difficulties to achieve their artistic ambitions). We actually became their resident band for a while, playing gigs throughout the year. Gradually more opportunities came up for us to play further afield at other disabled organisations and club nights, including Heart and Soul in London. Eventually a film crew approached us interested in making a documentary about the band, they managed to get a screening of the film shown at the ICA (Institute of Contemporary Arts) in London and also the Empire in Leicester Square.

> There must have been a few obstacles along the way – inflexible staff rotas being the biggest – how did you overcome these?
> Yeah, that was really how the campaign came about - we were starting to play lots of gigs but the time we had to be on was getting earlier and earlier, obviously this is crazy for a punk band! We were also getting fed up of seeing our fans leaving half-way through our gigs because of ‘curfews’. We used the film crew who were working with us as a platform to expose our Stay Up Late campaign and promote a more flexible social life for people with learning difficulties. We were lucky in that we had some really positive support workers with a can-do attitude, I realise others aren’t so lucky but I think you just have to challenge negative attitudes. We wanted everyone to have the same opportunity as us and we wanted to be able to push our band more and more.

> What have you gained personally from this experience?
> It’s wonderful to see a really simple idea take off and touch a lot of nerves. We had no idea Stay Up Late would become this big so it’s inspiring for me and the band to be able to wake people up and encourage them to think differently. I get to meet some really interesting people and hear excellent bands through touring with Heavy Load, it’s a lot of fun.

> What piece of advice would you give to others who’d like to get involved in this kind of work?
> Just plug away – network and, most importantly, persevere! We have and it’s worked out.

**More info:**

[www.stayuplate.org](http://www.stayuplate.org)
[www.heavyload.org](http://www.heavyload.org)
[www.carousel.org.uk](http://www.carousel.org.uk)
[www.heartnsoul.co.uk](http://www.heartnsoul.co.uk)