

The Environment



Book Two

**A Resource Pack for Local Groups of Disabled
People**

Published by the BCODP

This Booklet is one of six that form
the BCODP Resource Pack for
Local Groups of Disabled People

- Booklet 1 - About your Group
- Booklet 2 - The Environment
- Booklet 3 - Money, Workers & other Resources
- Booklet 4 - The Disabled People's Movement
- Booklet 5 - Training
- Booklet 6 - More Help and Information

This BCODP publication was funded by
Charity Projects

About this Booklet

This booklet will not tell you *how* to run your group, or *how* to do things. **It is** designed to signpost you to the information that you need. It will:

- Give you ideas about areas you need to think about.
- Point you in the direction of books and organisations that may help. Some of these books *will* tell you how to do things.
- Fill-in some of the gaps that these books leave about being a group *of disabled people*.

While we were working on these booklets, we talked to many local groups of disabled people. They told us about the hard work and determination you need to succeed. This Resource Pack has been written to help you find support and information so that your hard work does not go to waste. We hope that you will find these signposts get you where you want to go a bit more quickly than you would get there without them!

Full details of all books and reference materials mentioned in this booklet is contained in Resource Booklet 6

Introduction

What this booklet covers

This booklet covers the way a group can work with other groups and organisations, and get some of the resources it needs -

- Transport
- Publicity
- Local Support
- National Influences
- Premises and Meeting Places
- Networking
- Being Taken Seriously
- Using Advisors
- 'Breaking Free'

There are no books that will help you with all of these areas, but

The Director for Disabled People (about £20)
A Practical Guide for Disabled People – where to find information, services and
equipment

.... May be of some use.

Transport

What You Need to Think About

Access to transport

Access to transport is an equality issue. You need to know, or know where to find out, what transport is available in your area. This will mean you can:

- ✓ plan meetings and choose premises that people can get to;
- ✓ give people the right information to get involved in your group;
- ✓ campaign for accessible transport in your area.;
- ✓ try to arrange accessible transport if it isn't already available;

It is better if you give responsibility to one member of your group to make sure that people's transport needs are taken seriously.

Licensing authority

Try to understand (it might not be easy!) who is responsible in your area for public transport and transport policy. This will mean that you can talk to the right people if you need to find out about transport or get things changed. For example your Local Authority are probably the licensing authority for taxis and might be able to get taxi operators to buy accessible cabs. They should also know about Dial-a-ride and car volunteer schemes.

Books and Organisations That Might Help

Door to Door – Department of Transport
Your nearest disability information service
Tripscope

The Passenger Transport Authority for your area –
Responsible for buses and trams

Full details of Books & Organisations can be found in Booklet 6

Important Points about Transport for Groups of Disabled People

- People have different problems with transport which may arise from their impairment or for another reason. Some of those problems might be obvious like getting on and off buses. But many others are not obvious. For example - a person may feel threatened travelling in certain areas or on some forms of transport like buses. Some people may have problems understanding timetables or getting them in an accessible format. Someone who normally travels alone may need someone with them on a journey they are not used to. The cost of accessible transport can be a real barrier to people on benefit. Make it clear to people that you will pay their transport costs, and don't forget to include this when you apply for funding.
- Some transport is only available at certain times of day. You need to check whether the transport that your members or Committee needs is available at the times you plan to hold your meetings.
- When your staff or members go to meetings organised by other groups make sure that their transport needs are met. Many people do not understand the problems transport causes to disabled people.
- You may need to explain about access to the people who run transport services. Often it is just that they don't understand. Some groups of disabled people have been very successful in campaigning and educating. Examples include getting a whole tram system accessible and widening local travel concessions to include mental health system survivors. Local councillors, Members of Parliament, and even Members of the European Parliament may help you campaign if they know what the problems are.
- You may be able to get sponsorship to help with your group's travel costs. For example a taxi firm may give you a reduced rate for regular bookings if you mention their service in your newsletter. 'If you don't ask, you don't get'.
- Make sure you operate in line with your Values. For example, if you believe in a fully-accessible transport system buying your own mini- bus (a form of segregated transport) might not be the best choice. Your Local Authority, or other voluntary groups, may have accessible vehicles you can use.

Publicity

What You Need to Think About

Being Noticed

Publicity is just about anything which brings your group to the notice of other people. It can be face to face, in writing, by radio or television, or any other modern way of communicating, like the Internet. Don't forget other organisations' newsletters, Community Radio, and Community Service Announcements on local television. If you know why you want publicity, you can choose the best method.



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Reaching People

To get new members you need to reach disabled people. Ask the Health Authority to put a poster in GPs' surgeries, or ask Social Services if they can contact the disabled people on their registers. To improve access to a public building you need to reach those who can influence change. You could arrange a demonstration outside the building, making sure that the Local Press know why you are doing it.

Reaching Funders

To highlight a threat to your work through lack of funding, you need to reach funders. You could produce a review of the work you have done over the last year detailing your achievements. Send it to people with influence like Local Councillors and the Press.

Highlighting an Issue

You can get most of your publicity, if not all, for free. Also consider if another group can get it easier than you can. You might get a local school to do a project to highlight a particular access problem -this would also make the pupils more aware too, provided they do it in a way that fits in with your Values.

Useful Contacts

Usually, the only publicity that 'just happens' is bad publicity. Build a list of useful contacts, know who you send a press release to or where you put up a poster, for the best results. Choose someone to be a Publicity Officer. Also see if a local organisation, like your local authority or an NHS trust, has a publicity department that will help you.

Books and Organisations That Might Help

DAA Resource Kit 1 – Media
DAA Resource Kit 3 – Campaigns
The Effective Trustee, Part 2 Aims and Resources
Image-building and money-raising for hard-to-sell groups
Disabling Imagery and the Media

Full details of Books & Organisations can be found in Booklet 6

Important Points about Publicity for Groups of Disabled People

- 'The Media' does not normally show disabled people in a very positive way. It is difficult to make sure they do not give the wrong messages to the public about your group. But you cannot just ignore them, and you need to make them work *for* you.
- Because of the problems in getting the right message across you need to be *very clear indeed* about your facts, the language *you* use, and what you want from the Media. Even a picture of you in a positive place, like at work, can be made to look negative by a press photographer. You can *ask* to see articles and pictures before they are published, but more often than not they won't agree. One of the best ways to control what is said about your group is to send out a press release.
- You need to make sure that your own publicity is accessible -news letters, posters and so on. It's not just about access for visually impaired people. Use clear, jargon-free language (even the Disabled People's Movement has its own jargon), and think about access for everyone to places where you arrange meetings, put up posters, and so on. You may need to put out publicity in other languages, such as Hindi.
- Complaints are something which a group can use to get its message across. For example if the Media give you some unacceptable publicity there are a number of ways to complain. *Disabling Imagery and the Media* has a useful section on this.

Local Support

What You Need to Think About

Local Resources

In your local area there are a lot of organisations, most of which have a lot more resources than you do. Many of them have legal responsibilities to do things which you can take advantage of. You need to understand where their money comes from and what they *have* to do with it, so that you can work with them to your advantage. There are differences in different areas of the country, and you need to understand your own, but here are a few pointers.

Local Government

Local government is a source of funding and support. It is also responsible for a wide range services which mayor may not respond well to the needs of disabled people. There are two or more "layers" of local government in some areas -e.g. district and county councils. Together they have responsibilities which include education, housing, planning, social services, licensing (including taxis, street-collections), local roads, public transport, environmental services (refuse collection etc.). Their money comes from local charges, like from Council Tax, *and* from central Government. They decide what services the local area needs, and they often provide them. *However*, they now have to use CCT (compulsory competitive tendering) which means that they may not be doing the work, just overseeing another organisation doing it -probably a private company, but it could be a voluntary organisation. Be aware that there are a number of different departments which might be useful to you, and they don't always talk to each other.

The Voluntary Sector

The Voluntary Sector can be a very useful source of information, support and resources. In most areas there is a CVS (Council for Voluntary Service) or Voluntary Action. Their funding is probably provided by the local authority in exchange for their agreeing to support local voluntary organisations. They almost certainly don't have spare cash but may provide training, meeting rooms, access to desk-top-publishing, information about locally available funding and so on. They should know the local voluntary/charity scene, and what other organisation might help you. There will also be many impairment specific charities/groups based in or serving your area.



The Voluntary Sector can be a very useful source of information ...

Education, employment and training services.

The local TEC (Training and Enterprise Council in Scotland LEC, Local Enterprise Council), Chamber of Commerce and BusinessLink focus on training for employment and support for local businesses. Various public and private organisations will provide further and higher education, and professional courses, in your area. You may work with them and/or their students may support you.

The National Health Service

The NHS can be a useful source of funding and support. It has responsibility for health which includes health education. The Health Authority (Commissioner and Purchaser) works out what health services an area needs. It decides, together with GPs who are Fundholders, how to spend the money central Government allocates them and who they will "buy" services from. NHS trusts (Providers) can only run services for patients which a Purchaser has asked for and agreed to pay for. Perhaps surprisingly, it knows little about the real issues for disabled people.

Books and Organisations about Local Support that Might Help

Image-building and money-raising for hard-to-sell groups

DAA Resource Kit 2 – Consultation and Influence

The Effective Trustee, Part 3 – Getting the Work Done

Your Community Health Council (CHC) who will be able to explain the local health service and help with complaints.

The office of your local authority's Chief Executive which should be able to provide you with information about local government in your area including a list of local councilors.

Full details of Books & Organisations can be found in Booklet 6

Important Points about Local Support for Groups of Disabled People

- A great deal of possible funding is tied up in these organisations, but you need to learn how to 'work the system'. If you know what they are responsible for it is easier to fit your aims in with them. For example the local authority has certain responsibilities to give information to disabled people, they may not be doing this well and you may be able to persuade them *you* could do it better if they paid you.
- If you understand local sources of funding you may see the 'trends' and be able to take advantage of them. For example money becoming available for carers could be tapped in to for disabled carers, or money for young people might help you recruit more young disabled members.
- Even if these local organisations don't have money to give you, they can often help you get to other money. For example, a local voluntary organisation may understand about accessing European funding, the local authority may know about money to regenerate your area, the health authority may know where best to go in the Department of Health, TECs may have access to training money and BusinessLinks may have ideas on who to 'tap' for sponsorship.
- Not many people really understand all these organisations, even those in them! Don't be afraid to ask officers of organisations, and elected members, to give you a simple explanation. It may be worth finding a retired officer, perhaps of the local authority, who will assist your group and help you through the maze.
- **It** is always best to be on good terms with your local organisations - you never know when you, or your members may need them. However, if you just cannot 'get through' to an organisation about the way they treat disabled people, you might be able to support an individual disabled person making a complaint to them. But you need to recognise this is a very stressful thing to do.

National Influences

What You Need to Think About

The National Scene

Even if you are only interested in local issues it is important to understand something about the national, and European, scene. There may be information available which will help your group, legislation that would support your arguments, funding you could apply for.

The Political Parties

You need to be able to work with people from all political parties. If you are campaigning, you may want to know about the major parties' policies on disability. You may also need to look wider than this because we know that almost all laws and national policies will affect the lives of disabled people.

Influence Policy Change

Parliament and the Government make policies that affect disabled people's lives. These policies are carried out by Civil Servants, the people who work in Government departments like the Department of Health, the Department for Education and Employment and so on. Sometimes it may seem we have no say. However, if you take an interest and understand the system, if you are seen as a reliable source of local disabled people's views, you *maybe* able to influence policy change through those who represent you - whether or not you voted for them.

Acts of Parliament

There are a number of Acts of Parliament intended to improve the lives of disabled people. The latest edition of *The Directory for Disabled People* will give you a basic understanding of the important Acts. Disabled people need to know about them and how they can use them, and often need support to do so. Local groups have an important role to play here. The new Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) is probably not covered in many books, but there are details of where to get information about it in Booklet 6.

Important Points about Influence for Groups of Disabled People

- There is very little real understanding of disability issues and you may have a lot of educating to do.
- Depending on the personal experience, and perhaps the political party your MP or MEP belongs to, you may be patronised, seen as trouble makers, or given promises but no real action.
- Your MP's and MEP's surgery (where they see local people who want to talk to them) may not be physically accessible, and they almost certainly cannot be contacted by minicom. You can ask them to come to you. You can find out how to contact them through your local library or local authority.
- You may be able to get someone from your local department of the Civil Service, like the Department of Social Security, to come to talk to you about how that department works. But be careful because they will probably want to send someone to tell you about what they do for disabled people. You must make your information requirements very clear.

Depending on the personal experience, and perhaps the political party your MP or MEP belongs to, you may be patronised ...



Books and Organisations That Might Help

Your Member of Parliament (MP) and Member of the European Parliament (MEP) who should be able to help you understand what their job is and about Parliament, the Civil Service, the European Parliament and Commission.
Your local political party headquarters should be able to provide you with their party's agenda on disability issues. It may take them time to find out as disability may not be an issue they have ever considered. You may help get it put on their local agenda.

Pocket Parliament
The Directory for Disabled People

Full details of Books & Organisations can be found in Booklet 6

Premises & Meeting Places

What you Need to Think about

Access

If you want to welcome all disabled people into your group you must think about access - it doesn't matter if you are just looking for a place to hold one meeting or for permanent offices. Some people have more than one impairment, and some experience discrimination for reasons other than disability. Examples are a deaf wheelchair user or a Moslem with a visual impairment. Access needs vary and you cannot assume that everyone with the same impairment has the same needs. A person's needs also depend on their own life experience and personality.

Choosing Premises

When choosing premises, don't forget some people may:

- need good lighting
- use an induction loop
- be unable to use public transport
- *only* be able to use public transport
- find an area threatening (too posh for instance), or in conflict with their religious beliefs (a church perhaps)
- need child care

And this is by no means a complete list.

Local Contacts

Even if you have good, accessible premises *now*, keep a file of possible venues for the future and people who might help you find them. If you are looking for offices ask a friendly local estate agent to keep their eyes open for you (for free!). The local authority may have places available. Ask other groups what their meeting places are like. You may be able to get the use of rooms for free if you have good relations with local organisations - e.g. a training room in a local hospital or large employer. Your local DEA (disability employment advisor) has links with local firms. Don't be afraid to ask, they can only say no.



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If you want to welcome all disabled people into your group
you must think about access ...

Important Points about Premises for Groups of Disabled People

- Beware of relying on anyone else's view of access - *go and find out for yourself.*
- People really do not understand about access. If you are having building work or alterations done - be *very* clear on what you want doing, particularly on access features. Keep checking that the contractors are doing what you asked and even if funds are tight, don't cut corners. Beware of freebies - they can end up as a half-finished job and it is much harder to insist on what you want
- If you employ people it is possible you may be able to get some financial assistance through Access to Work. But approach it right, talk to someone who understands the system before applying. We suggest your DEA may not be the best person because they work for the provider of the money - the Employment Service. You can ask the Association of Disabled Professionals for advice, (please see details in Booklet 6).
- Don't underestimate the importance of making sure you follow best practice in matters of access. It shows others what is needed and what can be done. Also if we want people to give us equality, we must provide it for others, or we will not be taken seriously.

Books and Organisations That Might Help

Access Committee for England (ACE) will be able to put you in touch with your local Access Officer or Access Group if you don't already know them.

The Equal Opportunities Department of your council for help on issues relating to other oppressions like race and gender *Commission for Racial Equality / Equal Opportunities Commission Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) Conference Centres -Access guide to facilities for disabled people -RADAR*

Full details of Books & Organisations can be found in Booklet 6

Networking

What You Need to Think about

Making contact

Networking is a word used to describe people and organisations making contact and developing links with each other in a lot of different ways. Networking can happen face to face, over the telephone, by tape, through newsletters, even over the Internet. You may meet someone at a training session and talk about a problem you both have, then you think of something that may help. So you ring them up, or they ring you just to find out how you are getting on.

It's not Difficult

There's nothing mystical or difficult about networking, it's just keeping in touch. By networking we find out what others are doing and tell others what we're doing. We learn what we have in common and discover things it might be useful to do together; realise other have similar problems; get ideas on how to solve problem; help others with their problems; and also celebrate our successes and share them.

Learning from others

Networking is useful because it helps you to learn from the experience of others. If you are starting a project, draw on your networks to discover another group which has already done it. Somebody you know, may know someone who knows someone if you have a problem, or your group is going through a tough time, others have probably been there before, or will at least be prepared to lend an informed listening ear, all you need to do is be prepared to do the same for others. If you are campaigning, other groups may have found how *not* to do it. If your group have development needs one of your network may be able to recommend training or even after it.

Books and Organisations That Might Help

BCODP can put you in touch with other groups like yours.

The Disability Alliance Handbook

Full details of Books & Organisations can be found in Booklet 6



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Don't forget that there are many different ways of exchanging information and ideas

Important Points about Networking for Groups of Disabled People

- When networking with non-disabled organisations you need to consider whether what you are doing sits comfortably with your group's Values. For instance networking with an organisation which you know has a really bad record on employing disabled people, could go against your Values. But by keeping up networking links with some groups, you may be able to encourage them towards good practice, for example on access. You may also learn of unexpected additional resources you can get just by spending an extra few minutes on general 'chat'.
- Together we can do things that we would find hard if not impossible on our own, and we can learn a great deal from other groups' experience. You should, however, make sure that you take into account the access needs of people in another group, which may be different from those of your group. And some groups don't have as many resources as others. Some may find it difficult to find funding for a phone call, others may prefer to write for reasons of access.
- Don't forget that there are many different ways of exchanging information and ideas. Some groups have found that using audiocassettes (tapes) or video tapes is a good way for them to network.

Being Taken Seriously

What You Need to Think About

Be taken Seriously

You need to be taken seriously by those who can help your group achieve its Aims. These include funders, disabled people, officers *and* elected members of the local authority, the general public, Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), and anyone you are trying to influence.

If you're Not

If you are not taken seriously you won't make much progress. People involved in your group will probably feel demoralised and not valued, and they may lose interest. You will probably have trouble getting funding and other support and resources you need.

Work at It! ..

You won't automatically be taken seriously, you have to work at it. You need to build up relationships with people you work with and those you want to influence. You need to keep your word - if you say the group will respond to a consultation by a certain date it must do. You need to do the 'visible things' well run meetings that include everyone *and* get things done, use your funds and other resources effectively.

Important Points on being Taken Seriously for Groups of Disabled People

- You must not forget that there are almost certainly many more disabled people outside your group than there are in it. You will probably need to demonstrate that you have support of more than just the disabled people in your group, if you are to be taken seriously by the people you want to influence.
- You must practice what you preach, especially on equality issues. If you don't, people will very quickly stop taking you seriously.

Books and Organisations That Might Help

BCODP

Image-building and money-raising for hard-to-sell groups OM Resource Kit 2 - Consultation and Influence

Full details of Books & Organisations can be found in Booklet 6

Using Advisors

What You Need to Think About

Paying for Advice

There may be times when you will have to pay for advice or help from people outside your group even when funds are tight. Two main reasons for this are firstly to protect the group and its members from future problems that might be expensive, like taking on a rental agreement you can't get out of, or secondly when your funding runs out to make sure you are taken seriously and are seen to be doing things properly.

Who's Paying?

When you employ or seek the help of an expert or professional you need to remember a few things -*someone* is 'paying' them. If it isn't you then you need to understand who is paying, so that you can understand what influence this might have on the information they give you. An example of this is someone advising on insurance who may be being paid a 'commission' (extra money) if they sell you a policy.

Be Clear What You Need

Be clear exactly what you need from your advisor, and remember they are working for you, even if *you* are not paying them. So unless what you want is illegal or unethical, you can ask them to do it. They can always resign if they do not want to.

Get an Estimate!

Work out what you need to say before you talk to them and stick to the point. You may well be paying by the hour, which means the minute! Don't be afraid to ask them for a clear estimate of cost before they start work. Keep checking how this is going from time to time don't be afraid to ask them what experience they have of the subject you are asking about.

Important Points about Using Advisors for Groups of Disabled People

- Beware of freebies! Often professionals will give their time and talents free or at least cheap, to charities and voluntary organisations. Although the majority are very genuine in their wish to help, and with tight funds it is very tempting, there are a number of problems you should be aware of. It may *look* cheaper but you could have to put in a lot more of those valuable resources, time and energy, so it actually works out rather 'expensive'. Also, sometimes the expert or professional who will do it free is not the one for your job. For instance you may be a charity and your accountant may not be familiar with accounting requirements for charities and when a job is being done for free it is very easy for it to slip down the priority list. You may find you spend a lot of time and energy chasing results. It is also much harder to question what people are doing, and you have to learn to 'look a gift horse in the mouth!'
- There may be community organisations which are experienced in working with groups such as yours and can give sound advice on professional issues like accounting. They may receive funding for this work, and so their advice may be free.
- Other groups in your network may be able to recommend someone who has worked for them.

Books and Organisations That Might Help

Your CVS may have details of professionals who understand voluntary sector issues

Your local Law Centre if you have one could be useful

Your local CAB can help on some problems or might be able to recommend appropriate advisors

Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE)

Full details of Books & Organisations can be found in Booklet 6

‘Breaking Free’

What You Need to Think About

Starting Up

Many groups of disabled people begin life as part of another group. Sometimes the group forms an official sub-committee. It can be a very convenient way to start a group, building it up while using the resources of a larger organisation. Starting a group this way is a short-term measure. But beware because although it solves some problems - it creates others. One of these is that you will then have to look at 'breaking free'.

Ask for Help

The most effective way of breaking free is to work with the organisation you are a part of, explain to them why you want to become an independent group. Ask for their help in doing this.

Staying Friends

Stay friends if at all possible – you might need their help again!

Talk to Others

Sometimes a group of disabled people find themselves *inside* an organisation *for* disabled people. It *is* possible to change an organisation like that into an *Drone*, and for disabled people to take control. How you do it will be different for each group but it is helpful to talk to a group which has already done it.

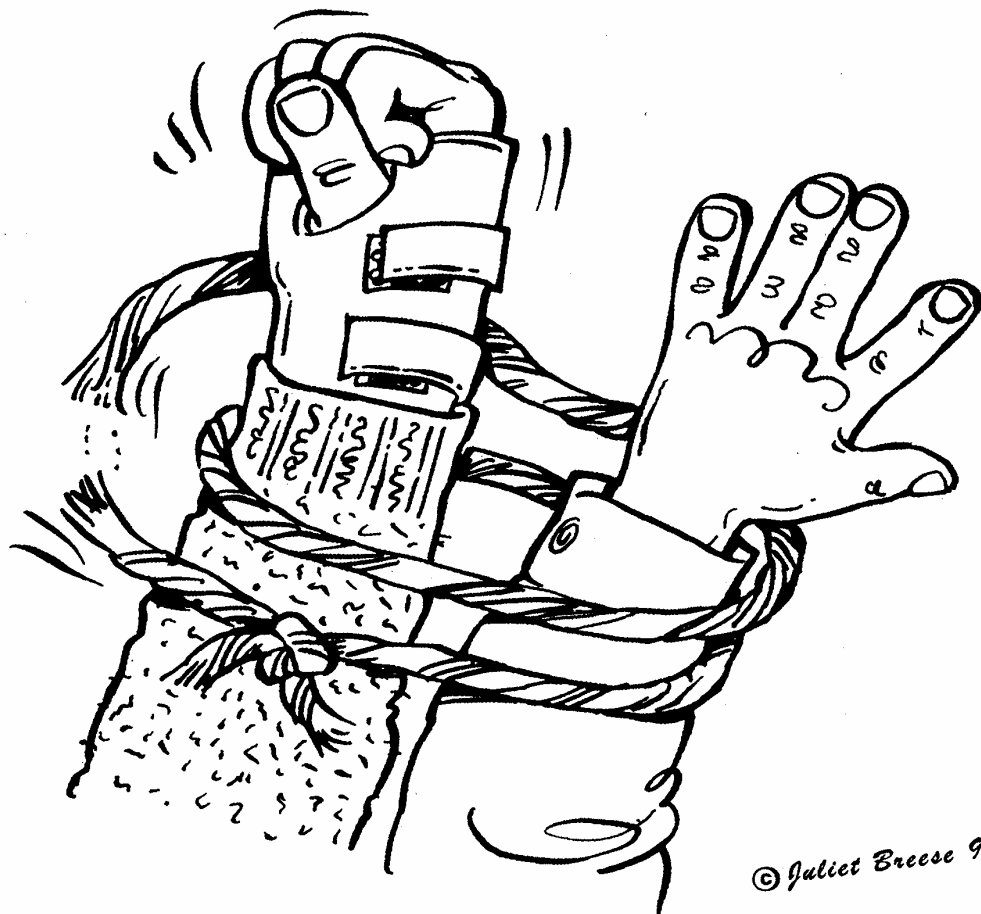
Books and Organisations That Might Help

BCODP can put you in touch with groups who have ‘broken free’ so that you can get ideas and support. One of the Case Studies in Booklet 6 is about just such a group.

Full details of Books & Organisations can be found in Booklet 6

Important Points about 'Breaking Free' for Groups of Disabled People

- When considering whether to start under the 'umbrella' of another group, you need to consider if being linked closely with the other organisation will compromise your Values. Do they put across a positive image of disabled people? What is their approach to equal opportunity issues?
- Breaking free from another organisation is not easy but it is very important. It enables disabled people to take control of their own group, and demonstrate the Values they believe in.
- Other groups of disabled people *have* successfully broken free before.



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Equal Ability would like to thank the Project Support Group and all the groups and individuals who have helped to put this Resource Pack together.

The publication of this booklet was made possible by a grant from Charity
Projects.

First published in 1997 by

The British Council of Organisations of Disabled People (BCODP).

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Composed by Equal Ability for BCODP

Printed by Bailey & Sons Ltd., Somercotes, Derbyshire