

**Creating Independent Living Futures
Research Project
NCIL & Disability Studies Unit Leeds University
December 2001**

Our Agenda

This is a piece of research that has taken a long time coming. It is the kind of research that some of us in the disability movement have felt should have happened a long time ago. It really is amazing that it has taken this long. Anyway, now it has finally happened. For a long time many of us have felt it so important, not only to have an in depth look at how a variety of our organisations have developed, but also to try and get a feel of the position we are currently in right now. It gives us the opportunity of getting an overview of our historical trend and development, and at the same time to have a good look at how we fare now in the current social economic climate.

One of the criticisms of the disability movement has always been that we were never good at documenting our main developments and history. To a certain extent this is true, and many of our organisations never recorded their key roots, origins, ideas and developments, except in an adhoc way. This has denied us of any real insight into our origins of how some of our organisations came into being. Many of us have this knowledge subjectively and are able to share it, but only a few have recorded it, and even fewer in any great practical or documented detail.

Anyway the main point is that at least this project has addressed some of these issues. We conceived it, thought it up, went to the lottery and successfully received the funding, and consequently developed it. Now we are in the position today to let you hear our findings. As well as this, able to

have this conference where we can look at some of the key issues together which can hopefully help us to form new strategies for the future.

Research is an area that has always been dominated by professional academic researchers, who have always been keen to study disabled people, their life styles and organisations. This is why this piece of research is so unique, because it is we ourselves this time, who are looking inwards at what we have done, in an attempt to come up again with our own solutions. Our movement has established the social model of disability, Independent Living, direct payments and struggle for our civil rights. This work is a combination of all these aspects and ideas, which we hope will fire us up again for more new ideas at a time when the odds seem against us within the current economic climate of ever tightening budgets, charging policies, and service cut backs.

It is not my job here today to tell you about the findings of the work, this will come later from Colin Barnes. I just want to finish by saying I wish you all a constructive and enjoyable day, and look forward to re-uniting with some old friends, and at the same time making some new ones in this growing movement of ours.

John Evans
November 2001.