

Our Lives R4 Living!



Statement proposed by “Our Lives R4 Living” for adoption by the meeting of representatives from national groups at the event organised by CSIP on Tuesday 27 February 2007.

We believe that a clear distinction exists between organisations led by people eligible to access services (sometimes referred to as User-Led Organisations or ULOs) and organisations routed firmly within the Disabled People’s Movement (referred to as organisations OF Disabled People).

Organisations OF Disabled People, whilst being led by people eligible to access services, are distinct because: first and foremost, they subscribe to the Social Model of Disability; they are owned, led, managed and staffed in the majority by Disabled People; they are usually cross-impairment with strong principles of democratic accountability; and they place *Disability* firmly in the human and civil rights arena and campaign for Disability Equality.

This is not to deny that there is a clear role for User-Led Organisations (ULO), which are not members of the Disabled Peoples Movement, e.g. some carers’ and children’s organisations or those set up to enable involvement within a particular service. However, such organisations are not the same in character as those which the ‘life chances’ report sought to promote (‘Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People’, January 2005).

‘Improving Life Chances’ laid down a clear principle that there should be an organisation of Disabled People modelled on Centres for Independent Living (CILs) in every locality (local social services area) by the year 2010. A CIL is a Social Model based, cross-impairment organisation, owned and controlled by, and accountable to, the Disabled Community. A CIL supports Disabled People to live

independently through peer support, campaigning and providing user-led services.

This meeting:

- strongly supports the establishment of such organisations and believes that this will be a vital contribution to ensuring that genuine and authentic independent living services exist for Disabled People by maintaining the independent voice of the Disabled Community;
- affirms that for such Centres for Independent Living to be successful, effective and sustainable, they need to be underpinned by Social Model principles and accountable directly to the local communities from which they spring and seek to serve - 'top-down' structures imposed centrally are destined to fail;
- asserts that existing Centres for Independent Living and other Social Model based organisations, owned and controlled by Disabled People at a local level, are best placed to support the widening of Centres for Independent Living;
- proposes that the Department of Health (DoH) resource a consortium of such organisations to ensure the effective establishment of independently funded Centres for Independent Living across the country and to this end, a working group of CIL representatives should be set up without delay and resourced by the Department of Health to found such a consortium and draw up detailed implementation plans for the establishment of Centres for Independent Living across the country;
- welcomes the current consultation exercise being conducted on behalf of the Department of Health to ascertain the views of Disabled People regarding the establishment of organisations modelled on Centres for Independent Living in line with 'Improving Life Chances';
- firmly believes that, if the momentum of the process is to be maintained and the 2010 target is to be achieved, that transparency, openness and accountability are all essential and for this reason, the report produced as a consequence of the current consultation exercise must be published and shared fully with Disabled People. This will help the process to be

meaningful, genuine partnerships to be built and trust to be maintained.

This meeting therefore urges Department of Health to demonstrate its support for and commitment to this important agenda by:

1. Prioritising the funding and re-energisation of existing organisations OF Disabled People with a proven commitment to the inclusion, independence and equality of Disabled People;
2. Agreeing to support and resource adequately the establishment of a resourced network of existing Centres for Independent Living, as described above, with a view to ensuring that they play the leading role in delivering new Centres for Independent Living in areas where they do not exist yet; and
3. Publishing, without delay, the full report of the current consultation exercise, including any recommendations, conclusions and proposed actions suggested as a consequence of this process.