

**Reclaiming Our Futures Alliance (ROFA)**

**Campaign Strategy 2015 – 2016**

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# Introduction

Creating social change to promote Disabled people’s rights is at the heart of why the Reclaiming Our Futures Alliance (ROFA) was formed. The Alliance aims to be a united voice for Disabled people and grassroots Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs), groups and networks across England and to co-ordinate campaigning at local, regional and national levels.

ROFA members have been at the forefront of campaigning against austerity and welfare reform in opposition to the discriminatory and disproportionate targeting of Disabled people under the past and current Government. These campaigns have re-energised the Disabled Peoples Rights movement and mobilised thousands of new activists. This has created great new opportunities for our movement to build a stronger collective voice and to co-ordinate effectively to get that voice heard which will be essential given the scale of the attacks and with more devastating cuts to come.

# Background

Rights and equality are regressing in the UK for the first time[[1]](#footnote-1) and Disabled people are reporting a reduction in choice and control over our own lives[[2]](#footnote-2). Government policy impacting on Disabled people is being influenced by far wider politico-economic and ideological agendas.

In order to effectively oppose the negative changes taking place it is essential to understand the wider political and economic issues and to build alliances broader than the Disabled People’s Rights Movement.

Experiences opposing welfare reform since 2010 have caused Disabled people’s rights campaigners to rethink traditional approaches to disability policies[[3]](#footnote-3) and to develop relationships with new allies such as anti-austerity groups and the trade union movement. The face of campaigning has also changed in line with social media developments.

All of this brings new opportunities as well as fresh challenges, all of which we need to embrace and to address in order to protect Disabled people’s rights in the face of a scale of threat never before seen in our lifetimes.

United, together, we are stronger.

# Campaign priorities identified at the ROFA conference

Below is a summary of the main priorities and issues that emerged as themes throughout the discussions.

ROFA Campaign priorities:

* Benefits and welfare reform
* Disability hate crime
* Employment
* Equality in education
* Independent Living

There was strong consensus at the ROFA conference about the importance of:

* Building a collective voice:
* Closer working between DPOs
* Agreeing a shared vision
* Opportunity to discuss and shape ideas

**What is campaigning?**

Campaigning definition: “ to engage in a series of actions planned to achieve a certain goal”

Campaigning tools – often when people hear the word ‘campaign’, they immediately think about protests and direct actions. There is a strong tradition of campaigning within the Disabled People’s Rights Movement from the National League of the Blind and Disabled marching to London in 1920 under the slogan “Rights not Charity” to the early days of the independent living movement in the 1970s when Disabled people fought their way out of residential institutions to live in the community.

Campaigning, or ‘influencing change’, relies on a whole range of different methods to achieve its goals. Protests and direct actions have their place but there are many different ways people and organisations can be involved in campaigning. Most Disabled People’s Organisations have in their constitutions that they have been set up to challenge discrimination and promote disability equality. These are campaigning aims.

Campaigning can include

- Raising awareness and changing attitudes, eg using the media/social media, or through partnership work with other organisations and groups

-Building public support, eg signing and circulating petitions

-Constituency campaigning, eg writing to and meeting local MPs

-Engaging with Parliament, eg briefing Parliamentarians and attending lobbies

-Influencing government (local/regional/national), eg responding to consultations and sitting on service user engagement panels

-Using the law, eg informing your members about their rights in accessible ways or supporting legal challenges

-Researching and collecting evidence, eg encouraging members to respond to surveys or collecting case studies

-Protests and actions, from peaceful demonstrations to civil disobedience

# Developing a campaigns strategy for ROFA

The ROFA conference identified five priority areas for campaigning in 2015/2016. Due to the pace of change and scale of the challenge facing us, each of these areas encompasses a wide scope for potential action. Against that, is the reality that ROFA has no resources of its own and only has capacity in so far as its members are able to contribute.

Being able to react quickly is absolutely key within the current climate. However, true to our aims as ROFA, all action must also be underpinned by our core values and principles.

Following discussions at the ROFA conference and a consultation with members, ROFA have agreed the following framework for working together on campaigning:

1. For each campaigns priority ROFA will develop and agree an overarching campaigns plan. The plan will include:

* Position statement – clearly setting out the ROFA campaigns position on the issue. In building support for our campaign allies can sign up to the statement if they are in agreement with it.
* Agreed key messages and campaign goals
* List of resources ROFA members can contribute
* Next steps with named leads

1. Campaign plans to receive sign off from the ROFA steering group to ensure they follow ROFA values and principles
2. Resources and activity to be contributed by ROFA members purely on the basis of what capacity they have – although all members are encouraged to think pro-actively about what they can contribute in whatever way
3. Campaigning activity on behalf of ROFA to be welcomed on any issue within ROFA’s values and principles and subject to sign off by the Steering group but any member suggesting an activity must be prepared to lead and take responsibility for carrying through any proposals
4. Campaigns resources created by individual ROFA members carrying the ROFA logo to be available to share with all other ROFA members for their use
5. Each campaigns plan will be reviewed annually by ROFA the Steering group and at the annual ROFA conference.
6. A revised or new set of campaign priorities will be agreed at each annual ROFA conference and campaign strategies for each priority will be developed by the ROFA Steering group as soon as possible after conference.

# Appendix A

# Benefits and Welfare Reform: campaign plan 2015-2016

Put together by: Equal Lives

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| **ROFA campaigns position statement:**  Because of the disabling barriers in society, disabled people rely on welfare services to live active lives. Welfare reform is causing death, poverty and misery for disabled people. It is discriminatory as it is targeted at disabled people who are disproportionately affected by welfare cuts relative to the rest of the population. It is a political programme designed to destroy the welfare state. The poisonous propaganda used to justify welfare cuts by labelling disabled people as welfare scroungers is increasing disability hate crime and damaging people’s mental health and self-esteem. It is in violation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) as it is lowering the living standards and life chances of disabled people relative to the rest of the population.  The state must play a crucial and active role in supporting its citizens whether at times of crisis or through on-going support to tackle poverty, discrimination, exclusion and the disadvantages of being disabled. Disabled people have a right to receive adequate levels of welfare support, including accessible social housing, that free us from poverty, ill health and exclusion and that meet the additional costs of disability and/or impairment that we face. Welfare support must be based on need and the recognition of the inherent value and human rights of every person; it must not be restricted or limited to those that are viewed as ‘deserving’ or productive. | |
| End Goals and Objectives | * All disabled people have a right to inclusive welfare support and housing . Ensure that disabled people are provided with welfare support, income and suitable accessible housing at a level that enables independent living, inclusion and participation in the community as defined in the UNCRPD. * Remove welfare reform from the political agenda * Force the Government to scrap the Bedroom Tax, Work Capability Assessments, Benefit Sanctions, PIP and restore DLA * Remove the disabling barriers in the employment market so disabled people can access education, training and jobs ( see ROFA employment campaigns strategy). |
| 2015-2016 Goals and objectives | * To get alternative welfare strategies into the political programmes of other Parties * A cumulative equality impact assessment on the impact of welfare reform on disabled people * Increase media profile & research on deaths related to ESA * Campaign against private companies with government contracts for running benefit assessments |
| Audience | * Government * Opposition parties * Public * Media * International disability and human rights movements * Disabled people |
| Messages | Welfare reform:   * is discriminatory * affects disabled people disproportionately * is causing poverty and death * increasing suicides and mental health problems * increasing demand on health and social care * is in contravention of the UNCRPD * damages our human rights |
| Who do they need to hear it from? (messengers) | * Disabled people affected * ROFA membership * DPOs * Human Rights organisations * UN |
| Strengths/resources | * ROFA membership groups * DPOs * Disabled people’s lived experiences and voices * DPAC infographics * Case studies of benefit related deaths/suicides |
| Challenges | * Political environment – re-election of Tory Gov’t with majority * Media bias * Public perceptions * Capacity for researching alternatives, writing policy briefings |
| Evaluating impact | * Changes in policy/legislation * Upsurge in campaigning/protests * Changes in public attitudes * Positive media coverage * Adoption of ROFA policies by other political organisations and groups |
| Next Steps | * Write research proposals and get funding * Write policy briefings * Build alliances with other anti-welfare reform organisations/movements |

# Appendix B

# Disability Hate Crime: Campaign plan 2015-2016

Put together by: Inclusion London

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| **Position statement:**  Disability hate crime (DHC) is a human rights issue. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) states that disabled people are entitled to the same and equal justice as others and freedom from harassment and attacks due to our identity or difference. However the Criminal Justice System is still failing on disability hate crime. We call for equal recognition of disability hate crime as a serious criminal offence; we call for clear legislation and guidance that will better protect Disabled people and we call for dedicated DDPO community and policing resources and support to improve awareness and reporting of Disability Hate Crime. | |
| End Goals and objectives | * To achieve equality of legislation for disability hate crime (so that it is treated the same by law as hate crime against other protected characteristic qualities strands) * To improve disability hate crime reporting so that levels of estimated incidents of DHC (approximately 62,000 per year ) are matched by same number of reported incidents of DHC. * To increase numbers of successful prosecutions of DHC * To empower Disabled people so we no longer expect or put up with DHC * To have a range of dedicated DDPO community and policing resources and support to improve awareness and reporting of Disability Hate Crime. |
| 2015-2016 Goals and objectives | * Increase levels of Deaf and Disabled people and their organisations representation at strategic level in Criminal Justice policy and decision making * Improve DHC reporting making it easier, more accessible and a more positive experience for Deaf and Disabled people; and by improving the police procedure so disability hate crimes are properly logged and appropriately acted on * Raise awareness of disability hate crime in our communities including awareness raising in schools, the wider public and also among Deaf and Disabled people * Improve understanding of disability hate crime and appropriate ways to address it among the police * Disabled People's Organisations to have more opportunities for fully funded roles tackling disability hate crime, e.g as third party reporting centres, advocacy, or training the police and other statutory agencies |
| Audience | * Parliament * GLA/Mayor of London * MOPAC / Police Crime Commissioners * Police * Schools and colleges * Local Authorities * Crown Prosecution service (CPS) |
| Messages | * Legislation as it stands does not give disabled people equal access to the protection of law * Disability hate crime is a major issue that we need to work together to address * Disabled People's Organisations have a key role to play in tackling disability hate crime |
| Messengers (who) | * Disabled people * Professionals within the criminal justice system (CPS/MPS/British Transport Police) |
| Messengers (how) | * Meetings & representation at policy and decision making forums * Lobbying * Evidence-based data , reports and research |
| Strengths/resources | * Disability hate crime network (national) * London disability hate crime network / other DHC networks? * Relationships with MOPAC (Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime in London) and MPS (Metropolitan Police Service) and CPS * Govt commitments to reducing DHC |
| Partnerships | In London:   * MOPAC (Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime in London) * MPS (Metropolitan Police Service) * CPS ( Crown Prosecution Service) |
| Challenges | * Lack of public awareness and understanding of disability hate crime * Negative media portrayals of Deaf and Disabled people leading to increased hostility in the community * Continuing lack of awareness about disability hate crime among police * Difficulty of organising training for frontline police due to shift work patterns * Generic hate crime contracts awarded to organisations without specialist disability knowledge |
| Evaluation (how we will know) | * Change in legislation * Increase of reports of DHC by police * Increase in prosecutions for disability hate crime * Self-reporting from Disabled people * More Third Party Reporting sites in DDPOs * More Advocacy support on DHC in DDPOs |
| Next steps (autumn) | * Set up a DPO disability hate crime resource section on the Inclusion London website * Seek funding for a national disability hate crime network for DPOs to meet with other agencies on a regular basis |

Appendix C

# Employment: Campaign plan 2015-2016

Put together by: Inclusion London

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| **Position Statement:**  Many Disabled people are prevented from gaining or maintaining employment due to societal and economic barriers which are out of their control. Some of the main causes of non-employment amongst disabled people include: lack of inclusive education and training, discriminatory attitudes of employers, poor employment and working practices and poor quality / inappropriate employment support. These barriers must be removed. This work must includes tackling the access issues that many disabled people face in the work place, training for employers, enforcement of Disabled people’s rights under the Equality Act and a commitment to addressing the “macro” issues that make some groups of disabled people less likely than others to be included in the labour market.  There must also be recognition that there will always be disabled people who are unable or too ill to work. These individuals must be supported so they can lead lives of independence, dignity and value. They should not be penalised or demonised. Likewise, economic productivity must not be the only measure of people’s worth and value, volunteering offers as much value to society as paid employment. | |
| End Goals and objectives | * Equal access to employment and career development for Deaf and Disabled people * Provision of a range of high quality, personalised support to disabled people to get and stay in work. * Inclusive and accessible employer and working practices that enable Disabled people to get and stay in work. * Meaningful redress under the law for discrimination at work |
| 2015-2016 Goals and objectives | * Reverse negative changes to Access To Work (ATW) * Improve quality of ATW and increase awareness of ATW amongst Disabled people and employers * Increase understanding of the failings of current Work programme and work choice models and lobby for different employment support models in lead up to new Work programme and work choice contracts in 2017 * Challenge employment discrimination |
| Audience | * Parliamentarians * Government (linking to the Tory manifesto commitment to have the employment gap for Disabled people) * Public |
| Messages | * There is an overall cost benefit to investing in ATW - ATW is not a "benefit" and ATW customers are tax-payers too * ATW is key to having the employment gap * Contradiction between govt ATW policy changes and government targets for getting more Deaf and Disabled people into work/benefit changes * Equalities principle of equal access to jobs and careers regardless of type of impairment |
| Messengers (who) | * Deaf and disabled people & their organisations |
| Messengers (how) | * Evidence-base for impact of changes to ATW * Evidence base for poor performance of Work programme and work choice and alternatives possible |
| Strengths/resources | * Active network (StopChanges, NUBSLI..etc) * Case studies * Broad based grassroots support * Govt manifesto commitments & emphasis on employment * Legal support |
| Partnerships |  |
| Challenges | * Lack of ROI figure - need to lobby for this to be revealed or carry out own research * "Discretionary" nature of ATW - need to draw out trends and themes * Govt/ DWP misuse of statistics - need to get to the bottom of them * Over shadowing by more dramatic/brutal benefit changes - need case studies |
| Evaluation (how will we know) | * Introduction of ATW cap withdrawn * Deluge of individual cases struggling with ATW changes ATW review undertaken to improve ATW beyond just reversing recent changes and based on idea customers are the experts. * Commitments to radically rethink Work programme and Work choice prior to new contracts in 2017 |
| Next steps (autumn) | * ATW petition and march to publicise 26 Sept * Support for individuals to challenge and collate case studies * Accessible survey * Info to Debbie Abrahams and suggest PQs * Meeting with Justin Tomlinson |

# Appendix D

# Equality in Education: Campaign plan 2015-2016

Put together by: Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE)

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| **Position Statement**  Education is the key to creating an equality and inclusive society where all citizens are welcomed and valued. An education system that is fully inclusive at all levels, allows Disabled and non-disabled people to develop common and shared values through living and learning alongside each other. As a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UK is committed to ending the inequality and segregation of Disabled pupils and students (including those with Special Educational Needs) by building the capacity of the education sector, at all levels and in each of the devolved nations, to enable the full and equal participation and learning of disabled pupils and students.  Currently, in the UK, Disabled pupils and students are the only group of learners that can be prevented from participating in mainstream education due to their rights being restricted by various Education Acts (such as the Children & Families Act 2014 and the Equality Act 2010. For example disabled pupils and students only have the right to get into a building of a mainstream education provider – the right does not currently extend to having a right to participate on mainstream courses or a right to the support they require to fully participate in learning.  Since 2010 there has been an attack on inclusive education as the Coalition Government and now a Conservative majority Government have sought to implement an elitist education system through developing increased competition between education providers and placing emphasis on students’ examinations results and nothing else. Also the Government have also sought to implement an ideology that reduced the role of the state and seeks to enhance the opportunity for private enterprise to lead on educating this and the next generation of learners.  It is also important to highlight the impact of austerity, which has meant that Local Authorities have had to implement deeply damaging cuts to vital education support services that have left disabled pupils and students without the support they require to participate and flourish in mainstream education settings on mainstream courses. This is on top of the cuts to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills budget cuts (including to the Disabled Students Allowance) that will affect the support that disabled adult learners will receive whilst in further and higher education.  Austerity and a hostile political climate has resulted in an increased pressure on education providers to exclude or not admit disabled pupils and students - Dept for Education’s own statistics show a decline in the numbers of disabled pupils and students in mainstream education since 2010, stifling the opportunity to continue the development of inclusive education practice across all levels of the education system.  ROFA’s campaigning will focus on ending the segregation of disabled pupils and students in separate settings, units and courses and assessment systems promoting the benefits of a fully inclusive education system as a starting point for an equality and inclusive society. | |
| End Goals and objectives | * All disabled learners have the legal and human right to attend mainstream courses in mainstream education settings. * All disabled learners have the legal right to support to enable participation and learning. * Education buildings to be made accessible to all disabled learners. * All mainstream course curricula are accessible to and inclusive of disabled learners. * All education assessments and accreditations are inclusive. * Inclusive education focused training is compulsory for all education professionals and staff. |
| 2015-2016 Goals and objectives | * Analysis of SEN Tribunal Case law highlights the bias towards segregated education and the lack of pupil/student/family choice * Recognition that current SEND policy and law acts as a disincentive for education providers * Education funding analysis * Children & Families Act 2014 implementation review and case studies * Analysis of Higher Education Statistics that highlight the impact of DSA reforms on disabled students and case studies. |
| Audience | * Parliament * Government * Families/parents of disabled pupils/students (including those with SEN) * Disabled students and Disabled Pupils * Disabled Peoples Organisations * Education providers at all levels * Media |
| Messages | * Impact and extent of segregation of Disabled pupils and students * Benefits for the whole of society of Disabled and nondisabled people growing up and learning together |
| Messengers (who) | * Disabled people (including young disabled people) & their organisations * Family/parent allies * education professional allies * Public support * Specific media / journalists |
| Messengers (how) | * UN inquiry * Parliament briefings and PQs * Evidence-based research using experiences of Disabled Pupils/students and their families/parents * Specific media coverage |
| Strengths/resources | * Case studies / recording personal experience ([www.howwasschool.org.uk](http://www.howwasschool.org.uk) ) * Media interest * Profile of inclusive education amongst Parliamentarians * Broad-base of grassroots support * LAs in crisis over SEND support funding * Possible DSA related Legal action by disabled students |
| Partnerships | * Lawyers * Supportive MPs/Peers * Teaching/Education unions * Student led organisations. Networks and campaigns * Mainstream education campaigns – Anti Academies Alliance, Reclaiming Education Alliance |
| Challenges | * Capacity for   - briefings  - robust research   * Privatisation of the education system and competitive ethos between education providers * Education provision emphasis on exam factories and preparation for paid work rather than preparation students for the type of society we want to live in. * Difficulties engaging family/parent allies * Government |
| Evaluation (how will we know) | * Changes in legislation & statutory guidance. * Changes in SEN Tribunal case law * Maintained and increased media ‘airtime’ |
| Next steps (autumn 2015) | * Build capacity of DPOs advocate for inclusive education at a local level and to work with disabled young people and their families seeking inclusive education in mainstream. * Continue working with disabled students and their unions to challenge attacks on their access to further/higher education. * Work with ROFA members to gather evidence of the Govt attack on disabled pupil/student access to inclusive education * Work with the opposition parties to support the building of a co-ordinated challenge to Government education reforms that adversely impact on the inclusion of disabled pupils and students * Meeting with Dept for Education SEND leads to influence current and planned policy/law changes * Meeting with Dept for Business, Innovation and Skills lead to influence current and planned policy / law on higher education * Feed into UN investigation |

# Appendix E

# Independent living: Campaign plan 2015-2016

Put together by: Inclusion London

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| **Position Statement**  We want to see a society that supports and enables full citizenship for all including Disabled people. There must be extensive and sustainable funding for genuine independent living and user self-directed support that is free at the point of need, paid from general taxation with ring-fenced funding. Disabled people must have the enforceable right to live independently and to live a life of full inclusion, spontaneity, choice, family, friends, education, work and community. The state must provide appropriate funding and support to enable disabled people and all people to live lives of equality, independence, and dignity. | |
| End Goals and objectives | * Right to independent living for disabled people * Article 19 enshrined in domestic legislation * Adequate social care / independent living funding * National body independent of LAs responsible for administering social care support co-produced with Disabled People |
| 2015-2016 Goals and objectives | * ILF replacement monies secured to LAs post April 2016 * Direct Payments rates in line with the living wage * Case law that establishes well-being and independent living in Care Act 2014 as over-ruling considerations of available resource and maximum expenditure policies * Media & public profile of ILF & independent living issues maintained * Increase understanding of widest definition of independent living as described in 12 pillars of independent living |
| Audience | * Parliament * Government * Local Authorities * Media |
| Messages | * Impact and extent of crisis in current independent living / social care support on Disabled people * Benefits for the whole of society of investing in independent living for Disabled people |
| Messengers (who) | * Disabled people & their organisations * Public support * Specific media / journalists * United Nations via optional protocol complain investigations |
| Messengers (how) | * UN inquiry * Constituency campaigning for ILF replacement monies secured to LAs post April 2016 * Parliament briefings and PQs * Evidence-based research using experiences of Disabled people * Specific media coverage |
| Strengths/resources | * Case studies / recording personal experience * Media interest * Profile of ILF amongst Parliamentarians * Broad-base of grassroots support * LAs in crisis over funding * Recent Care Act litigation by LA’s * Possible Legal action by ex-ILF users |
| Partnerships | * Lawyers * Supportive MP’s * Association of Directors of Adult Social Service (ADASS) * Local Government Association * Health watch? * Carers organisations |
| Challenges | * Capacity for   - briefings  - robust research  - engagement by Disabled people whose support packages are now cut   * Co-ordination * Difficulties engaging Government * Size & nature of the social care funding issue |
| Evaluation (how will we know) | * Changes in legislation & statutory guidance. * Changes in Care Act case law * Maintained and increased media ‘airtime’ * ILF replacement monies secured to LAs post April 2016 or public awareness of failure to provide this funding |
| Next steps (autumn 2015) | * Pressure on Government in lead up to Spending review to secure ILF replacement monies to LAs post April 2016 * Build on / use Lords committee equality act recommendations * DDPOs deliver workshops on Care Act rights to maximise number of Disabled people who know their rights and can challenge LAs. * Supporting individual test cases under the Care Act * Collating evidence of ILF transition and social care funding crisis including via ILF website <http://ilfaction.net/> to present as a report at a lobby of Parliament * Meeting with Alastair Burt: Minister of State for Community and Social Care at the Department of Health * Meeting with Debbie Abrahams: Shadow Minister for Disabled People * Feed into UN investigation |

1. http://jennymorrisnet.blogspot.co.uk/2014/07/there-was-lot-of-political-consensus-on.html [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/choice-and-control-have-plunged-under-tories-say-government-figures/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/rethinking-disability-policy [↑](#footnote-ref-3)