**ROFA Conference presentation: National Independent Living Strategy Subgroup**

Hello. My name is Dorothy Gould. I come from a new user-led organisation called Liberation, which has been set up specifically to promote the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the UNCRPD) - on behalf of people who experience mental distress. If you’re interested in it, please get in touch with me through Rachel O’Brien who has my email address.

I’m also a member of the sub-group for a campaign about independent living launched by the Reclaiming Our Futures Alliance and it’s work from that which I’m going to present. **We are very aware**:

* That politicians and professionals often define ‘independent living’ in narrow ways, instead of setting out a full human rights model for it in partnership with Deaf and Disabled people
* That measures taken in the name of austerity have had a hugely damaging effect on independent living
* That the Coronavirus Act and approaches related to it are dismissive of Deaf and Disabled people and are raising fears, too, of a eugenics ethos.

**Core demands** from the National Independent Living campaign are:

* A new independent living strategy enshrined in UK law and based on Article 19 of the UNCRPD, which sets out Deaf and Disabled people’s right to independent living and community involvement, on a holistic basis and with the necessary support in place. The strategy includes a call to put an end to compulsory admission to psychiatric hospitals and forced treatment, in line with Article 19. It also has a particular emphasis on people who experience more than one form of discrimination
* Delivery of this strategy through a new national independent living service, co-created between the government and Deaf and Disabled people
* Funding of the strategy through general taxation
* Management of the strategy by government
* Leadership by Deaf and Disabled people
* Local delivery of the strategy, in co-production with Deaf and Disabled people.

The subgroup has met twice now. **Some key action points from our first two meetings are as follows:**

* As Deaf and Disabled people’s organisations, agree a common message about what we mean by independent living under Article 19, one which clearly includes people who experience more than one form of discrimination, and agree steps needed
* Put together a communications strategy to explain Deaf and Disabled people’s vision of independent living and find creative ways of promoting this, including ones used by other rights’ movements. We all need to work together on this
* Challenge the lack of involvement of Deaf and Disabled people’s organisations in the government’s disability strategy
* Use whatever existing law we can to challenge failures to implement Article 19 of the UNCRPD
* Build as many allies as possible at local and national levels, including amongst politicians, trade unions, professional workers, the Equality and Human Rights Commision (which itself does not fully endorse Article 19) and the general public
* Campaign for adequate resources for our independent living campaign and for the implementation of independent living based on Article 19, highlighting, too, the huge and wasteful amount of money spent on institutions
* Then use this campaign as a basis to call for the implementation of the whole of the UNCRPD.

Dorothy Gould.

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