

Pushing for Change

The Role of Disabled
People's Organisations in
Developing Young Disabled
Leaders of the Future



A Short Summary

‘Young people's non-acceptance of things as they are is absolutely refreshing. It's important to have those sorts of ideas put forward’ Young Participant

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A Short Summary

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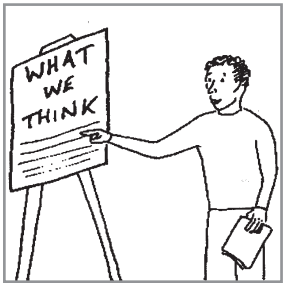
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Pushing for Change - A Short Summary

'By the age of 26, young disabled people are more than three times as likely as other young people to agree with the statement "whatever I do has no real effect on what happens to me"'
Disability Rights Commission, 2005



Introduction

The 'Pushing for Change' report looks at some of the ways that different organisations are including young disabled people and encouraging their leadership. It includes the voices and experiences of young disabled people.



This report is a part of the 'Young Disabled Leaders of the Future' project. The project was set up because there was a lack of suitable, inclusive projects and opportunities looking at leadership that young disabled people could take part in.

There are more general leadership development projects aimed at non-disabled people, but most are about running organisations or groups, or being on local councils.

Our research shows that Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) with projects or activities for young disabled people will encourage and inspire them to become future leaders.

59%

of DPOs said young people did not have a leadership role in the organisation



What is a 'Disabled People's Organisation' (DPO)?

Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) are organisations that are controlled BY disabled people to **promote*** the rights of disabled people. This includes Centres for Independent Living (CILs).

This is different to organisations FOR disabled people, usually run by non-disabled people.

DPOs came out of the **pioneering** and campaigning work of disabled people, many desperate to be released from **institutions**, who in the 1970s first developed the 'Social Model of Disability'.

The Social Model of Disability describes how and where society fails to value and include disabled people by creating barriers and attitudes that exclude us from getting our rights and equality, and stop us from realising our true potential.

Often disabled people are not supported to be leaders in their own lives because of the way that services and opportunities are controlled.

Leadership can include having choice and control over everyday decisions, like what to eat, where to live, who to have as friends - right through to choices about social, learning and work opportunities.

* Any word in **bold** in the text can be found in the Jargon Buster at the end of this summary.



6%
of DPOs said
there were
young disabled
people included
in their work

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We need a broader, more inclusive **definition** of leadership so that it is more relevant for disabled people, and young disabled people in particular.

A better **definition** of leadership could help to reach the Government target *'to achieve equality for all disabled people by 2025'*.

The Research

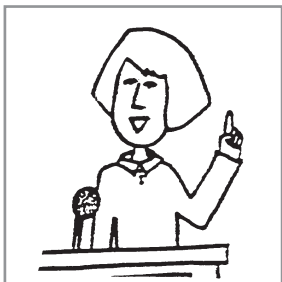
The main aims of the research project were:

To look at how DPOs and young disabled people understand 'leadership'

To look at the ways that DPOs include young disabled people and support them to develop leadership skills, and any gaps in that support

To look at what DPOs need to do to get young disabled people into leadership roles

To make sure that people from a range of backgrounds and experiences are represented



37%

of DPOs said there were no barriers to young disabled people in their organisation



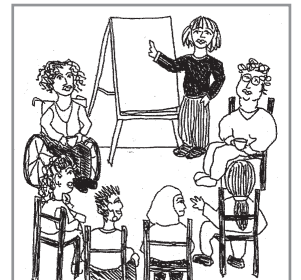
We gathered research for this project in a number of ways:

Representatives of DPOs filled in questionnaires

Young disabled people took part in face-to-face interviews or telephone interviews and also filled in questionnaires

Groups from a special school and two DPOs took part in group interviews

Young disabled people took part in a one-day event with their friends and family members



Key Findings and Recommendations

Key Findings

1. Leadership:

The questionnaires (filled out by young disabled people and DPOs) showed that a disabled leader is someone who promotes social justice and empowers themselves and other disabled people.



76%
of young disabled people thought anybody could be a leader

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There was no real difference between adults' and young people's definitions of leadership - both groups said that a disabled leader was someone who:

Promotes Social Justice - *speaks out against unfairness and discrimination*

Empowers Others - *helps people to feel they can change things*

Manages People - *is in charge*

Has particular Personal Qualities/Skills



'Someone who has a vision for change and the ability to influence, who has an understanding of leadership and equality - followed by the opportunity to participate in decision making'

2. Disabled People's Organisations:

DPOs that are looking at leadership with young disabled people have different levels of commitment and involve them in various ways.

There is no apparent agreement on what is good practice. 26% of the DPOs who took part in this research are not working directly on developing young disabled leaders because they lack:

88%

of the young disabled people thought young people could be leaders



Funding and resources to support the work

Commitment sometimes

Experience and expertise with young people generally

Access to young disabled people



3. Young disabled people:

'I am very heavily interested in disability rights. I've always been interested since I was a child. I hate discrimination, it gets on my nerves'



Young disabled people are definitely interested in disability politics.

Young disabled people can recognise inequality and are keen to challenge it.



Young disabled people have important points of view to share.

Young disabled people need disabled adult role models and disabled adults in their life who will show them long-term commitment and support.



Young disabled leaders are important **role models** for other young disabled people.



83%
of the young disabled people thought you did not have to do everything on your own to be a leader

Recommendations



- 1** The Government and other **public bodies** need to change leadership programmes to make them more inclusive and more relevant to young disabled people. This is to make sure that the views of young disabled people are fully included.



- 2** Government and local programmes which support the development of DPOs need to make sure that involving and supporting Young Disabled People is a top priority and is included as a goal in long term funding support.



- 3** DPOs should create a definition of the term 'leader' that is inclusive and relevant to young disabled people.

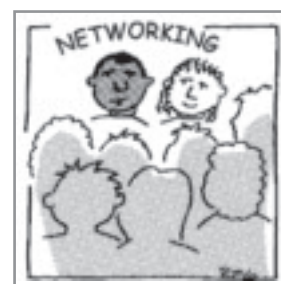


- 4** DPOs should look at the way they work to make sure that their activities include and do not exclude disabled young people.



- 5** DPOs should teach young disabled people about disabled people's history, the social model, human rights and equal **citizenship**. They should work hard to find resources that will help to include young disabled people within their organisations.

6 DPOs should make sure that young disabled people and their **allies** know about the activities/services that they offer. They should work with local community groups, schools and residential settings to ensure this. They should also work with social services and youth services to ensure that young disabled people and their parents are referred to them.



7 DPOs should find ways of working with disabled young people that develop their leadership.



8 The Alliance for Inclusive Education with the Disability LIB Alliance should find funding to run a series of 'fun' local events with young disabled people and disabled people's organisations across the U.K to help get their views and build more leaders for the future.



9 More research is needed on young disabled people and leadership - research that looks more closely at the needs of young disabled people in **looked after settings** and that includes an even wider range of backgrounds and young people using a range of communication methods.



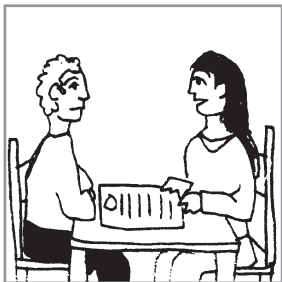
10 The Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE) should host a national conference for DPOs to **network**, to work out plans for supporting young disabled leaders of the future and to share good practice.



Conclusion



Much more work still needs to be done to make sure that young disabled people are included in all leadership programmes. Our research shows that none of the young people we interviewed have ever been asked to think about 'leadership' before, or what the concept of leadership means to them as young disabled people. They are, however, all keen to think about and discuss leadership.



Many young disabled people are missing out on chances for leadership that non-disabled young people have already. This means that they cannot play a part in making full equality and human rights happen for disabled people. This needs to change.

Many of the disabled young leaders who were interviewed say that interest and commitment from disabled adults makes a very important difference to their **self-esteem** and goals for the future.



We need to build lasting and welcoming structures of support for young disabled people within the disability community.

Many DPOs need to change how they work to build relationships with young disabled people. This will take a long term commitment and they must be willing to change.

88%

of the young disabled people thought you did not have to be able to speak to be a leader



DPOs have an important role to play in building confidence, **self-esteem** and a sense of history in young disabled people's lives. This will help to ensure that the next generation of disabled people are better informed about their rights and are more likely to live as equal **citizens**.



We hope that this report creates a big desire for change in the disability community. The Alliance for Inclusive Education believes that we cannot have equality and equal citizenship without disabled people and the full inclusion of young disabled people - in other words,



NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US!

A leader is 'Someone who is able to take charge - able to manage a group of people and bring everyone's ideas together - like a facilitator. The person at the front - a spokesperson, or a representative of that group. A good leader would be someone who naturally took on that role and was accepted by the others'



83%
of the young disabled people said being a leader did not mean doing everything on your own

Jargon Buster

Promote - to cause or contribute to the growth or development of something

Pioneering - leading the way

Institutions - residential schools, hospitals, care homes etc.

Definition - the meaning of a word or phrase

Opportunity - chance

Participate - to take part in

Role model - somebody that you can admire and want to be like

Public bodies - organisations which are funded by Government to carry out public functions or duties

Citizen - a member of society

Citizenship - the status of being a citizen with duties, rights, and privileges

Allies - supporters, people that are linked with another or others for a common cause or purpose

Looked after settings - care homes, foster homes, residential schools, etc.

Network - to link up with other organisations or people who are doing similar things

Self-esteem - pride in yourself

Pushing for Change

“Being a leader means pushing for change, being willing to stand up and do the work that others don't. Seeing the situation and wanting to change it and encouraging other people to do the same, utilising your experience to empower other people and get their own leadership going” Young Participant

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