



## Thurrock Coalition response to the ODI discussion document: Fulfilling Potential

### Introduction

As a User-Led Organisation for disabled people, older people and carers in Thurrock, Thurrock Coalition is taking part in the consultation to inform the government discussion document entitled “Fulfilling Potential.”

In relation to the Minister’s Foreword, the inclusion of the aims of independent living are welcome, however, these aims will become increasingly difficult to achieve given the closure of the Independent Living Fund and the impact of the welfare reform agenda. It is important to be aware of the purpose behind disability –related welfare benefits such as DLA (soon to be PIP) as an added costs benefit, which goes a long way in currently supporting people towards living independently.

### Realising aspirations

In terms of societal attitudes and disabled peoples aspirations, there has been an increase in hostility towards disabled people around the welfare reform agenda<sup>1</sup> and this needs to be addressed through awareness raising for the general public.

The attitudinal barriers should be addressed through provision of funds to support capacity building for User-Led Organisations to deliver equality and diversity training to the Third Sector, Local Authorities and the public. Training could also be delivered in terms of the provisions relating to disability contained within the Equality Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The training should contain social model theory, as well as a focus upon the performance of the duty itself. The Discrimination Law Review (GEO 2009) usefully stated a number of principles that could be used to underpin effective performance of the duty. These are as follows.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2012/feb/05/benefit-cuts-fuelling-abuse-disabled-people>

- Consultation and involvement of employees, Service Users and other interested parties
- Transparency - Allowing people to see the progress authorities are making
- Capability – strong leadership and high-level commitment

Implementation of the above as principles of best practice within Local Authorities will go some way to realising the aspirations of disabled people. However, support for the Third Sector to act as a “critical friend” will also be an important factor.

The provision of timely information and advice is vital for disabled people to achieve their full potential. There needs to be a focus on the advancement of equality of opportunity for disabled people. Emphasising the contribution disabled people can make to society so that they are not underestimated and consequently held back from achieving their full potential.

In relation to transition points, it is important to highlight several principles of good practice in this regard (extracted from Aiming Higher – Transition to Adulthood, A good practice guide<sup>2</sup>):

1. Quality of relationships
2. Continuity
3. Personalised support
4. Meeting basic needs
5. Information, misinformation and challenging stigma
6. Getting involved
7. Aiming higher

It is also important to ensure proper training in disability equality for support workers who work with disabled young people and adults.

### **Choice and control**

In terms of maximising choice and control it is important to ensure the inclusion and involvement of disabled people in any decisions that affect them. Disabled people must be listened to, heard and then actions taken.

An emphasis on early intervention and prevention should also be considered as a more economically effective option in the long term.

The current interpretation of FACS criteria by many local authorities across the U.K means that only assessed needs that are deemed to be “critical” or “substantial” are funded through adult social care. This often results in increased social isolation and a subsequent decrease in the level of exercisable choice and control for disabled people. Thus opportunities to live independently are significantly diminished. All identified needs should be

---

<sup>2</sup> [www.revolving-doors.org.uk/documents/aiming-higher/](http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/documents/aiming-higher/)

recorded and reviewed in order to influence future policy and strategy implementation.

There needs to be more flexibility of interpretation of the FACS criteria to take into account the full range of an individual's daily activities, to include, for example, housework and social activities and the opportunity to participate in their community.

There is also growing concern over the implementation of Continuing Health Care and how it relates to Adult Social Care funding. Disabled people and professionals need to be equally aware of the implications of consenting to either funding regime. The consideration of the practicalities of co-operation and flexibility, funding and provision of requisite support between the two systems needs to be acknowledged.

Greater support for the Third Sector and forums/partnership boards is also required to ensure inclusion, involvement and participation in decisions that affect the local area.

### **Changing attitudes and behaviours**

Effective attitudinal change can be achieved through equality training in schools as part of citizenship classes, along with integration of understanding the principles of the Equality Act 2010 as a subject within the National Curriculum.

Delivery of better training and awareness is required around recognition of how and where to report hate crime and consideration of increased recognition of consequences for perpetrators of disability hate crime.

The development of peer support networks and assistance with capacity building would go a long way in providing support to those who experience disability discrimination.

In relation to the legal rights, obligations and responsibilities of disabled people it would be useful to recognise that other legislation and international standards apply to disabled people and non-disabled people alike. E.g. the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the ECHR, the UNDHR and the HRA 1998. It is somewhat concerning that the consultation/discussion paper only makes reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of Individuals with Disabilities.

### **Implementation and monitoring**

The development of hard performance indicators with timescales and deadlines for performance would be an effective method of implementation and monitoring. Furthermore, we suggest that monitoring could be undertaken

by a committee/watchdog of the ODI and/or in conjunction with the EHRC and a wide selection of User-Led Organisations from across the United Kingdom.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the issues raised in the discussion document are important for disabled people, but the practical implications and associated outcomes need to be elaborated upon and developed further in order to be effective and meaningful.

The opportunity for input into the discussion document is welcome. It is important that all those who feedback on its content are kept informed of the development of the strategy so that individuals and ULOs alike can see the effect and impact of their contribution upon government policy, to ensure that the involvement in the process is meaningful and has an impact.

Thurrock Coalition - March 2012