

Summary

See me as a human being: How attitudes within the social care system impact on the independent living choices of disabled people

About the DRILL Programme

DRILL (Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning) was an innovative 5 year, UK wide programme led by disabled people, for disabled people and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Launched in 2015, the programme was managed by a partnership of Disability Action Northern Ireland, Disability Rights UK, Disability Wales and Inclusion Scotland.

The aim of the programme was to build better evidence about approaches which enable disabled people to achieve independent living. The findings from the projects it funded can be used to inform future provision across a wide range of policy areas, and give a greater voice to disabled people in decisions which affect them.

This is one of a series of summaries of the project supported by DRILL. Final reports, toolkits and summaries of all the projects are available from the DRILL website at www.drilluk.org.uk.

Overview of the project

This project examined the ways in which attitudes in the adult social care system impact on disabled people's independent living choices.

Approach

The project carried out four focus groups with disabled people and one with social care managers.

Fourteen in-depth interviews were conducted with disabled people.

An online survey was distributed through the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) looking at the dynamics of the caring relationship from those who work in adult social care. This received 550 responses.

Findings

Disabled people are consistently not having their human rights or needs met in adult social care.

Negative attitudes are fundamental to why disabled people are not living as independently as they could be. This is both from individual workers as well as being systemic.

Disabled people are often not given enough information about their independent living choices. Sometimes, this is because the resources for independent living choices are unavailable.

Decisions about care packages to support independent living can be made based on stereotypes or assumptions about a condition or impairment, without consultation of individuals.

Disabled people have a unique lived experience of their impairment or health condition, but that knowledge is often not accepted as expertise within the social care system. They are often spoken for, talked at, and their care taken over without being consulted.

There is a paternalistic attitude within adult social care. There is an assumption that other people know what is best for disabled people.

Many disabled people experience wide disparities in the quality of care they receive.

Many disabled people find it difficult to raise complaints about poor quality care, with some feeling that they should be grateful for what they are getting. This can often leave them feeling worthless.

Findings (continued)

Some disabled women have had their care provision cut for requesting female-only care workers.

Many disabled people talk about how little choice and control they have over their independent living choices. One reason for this is a lack of available resources.

Recommendations

The project outlined many recommendations, some of which are listed here. All recommendations are included in the full report, which is linked below.

- Government must ensure social care is sustainable and for the long term, with a protected funding solution
- They must also ensure that a minimum level of care is guaranteed for everyone and is universal
- Voices of disabled people must be listened to in order to help shape all relevant policy, practice, service planning and delivery
- It must be acknowledged that disabled people are experts in their own lives, and living with their impairments
- The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) must develop a holistic model of social care which considers how an individual's needs change
- DHSC must ensure disabled people receive enough information about their independent living choices and that access to this information is not dictated by the availability of resources
- Review the assessment processes, aiming to move towards continuous needs-based assessments
- Training for all workers within the social care system must be provided
- Workers in social care must be paid fairly, including payment for travel time, mileage and expenses in addition to their salary. There must be an end to zero-hour contracts
- A fairer application and review process for disabled people accessing benefits must be developed and implemented
- The Social Care Council should develop and promote value-based recruitment to ensure we have the right people working in social care.

Final report

[See me as a human being: How attitudes within the social care system impact on the independent living choices of disabled people](#)

Please click on report name to read the full report.

Project partners

Disability Action
Northern Ireland

