

Summary

Getting our voices heard – safeguarding you, safeguarding me!

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 this project

This project explored how people with learning disabilities and organisations can best influence the policy and practice of adult safeguarding.

Approach

The project recruited and trained six peer researchers, who had lived experience of a learning disability.

Semi-structured interviews were then carried out with policy makers from across the UK. They sought to explore the ways policy was developed, perceptions on the consultation process and what influenced policy makers most.

Case studies with organisations such as Positive Futures and People First were conducted. This included focus groups and interviews of staff, individuals with learning disabilities.

An online survey was then produced and sent to organisations who contributed to safeguarding policy consultations and throughout the Association for Real Change (ARC) network.

Findings

Issues raised for those with learning disabilities include the need for clarity around definitions, practical difficulties around implementing safeguarding policy, capacity and consent, the need for advocacy and the balance between autonomy and control.

Often, the fundamental aspects of the policy or legislation were already mostly written before feedback was sought. This limits the opportunity to shape policy.

Professionals' knowledge and 'frontline' practitioner wisdom was seen as useful in discovering what was and wasn't working in practice but didn't provide a full picture of how a policy or law could work.

There was a consensus from policymakers that involving people with a learning disability, and supporting organisations, was important from the outset and throughout the policy making process.

The best way to include people in this process was through face-to-face conversations and discussions. For many learning disabled people, this is a more empowering route to involvement than using written documentation.

Findings (continued)

Organisations emphasised there was a need to build trusting relationships and alliances to have a collective voice.

Survey respondents cited senior leadership in organisations as being the most likely to engage in influencing policy.

Approximately 80% of organisations who responded said that their attempts to influence policy were successful, at least to some degree.

Recommendations

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

- People with learning disabilities must be supported to effectively participate in the policy making process
- Policy makers should invest time and resources communicating with those who are directly affected by the policy
- Policy makers must develop initiatives, such as workshops, to help people with learning disabilities to understand the political process and empower them to influence policy
- Improve the quality of easy read documents, ensuring that they cover all important information and explain key points
- Use face-to-face conversations and discussions rather than written consultations when seeking input on policy development
- Ensure the policy process is informed by high quality and up to date evidence,
- Support organisations should consider rural outreach programmes, or the facilitation of smaller groups
- Empower people with a learning disability to share their personal stories and lived experience
- Support organisations must engage in the policy making process
- Opportunities must be provided to people with a learning disability to experience participation and advocacy so that they can develop skills which may enable them to engage in influencing policy.

Final report

[Getting our voices heard](#)

Please click on report name to read the full report.

Project partners

**Queen's University
Belfast**



**Action for Real
Change UK**



**Compass Advisory
Network (NI)**



Praxis Care (NI)



**Mencap Cymru
(Wales)**



**Richmond Fellowship
(Scotland)**



Ann Craft Trust (England)

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