



**Independent  
Living in Scotland**  
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# It's our world too

About Scotland's disabled people's  
Independent Living Movement

Independent  
Living  
Scotland



# What is the Independent Living Movement?

The disabled people's Independent Living Movement has grown in Scotland because disabled people believe that they are best placed to make decisions about their lives – not anyone else.

The Movement challenges the individual approach taken by many organisations to solving the barriers, such as physical barriers or other people's attitudes, which disabled people face in their daily living. Often the solution achieved by the individual approach only benefits the person concerned. What needs to happen is equality of opportunity for all disabled people and it's disabled people who should have a say in how that is achieved.

More and more disabled individuals and organisations led by disabled people are coming together to make their voices heard. They are working collectively to change the policies and practices that disable them. They look for different ways to influence or even work alongside policy-makers and service-providers to design "joined-up" services to enable more choice for all disabled people. They want to get away from the 'one size fits all' approach.

## What is a movement?

A movement is a group of people with a common aim who try to achieve certain general goals together – for example the Women's Suffrage movement, which helped bring about women's right to vote, or the Fairtrade movement, which campaigns for better prices, working conditions and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world.



## What is Independent Living?

Independent Living is basically about human rights for disabled people. It means disabled people of all ages having the same freedom, choice, dignity and control as non-disabled people.

It does not mean living on your own in isolation or fending for yourself. It means having rights to practical assistance and support to participate fully in society and live an ordinary life.

It includes things like the right to live without having to plan everything in advance; to go to school; to work or study in an inclusive environment; to have an adequate income; to take part in leisure activities; to be accepted as a full and active member of the community; and to have access to services that actually work together, delivered at the right time in the right way.

It's about being free to make your own decisions (perhaps with some assistance if you want it) about what you want to do and when you want to do it.

## History of the Independent Living Movement

The disabled people's Independent Living Movement started in Berkley, California in the mid 1960's. Ed Roberts, a disabled university student, was campaigning for the human rights of Puerto Ricans when he realised that his own human rights as a disabled person were being denied too.

He and some other disabled students formed a radical group called the "Rolling Quads". They persuaded the state to give them money to pay for support and accommodation to allow them to participate fully in university life.

This was later extended to other disabled people in the wider community and Ed Roberts opened the first Centre for Independent Living to support them to manage their money and the people they employed as their "personal assistants".

Ed Roberts' idea became a worldwide phenomenon. In Europe, they call independent living 'community living' but it is based on the same principles.

## Who makes up the Independent Living Movement in Scotland?

The Movement in Scotland is made up of a range of organisations, networks and individuals.

There are national groups led by disabled people - such as Inclusion Scotland, Scottish Disability Equality Forum and People First Scotland. At local level there are organisations such as local networks and forums or Disabled People's Housing Services.

There are currently two Centres for Inclusive Living in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Both Centres, along with Self Directed Support Scotland and Scottish Personal Assistants Employers Network (SPAEN), provide information and advice to help disabled people arrange their own support, including training, recruiting staff and payroll services.

Many disabled individuals in Scotland are also doing their bit to advance the cause of independent living.

## How does the Independent Living Movement work together?

The Movement takes two approaches to achieving its goals – supporting each other ('collectivism') and working together ('collective action').

Collectivism means individuals sharing information and experiences and learning from and supporting each other. It also means having shared goals rather than individual goals.

The Movement also achieves its aims by collective action - pulling together ideas, resources and experiences and working together to make independent living a reality.

## What's the difference between Disabled People's Organisations and non Disabled People's Organisations?

This is an important distinction. Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) – such as Inclusion Scotland or People First Scotland - are organisations run by a management or executive committee on which either all or the majority of the voting membership are disabled people. Organisations for disabled people are not necessarily controlled by disabled people. However the Movement in Scotland is keen to work with allies, including those organisations for disabled people who aspire to the same principles and outcomes of independent living.

These allies could be other organisations, individuals or teams in local authorities or other public bodies, enlightened councillors or MSPs who commit to the principles of independent living and who work with disabled people and share resources and decision making with them on an equal basis.

# Stories from the Movement

The following stories show what disabled people and their organisations are doing as part of the Movement to create real change for all disabled people.

## **Inclusion Scotland**

Inclusion Scotland, is a nationwide Disabled People's Organisation which was set up so that the grass roots of the disability movement in Scotland would have a strong voice heard by policy-makers. One recent IS activity was to carry out research into accessible housing for disabled people across all 32 Scottish Local Authorities. IS used the Freedom of Information legislation to help them to identify the gaps and failings in housing provision for disabled people, as well as to highlight good practice and policies. IS has since been using the results of their research to lobby decision-makers and raise awareness of what needs to change. The Information Commissioner, who is responsible for the Freedom of Information Act, has used the Inclusion Scotland example to show other voluntary organisations how they too can use the legislation.

## **Campaign Action Group**

The Fife based Campaign Action Group is a group of disabled people who meet regularly to look at issues around home care budgets and decisions made by the local authority. The group uses the local media to raise awareness of the issues affecting them and lobbies local councillors and decision-makers.

They lobbied a local council meeting because they had not been able to obtain information they needed to make informed choices about care charges. Their direct lobbying led to them getting their information within 2 weeks and moving on to the next case. Success!

## **Mark Cooper**

Mark Cooper is a disabled activist who set out to improve the accessibility of Scotland's pubs and clubs for disabled people after he was forced to leave an Edinburgh pub in the middle of his drink – because it didn't have an accessible toilet.

His campaign 'Barred!' has attracted over 1000 people from all over the world to its Facebook site, including many young disabled people for whom independent living means having a full and varied social life... including going for a drink without major inconvenience.

Mark approached Capability Scotland to help get his campaign on the national political agenda. As a result, the Scottish Government is supporting it and Mark's MSP is proposing an amendment to the Criminal Justice and Licensing Bill on behalf of Capability Scotland to improve access information about Scottish pubs and clubs, so that disabled people can choose where to go.

## The ILiS project

The Independent Living in Scotland (ILiS) project began in June 2008 when the Scottish Government announced funding to develop independent living in Scotland.

ILiS aims to strengthen the Independent Living Movement and support disabled people to have their voices heard at national and local level so that decision-makers work with them to deliver independent living.

An expert group of disabled people guide the ILiS project, which is based in the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

## Information

For more information about ILiS visit [www.ilis.co.uk](http://www.ilis.co.uk)

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