

User-led organization teaching and inspiring others

United Kingdom/ SPECTRUM Centre for Independent Living (CIL)

SUMMARY OF PROJECT

The SPECTRUM Centre for Independent Living is an established user-led organization (ULO) run by persons with disabilities. It peer-supports the development of new ULOs through the sharing of experiences and information, offering a platform for lessons learned, and providing advice and mentoring.

"We believe that all organizations promoting empowerment and social change should be peer based, and should be fully accountable to and representative of the community they work in."

—Ian LOYNES, Chief Executive, SPECTRUM Centre for Independent Living

FACTS & FIGURES

- Developed 3 new ULOs in Hampshire, 1 in Portsmouth, and 1 in Southampton. Engaged, trained, and supported 95 persons with disabilities to be involved in co-production with local authorities or to develop a new ULO.
- In cooperation with the local authorities of Hampshire, SPECTRUM CIL organized a 'home care competition' whereby small ULOs could propose an innovative new way of providing independent living services. As a result, two ULOs received £4,000 each to develop their ideas and to actually provide these services.

PROBLEMS TARGETED

UK Government policy requires all local authorities to support and encourage user-led organizations to develop new services through user involvement. Often, local policies are hostile to ULO development; and while local authorities may want to support ULOs, they do not know how to go about doing so.

Likewise, new ULOs often do not know where to go for guidance.

SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

Sharing experiences and success stories of existing ULOs and providing peer-based mentoring to new ULOs helps them to develop more quickly and to avoid making the same mistakes. SPECTRUM CIL collects existing good practices in ULO development and user involvement and makes these resources available to a wide audience. Lack of such information is often the reason new ULOs fail in their development.

OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

SPECTRUM CIL has developed a legacy strategy to ensure that the toolkits, resources, support networks, and facilities that it has developed will remain available to new ULOs even after the project concludes. All findings and resources are transferable to any developing user-led organization supporting any disadvantaged group (e.g., older people, gays and lesbians, immigration groups, etc.).

Photo

Participants gather at the SPECTRUM CIL “Hate Crime” seminar held in October 2014 for ULOs and other organizations that are concerned about hate crimes in the United Kingdom.

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