

CILs – What Are They?

A CIL is an organisation which supports disabled people with independent living issues. The “I” in the middle of CIL is sometimes “independent”, “integrated” or even “inclusive”.

For example,

- Southampton Centre for Independent Living
- Leeds Centre for Integrated Living
- Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living

Independence is having more choice and control over our lives (see the GMCDP ‘Independent Living’ information sheet). CILs were first developed by disabled people in America in the early 1970s. The idea was adopted in the UK during the 1980s as part of the campaign to get disabled people out of residential care and into homes of their own.

The first CILs were developed, run and controlled by disabled people. Government policy over the last few years has been promoting the development of “user-led” organisations, modelled on existing CILs, in every local authority area in the UK (“Improving Life Chances of Disabled People” Report).

These CILs may be along similar lines to the original CILs developed by disabled people, but government policy is encouraging a significant difference. The new CILs will be “user led”. As other people, such as carers, may be “service

users”, this means that the new CILs may not be in the control of disabled people alone.

CILs offer a variety of support and services to disabled people, including:

- Information on many issues.
- Advocacy around independent living issues.
- Peer support (getting together with other disabled people to share knowledge and experience) and peer counselling (a more formal discussion with another disabled person).
- Finding suitable housing.
- Employing personal assistants. This may include support with Direct Payments and Individual Budgets and the practicalities of being an employer.
- Brokerage –support with what Individual Budgets can be used for.
- Equipment – either information about it, or equipment to look at and try.
- Access – some CILs offer information and advice about which buildings, cafes, restaurants, hotels etc are accessible in their area.
- Training – some CILs offer Disability Equality Training, training for Personal Assistants or a variety of training to disabled people and other service providers.

Why The Three “I”s (Independent, Integrated, Inclusive)?

There are a few reasons for people choosing the different “I” words. Some are because of the gradual change in the use and meaning of words over the years, and others a political statement.

Many CILs use the word “independent” because the services offered are around independent living issues. They are promoting disabled people’s independence. That is, disabled people having choice and control over their lives.

Some people do not like the word “independent”. This is because professionals can use the word against disabled people. For many people independence means doing things for yourself. It can also be used to criticise: “you are too independent” is said to a disabled person when someone is not happy with their attitude or with what they want to do.

When the Disabled People’s Movement began, the interest was in “integrating” disabled people into society. The services offered by a CIL promote disabled people’s ability to become more involved in their local and wider community. This is by making it more accessible for disabled people to undertake the activities they choose, whether leisure, educational or paid/unpaid work. Because of these services, the CIL was supporting the integration of disabled people in society.

As time went on, it was recognised that the word “integrated” does not explain what disabled people want to achieve. We can be integrated in society without being included in society. Being included does not only mean that we can be part of our communities and take part in activities we choose, it also means we are welcomed by society and not just tolerated. So for some people it was important for the word “inclusive” to be used instead of “integrated”.

Whatever the name of a CIL, the most important elements are that:

1. The ethos is based on the Social Model of Disability (removing barriers not changing the person).
2. The services support disabled people to achieve their aims and goals in life.
3. The most welcoming and supportive environment is promoted.
4. Services are accessible to all disabled people irrespective of access requirements, communication method, age, class, ethnicity, faith, gender, impairment, race or sexuality.

To see the variety of CILs in the UK, please see the following:

Greater Manchester:

Oldham – the Link Centre for Independent Living (still in development)

http://www.oldham.gov.uk/health_and_social_care/disabilities/independent_living_services_for_disabled_people.htm

Right To Control Manchester Area Partnership Centre for Independent Living

<http://www.breakthrough-uk.co.uk/OurWork/righttocontrol>

Trafford Centre for Independent Living

www.trafforddisability.org

Around the UK:

Disability Rights UK (one element of which was formerly the National Centre for Independent Living) has contact details for CILs around the country as well as other information about independent living issues.

The website address is current at the time of writing this information sheet; it may change in the near future:
www.ncil.org.uk

Cheshire Centre for Independent Living

www.ccil.org.uk

Disability Derbyshire Coalition for Inclusive Living

www.dcil.org.uk

Dudley Centre for Inclusive Living

www.dudleycil.org.uk

Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living

www.gcil.org.uk

Lancashire Centre for Independent Living

www.lcil.info

Southampton Centre for Independent Living

www.southamptoncil.co.uk

Warrington Centre for Independent Living

www.disabilitypartnership.org.uk

West of England Centre for Inclusive Living

www.wecil.com

The History of CILs and the Independent Living Movement

Two of the oldest CILs are Disability Derbyshire Coalition for Inclusive Living and West of England Centre for Inclusive Living. Both have useful pages on their websites about their history.

To see a history of the Independent Living Movement in the UK written by John Evans, one of the originators of the Independent Living Movement, go to:

www.independentliving.org/docs6/evans2003.html

For an academic overview of the issues (although dated this is quite useful), see "Independent Living, Politics and Implications (2004) by Prof. Colin Barnes

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/Barnes/Jane's%20paper.pdf>

If you do not have access to the Internet or need support to access further information please feel free to contact a member of staff at GMCDP.

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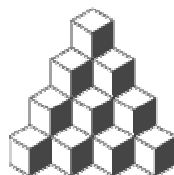
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