

FACTSHEET: Independent Living



What is Independent Living?

Independent Living is a philosophy developed by disabled people.

“Independent living means all disabled people having the same freedom, choice, dignity and control as other citizens at home, at work and in the community. It does not necessarily mean living by yourself or fending for yourself. It means rights to practical assistance and support to participate in society and live an ordinary life.” **(Independent Living in Scotland - ILiS)**


This philosophy was developed by disabled people who campaign on behalf of all disabled people for self-determination, equal opportunities and full participation in society as equal citizens. It has come from their own experience of discrimination, isolation and services which can sometimes obstruct rather than support. **(ILiS)**

What is the Independent Living Movement and where did it begin?

The Independent Living Movement is an international movement of disabled people who follow the philosophy of Independent Living.

In Berkeley, California, in the 1970s three disabled students made an arrangement to use the support of Personal Assistants (PAs) to attend university. The students liked this arrangement to as it gave them more control of their day-to-day lives than they had experienced before. As this worked so well, these individuals went on to set up an organisation which they called a ‘Centre for Independent Living’.

This ‘CIL’ was run by and for disabled people with the purpose of providing support for those wishing to take more control over their lives and their care.

The idea soon spread and, in the early 1980s, CILs sprung up in the UK. There are now several Centres for Inclusive Living or ‘Disabled People’s SDS Organisations’ around Scotland.  - See Disabled People’s SDS Organisations factsheet)

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How does society need to change to make Independent Living achievable for all?

To achieve Independent Living, these key areas of everyday society must be addressed (from 'Ready for Action', ILiS, 2009):

- **The environment and transport**
Were Independent Living to be realised, the built environment (e.g. shops, high streets, workplaces) would be accessible. The transport system would also be accessible and people would be able to afford to use it. There would be access to a choice of affordable and accessible housing
- **Personal support and services**
Were Independent Living to be realised, people would have choice and control over their care and support if they wish. They would be able to access equipment, personal assistance and suitable health services. Information would be accessible and communication would be appropriate. Individuals would have access to advocacy and support from peers

- **Economic, social and public life**

Were Independent Living to be realised, disabled people would be able to participate fully in economic, social and public life. For example, they would have equal opportunities in employment, education, training and lifelong learning. Leisure opportunities and activities within the community would be accessible

- **The overall political, social and service structure**

Were Independent Living to be realised, co-production would be at the heart of the overall political, social and service structure. There would be national and local mechanisms to consider issues of Independent Living as well as recognition of these issues in mainstream legislation.

Where can I find more information about Independent Living?

For more information, see Independent Living in Scotland's website: www.ilis.co.uk/home