

**Inclusive Education,  
Disabled People's  
Organisations and  
Capacity Building  
for Change.**

**ALLFIE, Spring 2022.**





# Disabled People; Some History and Politics!



The history of disability is characterised by **DISCRIMINATION.**



Which come about through Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPOs).



Yet collectives of Disabled people have developed a unique **CULTURE** of pride and power.



It is with a diverse **VOICE** that Disabled people speak out.



Many young Disabled people and children are **SEGREGATED** within the education system.



Though Disabled people do not enjoy full **HUMAN RIGHTS.**



This separation divides **US.**



to create the power to **PROTEST.**



Together Disabled people use our **LIVED** experience,



Our shared goal is to achieve citizenship, **SELF DIRECTION**, choice and control.



And this begins with Inclusive **EDUCATION.**



Because **INCLUSION** benefits everyone.



## Overview

This report provides some reflections from an Inclusion Champions project funded by the City Bridge Trust. This supported ALLFIE to successfully host the Inclusion Champions Network (ICN) made up of 18 London-based Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), working with young people and their families, Local Authorities and other young people's services.

The focus was to facilitate work around inclusive education and to capacity build DPOs to better engage with young Disabled people.

Based on our work, this document will offer here some suggestions to other DPOs considering shared capacity building and campaign work that is about inclusive education and involvement of young Disabled people as assets.

This includes both a structure for planning social change activities, along with links to learning resources produced as part of this project.

At the end of this document, we also note some ideas for future work that we feel will help us work together with DPOs and young Disabled people to achieve inclusive education.

***'... Capacity building is extremely important to any organisation especially small charities which need to grow but don't and have a lot of resources ...'***  
- DPO participant.



## Contents

Introduction -	5
Disabled People's Organisations -	7
Inclusive Education -	9
Capacity building and building capacity for change -	11
Recommendations -	16
Summary -	18



## Introduction

Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) are unique collectives that provide both peer support services and collective action.

We demonstrate solidarity in our drive for inclusion, and connect communities to bring together different experiences and individuals within the Disabled People's Movement.

They represent, both at the same time, a social change movement and a vibrant community sector.

While in recent years some progress has been made in inclusive education, there is still a way to go.

Inclusive education is a human right, as set out in Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (UNCRPD).

Being included in society is the

key to Disabled people being embraced as equal citizens.

Non-Disabled people need to grow up, to learn, play and work with Disabled people as friends, classmates and family members.

Though Disabled young people and children have some protections and rights to inclusive education, these do not currently work as they should.

The Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE) want Disabled People's Organisations to be part of the campaign for the right of all Disabled people to be fully included in mainstream education, not segregated from our peers, our friends, our families, our communities.

ALLFIE's vision is a fully inclusive education system



that welcomes all, with the ultimate goal of ending all forms of segregated education for Disabled pupils and students.

ALLFIE believes that DPOs can play an important role in achieving inclusive education by increasing involvement with young Disabled people and children in the movement.

Based on the learning and reflections of the City Bridge Trust project this document presents some information about Disabled Peoples Organisations, inclusive education and capacity building for change.

This includes an approach to planning and organising for change, as well as a number of links to materials produced as part of this project.

It sets out how to involve the right people, how to plan actions and campaigns, and links to wider

issues by recognising the intersect of ableism, racism, sexism and classism.

A number of ideas for future work are also recommended.



## Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs)

Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) are run and controlled by Disabled people, focused on equality and human rights. They work to support Disabled people to achieve inclusion.

A DPO can be defined as an organisation whose constitution requires it to have a membership and managing board with a majority of Disabled people. Its objectives will be the rights and equality of Disabled people. DPOs subscribe to the Social Model of Disability and are committed to the human rights of Disabled people. DPOs work for the empowerment of Disabled people either implicitly or explicitly.

DPOs, have grown and developed since the 1970s. They are unique social change organisations focused on issues relevant to Disabled people through the use of a range of activities. In the 1980s the first



UK Centres for Independent Living (CILs) were established in Hampshire, Derbyshire and Greenwich.

Run and controlled by Disabled people, CILs are based on a number of principles that if available to Disabled people enable self-determination and personal autonomy, so as to be able to participate equally.

These include, having access to accessible information, advocacy, adequate housing, PA support, equipment, transport etc.

The key point is that unless Disabled people are involved in decisions and policies about

their lives, nothing changes.

The UK has an ever-increasing number of voluntary sector organisations, ranging from small community groups to international charities with bases in many countries. DPOs represent an important movement within this sector. The impact of DPOs has been huge, furthering a radical social policy agenda and redefining meanings of social care, health, independent living and inclusion.

The added value of DPOs comes through the leadership that emerges from Disabled people coming together, sharing experiences and developing practices of inclusion.

This facilitates a unique organisational culture that embraces and values the voices

and experiences of Disabled people from the perspective of equality and dignity, rather than that of personal and medical tragedy.

For a recent view on DPOs see the report ['Understanding the needs of DDPOs in England'](#). This provides information from 100+ DPOs about current issues and what is needed to strengthen the capacity to tackle the deepening structural inequalities faced by Disabled people in a post Covid world.



## Inclusive Education

The right to inclusive education is set out in Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Sustainable Development Goals, Target 4.

The inclusion of young Disabled people and children is key to them being embraced as equal citizens as they become adults.

There are a number of concerns about UK education and equality legislation not following the rules on the international agendas, and how segregated education occurs in practice today.

ALFFIE's current campaigning work is focused on the government's anti-inclusive education reforms, which are proving to be disastrous and harmful for Disabled pupils' and students' right to inclusive education in mainstream education

settings.

Local authorities are taking funds from mainstream schools to promote, create and pay for expensive segregated education placements, reducing the capacity of mainstream schools to welcome a wide range of pupils and students from different backgrounds.

An increasing focus on academic attainment in public exams through league performance tables, puts considerable pressure on schools, colleges, and universities to standardise learning and assessment practice.

For Disabled people with diverse learning styles, the accessibility of education settings is a concern, as there is now greater segregation and exclusion of Disabled pupils and students from mainstream education.



The Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE) is keen to support Disabled People's Organisations to be part of the campaign for the right of all Disabled people to be fully included in mainstream educational settings and learning.

It supports educational and learning settings that do not segregate us from our peers, our friends, our families and our communities.

DPOs in local communities are well placed to support young Disabled people and children.

*'... Talking with other young people and learning about Disabled peoples rights together is helpful ...'*  
- Young Disabled Person.



## Capacity building and building capacity for change

Capacity building and building capacity for change are development activities, sets of resources, or forms of assistance provided to organisations in order to help them improve their effectiveness and boost performance.

This usually focuses on management, leadership and governance, and organisational systems, but equally can be about developing campaigns, setting goals and working to achieve those, as we have seen in the [#MeToo](#) and [Extinction Rebellion](#) movements.

Based on our work on the Inclusion Champions Project, below we set out some ideas about how we think DPOs can engage with young Disabled people on the issue of inclusive education.



The ICN involved exploring how to involve the right people, planning for action, connecting to wider networks, creating resources and ideas, and being influencers for change.

**Involving the right people** - It is important to remember also that it is people that make change happen. To organise and bring about the change you want it is useful to involve different types of insights and experiences.

This includes centring people with lived experience of intersectionality, people with ideas, and people with power





and influence.

Sometimes you may find people hold these experiences and insights at the same time, sometimes only one or two.

Additionally, people may not be able to be open with their experiences or may not recognise how valid their expertise is.

The following illustrates how this might be applied to the campaign for Inclusive Education.

**Lived experience** – Disabled young people and children who are (or have) experienced segregation in school or college. This might be as a result of being placed in a special school, or being excluded as a result of not

being able to attend some lessons within mainstream education.

It may also be to do with not being able to access learning materials or socialise with peers because of a lack of accessibility in the learning activity or environment.

**Ideas for change** – Disabled people, supporters or allies with knowledge about the social model, intersectionality, human rights and specifically Article 24 of the UNCRPD. Applying these ideas, in an accessible and meaningful way and facilitating those with lived experiences to imagine alternatives.



### **Power and influence –**

Those in influential or decision-making roles who can help to realise and make alternatives happen. This might be those who can articulate the need for change, persuading others of the unquestionable rationale and moral argument. Or it can be those who have decision making powers and who can allocate resources, change structures and reorganise policy and practice.

### **Planning for action -**

Understanding what the problem is, being clear about how and why it can be different, and knowing what needs to be done in order for it to happen, is key to achieving change. The following maps out some steps, poses some key

questions, and gives some useful links for DPOs to consider when planning and organising actions about inclusive education.

**Principles** – Building an understanding, by centring the lived experience of segregated education and the arguments against it, is crucial in developing campaigns that look to change it.

***What is the impact on people? What harm does it do? Why is it wrong?***

Here is a guide to the [UNCRPD](https://youtu.be/T6AKWrOmmTY) (<https://youtu.be/T6AKWrOmmTY>).



Here is an introduction to the Social Model of Disability in the context of inclusive education  
<https://youtu.be/LKz1S964uPO>

**Preparation** – With a clear idea about what’s wrong, and why it should be different, change and aspects of it can be imagined and articulated.

This does not need to be in detail, rather it can be a shared description of the destination. Change can be both big and small, local and global, for an individual or a wider group.



It can be about access in a school, access getting to a school or the standardised delivery and assessment of learning.

***What is wrong? What needs to change? How can it be different?***

Here is an overview of inclusive education  
<https://youtu.be/Dd-xJusvURY> and an account of how inclusion can be achieved in a school  
<https://www.allfie.org.uk/inclusion-resources/video-inclusion-at-eastlea>

**Action** – Identifying how change could be made and framing the message clearly for your audience is important.

Knowing what drives and motivates them, and using this to plan an action, can help it be successful.



Campaigning actions can be brief or lengthy, they can be a posted letter that spells out what you want, a petition of many, or a demo with placards in the street.

***What are we asking for?  
What exactly do we want? Who needs to hear what we are saying? How do we make them act?***

See here for the [‘Educate Don’t Segregate’ and other campaigns by ALLFIE](https://www.allfie.org.uk/campaigns/) (<https://www.allfie.org.uk/campaigns/>).

### **Being local and global -**

Recognising the intersectionality of Disabled people and how their organisations are connected to wider communities across the globe is important for several reasons.

Knowing that you are not alone, that you are part of a community that shares your experiences of barriers and struggle, and that has a passion for an inclusive future brings strength.

The connections come from sharing experiences, sharing information and knowledge with local peers about human rights and the resistance that is occurring elsewhere.

Being local validates shared experiences of barriers and exclusion. It also helps to build communities for an inclusive world.

Using the lens of human rights to recognise how social change is both possible and probable for Disabled people and their organisation can be big motivator in the campaign for inclusive education.



Here is some information about the 'European Convention on Human Rights' and its relevance to inclusive education

<https://youtu.be/Y8hRnzc2qbU>



In turn this will help further the campaign for inclusive education, and bring an end to the circumstances that continue to exclude many young Disabled people and children from experiencing inclusive education.

## Recommendations.

Based on our work, and the feedback of those we engaged with, we present the following as ideas for future work.

This, we believe, will assist DPOs to engage with young Disabled people, to ensure their voice is embedded within their work.

**Develop a young Disabled people and children's network** – create regular opportunities to provide updates and learning on human rights, Disabled people's movement issues and social change. Recognise young people as assets, so that they can develop as leaders and initiate and run successful social change campaigns.



**Create opportunities for DPOs and young Disabled people and children to work together** – build attendance at the Inclusion Champions Network of DPOs across England. Support young people and DPOs to develop local activities and action.

**Identify current gaps in peer support and advocacy for young Disabled people and children** - review the commissioning activity of these services to explore the current and future roles of DPOs.

**Give space to Disabled young people and children to become leaders** – profile current issues about intersectional identities, exploring distinct and shared areas of oppression and opportunity, across race, sex, gender, faith, culture, Disability and other areas.

<https://youtu.be/95Q5g9-Hj5g>

### **Connect intergenerationally**

- create opportunities for dialogue between old and young experiences within the Disabled people movement, exploring previous challenges and successes, as well as developing a future manifesto.

<https://www.allfie.org.uk/inclusion-resources/being-seen-being-heard-empower-young-people-in-the-disability-rights-movement/>

<https://www.allfie.org.uk/news/inclusion-now/inclusion-now-55/alliance-for-inclusive-education-manifesto/>



## Summary.

This report summarises some key reflections and points of learning from the Inclusion Champions Project funded by the City Bridge Trust.

Through this we were able to work with Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and young Disabled people.

This enabled us to better understand some of the issues preventing them from engaging more actively on work about inclusive education.

Many DPOs want to work with young people, but often are not able to create the opportunities to do so.

ALLFIE's Inclusion Champions work has shown how this is possible, and what benefits it can offer to social change work in this area.

Based on this work we offer here some suggestions to DPOs when considering capacity building and campaign work that is about inclusive education and looks to involve young Disabled people.

These include both structure for planning social change activities and links to learning resources produced as part of this project.

***'... Capacity-building has helped us and we need to do more...'***  
**- DPO participant.**



## Resources.

Here are some resources created by young people:

### Our Voice

<https://www.allfie.org.uk/about-us/who-we-work-with/our-voice-project/>

### Online University Empowers Disabled Students

<https://www.allfie.org.uk/news/inclusion-now/inclusion-now-58/online-university-empowers-disabled-students/>

### 50 years since Handicapped Children Act

<https://youtu.be/3c4IAAt-PNcA>

### The CripTales and Inclusive Education

<https://www.allfie.org.uk/news/inclusion-now/inclusion-now-58/the-criptales-and-inclusive-education/>

### 'Our Voice' Project Participants interview Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson.

<https://www.allfie.org.uk/inclusion-now-60/our-voice-project-participants-interview%e2%80%afbaroness-tanni-grey-thompson/>

### Judy Heumann: 'The battle is so much bigger than we thought it was'.

<https://www.allfie.org.uk/inclusion-now-60/judy-heumann-the-battle-is-so-much-bigger-than-we-thought-it-was-unless-all-disabled-people-are-liberated-none-of-us-can-be-liberated/>

### Returning to School After Lockdown

<https://www.allfie.org.uk/news/inclusion-now/inclusion-now-59/returning-to-school-after-lockdown/>

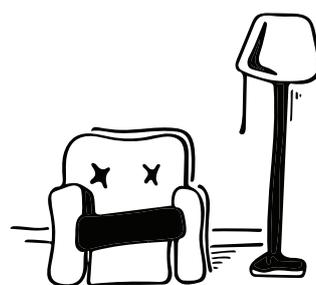
### Learning in Lockdown

<https://www.allfie.org.uk/news/inclusion-now/inclusion-now-59/learning-in-lockdown/>

### 'Like a bird released from a cage, I am free to fly in the open fields'

<https://www.allfie.org.uk/news/inclusion-now/inclusion-now-58/like-a-bird-released-from-a-cage-i-am-free-to-fly-in-the-open-fields/>





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