

## **Independent Living Scrutiny Group Annual Report 2009**

Dear Life Chances Ministers

I am delighted to present you with the first report of the Independent Living Scrutiny Group. I am very pleased to be given the role of Chairing the scrutiny exercise as this feels a natural extension of my last role of facilitating the Independent Living Review Expert Panel. Although the group has only just begun its work, we have gelled as a team instantly and feel confident about our joint task over the coming years. I believe this successful collaboration is exemplified in our clear understanding of the scrutiny exercise, reflected in the report before you. The group is eager to work in a co-productive way with all levels of government, therefore should you wish to raise any points of clarification or scrutiny methodology, please feel free to contact me personally.

### **Background**

The cross-Government Independent Living Strategy was co-produced with disabled people from the outset. It was launched in March 2008 and contained a clear commitment to measure and report annually on progress towards achieving the vision and aims set out in the Strategy.

The Government's response to the consultation asking how to involve disabled people in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy committed to the setting up of an Independent Living Scrutiny Group (ILSG). The consultation response also committed to the ILSG being an influential group that will play an important role in the monitoring of progress on the Strategy.

The Strategy noted the clear message from disabled people that there is too big a gap between national policy aims and local implementation and set a clear aim to bridge that gap between rhetoric and reality.

The ILSG is keen to ensure that this gap is narrowed and looks forward to playing an active part in making sure that this happens.

## **Role of the ILSG**

The ILSG's remit is to report its views on progress on delivery of the ILS to Life Chances Ministers. Members of the Group have not been appointed to be accountable to, or representative of, disabled people, they have been selected on the basis of their expertise of independent living issues.

The ILS was produced in partnership with disabled people and the Group is keen to ensure that our work and scrutiny role is done in the spirit of co-production, taking into account the aspirations, observations and views of disabled people who are trying to live independently with maximum control and self determination. We want to be able to test what the data is telling us against the perception of change ordinary disabled people are experiencing. We look forward to being able to use the "network of networks" that the Office for Disability Issues is currently working to establish. This will allow the Group to hear the views of disabled people and also share details of progress on the ILS.

We hope that through our scrutiny we can help to ensure that the commitments in the ILS are delivered and that disabled people are able to experience greater choice and control over the support they need to go about their daily lives. By maximising the involvement of disabled people throughout the scrutiny exercise, we will draw upon the expertise and knowledge developed over the last 30 years in the disabled people's independent living movement. The concept of independent living which resulted in Community Care Direct Payments and later Individualised Budgets, is the intellectual property of disabled people's long-standing campaign for choice and control over their lives. Therefore it is essential for the ILS to continuously draw upon the evidence and expertise of this important stakeholder group.

Publication of Annual Reports by the ILSG will, along with the progress information that the ODI publishes as part of their annual reporting cycle, help to keep disabled people informed about progress on the ILS and the Government's commitment to deliver equality for disabled people by 2025.

For ease of reference, Annex C of the Independent Living Strategy sets out what the Government's commitments are, how they will be measured and what difference they will make to disabled people's

lives. See [www.odi.gov.uk/working/independent-living/strategy.php#strat](http://www.odi.gov.uk/working/independent-living/strategy.php#strat)

## **The ILSG**

I had the privilege of chairing the Independent Living Review Expert Panel (the group of independent living experts who supported the cross-government Independent Living Review) and very much welcome the opportunity to continue my involvement with and input to the Independent Living Strategy. I also believe that my role as chair of the Scrutiny Group complements my role as chair of the Right to Control Advisory Group.

In line with the consultation commitment the Group has been formed from members of Equality 2025 and members of the former Independent Living Review Expert Panel. In addition, we have co-opted a member who represents family carers and a member to represent older disabled people. (A full list of members can be found at Annex A).

The ILSG met for the first time in July and undertook the first scrutiny of activity and statistical data in September 2009. Although the ILS was launched in March 2008 we recognise that this is early days both for the Group and for the scrutiny process. We have, therefore, not only been thinking about progress so far, but also how we will be conducting the scrutiny process over the coming years.

Through our initial learning, as preparation for our scrutiny role, we are aware that there are a range of measurement tools within national and local government. We are therefore happy at this stage to work within existing data and information collection channels rather than impose additional burdens on Life Chances Departments.

We have based our scrutiny on information supplied to the ODI by the Life Chances Departments. This falls into two categories: activity data which details what Departments have done in respect of delivering each of the commitments contained in the ILS; and statistical data – that is Public Service Agreements, Departmental Strategic Objectives and National Indicators.

## **The ILSG's view on progress on delivering the ILS**

The ILSG noted that much of the statistical data is either at a baseline level or that appropriately disaggregated data is awaited. However, we noted some areas in which the data showed signs of positive developments. For example, the employment rates for disabled people in England (the ILS covers England only), whilst still some way behind those for non disabled people, have increased from 47.8% in 2007 to 48.5% in 2009. In the same period the employment rate for non disabled people has decreased from 79.2% to 77.1%.

Participation rates in informal volunteering have also increased between 2007/08 (33%) and 2008/09 (36%). This is very encouraging.

We also noted that the percentage of buses with low floor wheelchair access has increased regularly since 2001/02. We would expect to see this trend continue.

However, the Group was concerned to note that the baseline data showed that 23 per cent of disabled people say that they do not frequently have choice and control over their lives. We will be looking for a significant reduction in this figure in the coming years.

Looking overall at the data the Group concluded that it is perhaps a little too early to draw meaningful conclusions about progress at this stage. This is particularly so given that, as yet, we are still awaiting relevant National Indicator data. Nevertheless, we are pleased to note that the necessary means of reporting are in place and we very much look forward to more detailed analysis next year.

Similarly, the activity information we received shows that, by and large, action to deliver the various ILS commitments is on course. We recognise that many of the commitments are not yet due to be completed, and that some are not yet due to start.

We found that for a number of the commitments we would have wanted more detailed information than had been provided, for example what research shows and what will follow this? How is co-production being taken forward in particular actions? How does a particular activity fit into the broader independent living agenda?

We are looking forward to these questions being answered in the future.

Overall, taking everything into account and overlaying this with the knowledge and experience of the Group we are satisfied that, at this early stage, progress on the ILS can be considered to be on course.

### **Looking Forward**

During the scrutiny we noted that there were instances where activity information had not yet been provided by Departments, or that information was provided late. It is important that Departments not only deliver their ILS commitments but that they also provide timely information about their progress.

The Group's questions largely focused on the detail of actions that are taking place to deliver individual ILS commitments. In some instances Departments had provided brief information but had not either set a context for their actions or considered more fully the detail of the commitment – giving the impression they had simply responded to the summary of the commitment rather than the detail of the commitment.

The Group was also aware, based on our wider knowledge, that in one or two cases Departments had rather “under-sold” their achievements to date. So we would say “please sing your achievements from the rooftops”. Disabled people want to know about them.

We would therefore ask that for next year, and in subsequent years, Departments respond promptly to requests for information. We also ask that, when providing information, Departments look beyond simply responding to the relevant commitment summary and that they report on the wider application and implications of the commitment and their work to deliver it. This will provide a more accurate picture and enable the Group to make a more informed assessment of progress.

## Conclusion

The ILS is a five year cross-government strategy that was launched in March 2008. Having scrutinised the information made available to us we are satisfied that progress is being made on the ILS and the summary of actions reflects where we would expect the Strategy to be at this point.

We recognise that it is early days in terms of seeing real progress but we are looking forward to receiving more detailed information in the coming years. We hope that this will enable us to celebrate the inclusion of disability issues in the Government's work and ensure that disabled people and family carers are both national leaders and equal partners in the co-production, co-development and co-evaluation of a transformed approach that provides choice and control for disabled people.

The Independent Living Strategy sets out to address not only the barriers experienced by all disabled people but also those faced by particular groups, such as disabled people from black and minority ethnic communities, older people with high support needs, young people with autistic spectrum disorder<sup>1</sup> for example. We hope to see evidence of how the wider issues that affect disabled people from different backgrounds are being tackled as part of the progress towards delivering the ILS commitments.

We would anticipate being able to see more tangible progress next year and, as a consequence, our subsequent reports will be more substantial.



Baroness Campbell, of Surbiton, DBE.

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<sup>1</sup> Example groups are drawn from the Independent Living Strategy, Executive Summary, Paragraph 14, Sub Paragraph 1:4, Promoting Independent Living.

## **Annex A**

### **The Independent Living Scrutiny Group**

Chair                      Baroness Jane Campbell

Members                 Saghir Alam

Michelle Daley

Nick Danagher

Rowen Jade

Ian Loynes

Ann Macfarlane

Andy Rickell

Dame Philippa Russell