

Advocacy Manual: Developing a Strategy for Community Living

Scope and Purpose

The purpose of the manual is to help organisations on the local or national level develop a strategy for change. In countries where community-based services for people with disabilities are scarce or non-existent and many disabled people still live in long-term residential institutions, this manual will help organisations think about what they can do to change the situation and lead them into drafting a plan of action, and as a result of that, also taking action. It will demonstrate what part advocacy plays in encouraging local or national authorities to support the development of community-based alternatives to institutions.

The manual will present examples of good practice in different areas of advocacy in the form of case studies. It will introduce how advocacy tools, such as lobbying, campaigning, awareness raising and media work can be used to support the development of quality community-based services for people with disabilities.

The manual is aimed at organisations that want to change the situation in their communities (on the local level) or in their country (on the national level). These could be organisations providing services in the community for people with disabilities, organisations representing the interests of disabled people, user led groups and self advocacy organisations¹. The main target region of the manual is Central and Eastern Europe.

The manual will be launched at the ECCL Seminar in Oslo, Norway on 12 – 13 September. A workshop will be organised for a smaller group of participants on the 13th September. After the workshop, the manual will be available on the ECCL website.

Members of the Reference Group are: John Evans (UK), Camilla Parker (UK), Kapka Panayotova (Bulgaria), Tina Coldham (UK), Eric Bloemkolk (Netherlands), Gengoux Gomez (Belgium), Julie Beadle-Brown (UK) and David Towell (UK). The publishing of the manual is funded by Socires, Netherlands.

Case studies

To illustrate how advocacy works in practice, each chapter will be accompanied by case studies presenting success stories, but also looking at things that have not worked in particular situations. Case studies will be the main learning point of the manual, helping readers to think about their own situation and to devise advocacy strategies that could work in their community or country.

Case studies that we are looking for:

- using different advocacy tools – **lobbying** (through meetings, letter writing, issuing statements etc.), **campaigning, awareness raising, media work** – to change policy, legislation or, for example, encourage public debate about the situation of people with disabilities living in long stay institutions and the need to develop community-based alternatives to long-stay residential institutions;

¹ Organisations and groups led by people with intellectual disabilities.

- advocacy activities undertaken by user led or self-advocacy organisations;
- coalition building – building an alliance of different stakeholders to advocate for change; examples of cooperation with the authorities and service providers;
- examples of activities following publication of a report/documentary detailing the situation of people with disabilities living in long-stay residential institutions (such as reports by Amnesty International, Mental Disability Advocacy Center, Inclusion Europe or, for example, the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, BBC Documentary on Children in Bulgaria etc.);
- presenting recommendations of European studies on the situation of people with disabilities living in institutions to local or national authorities;
- demonstrating good practice in the provision of community-based services to policy makers;
- encouraging local authorities to support organisations providing community-based services for people with disabilities (examples of partnerships between NGOs and local authorities);
- organising study trips for institutional service providers and authorities to quality community-based services;
- example of a strategy/action plan for the development of quality community-based services (locally or nationally).

Invitation to contribute to the Manual

If you have examples that you would like to contribute to the Manual, please send us a **brief description (a short paragraph)** by the **end of April 2008**. This can be a success story, but also something that has not worked out the way you intended.

We are interested in activities that have already taken place or have been ongoing for some time. Also, we particularly interested in activities undertaken by local or national organizations.

At the end of April, the Reference group will look at the contributions we received and we will contact you for further information. We are hoping to collect have examples from different parts of Europe, to illustrate various strategies and problems that can come up.

Thank you in advance for your contributions!