

## ORAL HISTORY EXTRACT TRANSCRIPT

### 'Fighting for our Rights' project

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#### Extract 1: first job at the Centre for the Handicapped

That job was described as a technical instructor. I'd love to say it involved technically instructing people but it didn't seem to do much of that, I think that job title related to the kind of industrial rehabilitation model of impairment, so the idea was that we had a massive woodwork shop there, we had lots of different light industrial machinery, and people with acquired disabilities, for the most part people with acquired disabilities would be referred to us for a period of rehabilitation with a view to try to get them into employment. We would have had referrals from a wide range of places, often from hospitals, usually from occupational therapists working in the community, doctors, sometimes nursing services as well, often social workers would have referred people to us and the expectation of that model of care would have been that you would have had people with you for a short period of time, alongside the kind of opportunity to learn new skills, would have been the chance to have spent time coming out of the home, socialising with other people, but there was very much an expectation at that time that it should be a short-term intervention, and that our objective would be to rehabilitate people in order to return to work. By the time I had started there, the whole employment situation within Kingston had changed out of all recognition, and all of those kind of light industrial manufacturing jobs had either gone or were going at a very rapid rate of knots. So, the actual opportunities for people to learn skills that they could put into effect in a workplace, was diminishing quite rapidly. And I don't think that the model that Kingston Social Services had at the time was able to keep up with that change, so through that period of time there was a kind of a rapid change really around people staying much longer and the service becoming much more of a social outlet for people who were otherwise going to be quite isolated. There would have been opportunities to do broad rehabilitation work and we were still trying to always keep an eye on trying to find opportunities for people to be occupied in mainstream activities, but back in 1987 we were a long way away from quite understanding how much the landscape had changed around us and how as a result the service would need to change a lot, from a very medical model, to something quite different. They wouldn't have been aware at the time it was a medical model, because nobody would have been aware of the social model to contrast it to, but it was managed by... no, it was led by occupational therapists, there would have been a senior OT and I think at that time there would have been as many as four full-time occupational therapists an OTA and a part time OT so it was a really OT orientated model of rehabilitation. And the technical instructors were the unqualified people who knew how to use saws and machinery and trying to get people to get their hands dirty and go and make bird boxes and stuff.

#### Extract 2: independent living scheme for Crescent service users

I think we would have been aware of people who perhaps could have benefited from the Independent Living Scheme at the earlier stages of it. I think the people that first piloted the opportunity to be part of the Independent Living Scheme probably wouldn't have been people that were making use of the Crescent at the time, but there would have been people at the Crescent who

were active members of KADP who would have known a lot about the development of that scheme and would have been very keen to have had the opportunity to have started to be considered for it. And I think we might have even been asked to approach people, some of our clients to talk to them about what the Independent Living Scheme and to see whether it was something that they might be interested in taking on. Yeah, so from its inception I guess, from the earlier stages of that starting to be developed.

There was a real mixed reaction I suppose, there will have been those people who would have probably been early adopters, keen to find out what the new opportunities presented, they will have been aware of those people who were championing that kind of model of care and would have wanted something similar for themselves, so they would have been really keen to find out more about it, find out how it worked, look into what the implications were for them. There would have been other people who were absolutely completely against that idea, and felt that life was quite difficult enough without becoming an employer as well as somebody who had struggles to look after themselves and meet their own needs, and I think that was a quite a big deterrent to a lot of people at the Crescent was that they probably knew enough from their working lives to know that managing people, employing people, managing budgets is quite a taxing experience, and unless there's someone there to help you with it, if you are finding life more difficult than you used to, you would have to be quite naïve to volunteer to take that on if there was no obvious benefit in it for you. So I think for those people their argument would have been if the way that the care is provided to me meets my needs, and all I'm going to be doing is taking away the executive function from social services, what's the benefit for me, other than the stress of becoming a manager, an employer, and having to deal with things like National Insurance contributions, potential insurance claims, industrial tribunals if I sack someone who takes me to court, you know, and these were bright people, they knew what they were talking about, they would have worked in sectors where they would have employed lots of people, so they weren't naively going along thinking, yeah, that's great, I want to be my own boss, and not thinking for a moment that could be actually an extraordinarily difficult and stressful thing to do. So I think that it was a quite well evaluated reservation, it wasn't one of just fear of the unknown. I think as more people started to take it on, and more people started to find that it worked for them, there were more models around, role models around in the Crescent who could explain, well you know, it's not all roses, but you do get a degree more choice and flexibility, you have more choice over who you employ, and I think that started to sell itself when people could see that. But even now, I think that those people were right to question whether it was as simple and straightforward as perhaps it was being suggested it would be.

### Extract 3: disabled peoples' voices being heard

One of my friends is a very proactive disability rights campaigner and he inspires me, maybe not to be able to work to, in any way, to the same kind of level of amazing dedication and energy that he does, because disability rights have been massively under attack for probably the last ten or 15 years. And it's resulted in things like the Disability Living Fund being closed down, despite a very well-coordinated and organised campaign to try and stop that happening, and what I think I'd like to see is more people being heard and getting their voices heard, so as the effects of those decisions are made clear, the effects of the decisions around funding and how it impacts on individual cases are known about, and that can only help to try and make it more difficult for decision makers to starve the resources from the services and from the individuals that need the support to continue to try and live independent lives. I think there's a false economy around cutting support from people who would otherwise perhaps be able to remain in employment and remain actively part of society, that if you take away their opportunity to have PAs that allow them the chance to get up in time to go to work and to be ready in order to be in employment, then they're simply going to fall back on a source of resources that is completely lacking in any proactive supportive or forward-thinking

nature. So you know, tackling those things, continuing to fight on those things and to have the kind of boundless energy to take those kind of disappointments and setbacks and still keep fighting really, that's, you know, seeing more people with disabilities, more disabled people inspired to take that challenge on, must be the key thing really in trying to turn the tide. Because it's not going to happen because anyone's going to suddenly throw more money at it, that I think everyone needs to be realistic and understand that's not going to happen, not without a monumental change of will.