

## ORAL HISTORY EXTRACT TRANSCRIPT

'Fighting for our Rights' project

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### Extract 1: starting the Independent Living Scheme

It's a very different political environment. Southwark was very much councillor run or at least they thought it was, which in the sense that anything--, any new schemes that you wanted to develop, the way in which money was spent and so on was very tightly controlled by reports to committee. Within Kingston there was much more of a culture of delegation to officers and obviously key things did go to committee but it was certainly a different level of freedom at officer level which, you know, people have different views on whether that's good or not.

Well in fact before I arrived the then Director of Social Services who only overlapped with me for about six months, Angela Julia, had asked me to come and meet Jane and Ann and one of the first tasks I was given was to address this application which they had made for what was effectively direct funding which people didn't quite know what to do with. So my task was to work with them and to try and set up the scheme and it was fortuitous at that stage that I took legal advice about making direct payments and the Borough Solicitor, as he was then called, said that wasn't a problem. So as a new scheme we took it to committee for approval and by the April it was up and running which in local authority terms is not bad going given that you've also got to identify the resources to start it up because it's not easy to pull resources out of existing services.

I think it was really about people determining their own futures and having control over their particular personal care requirements in particular, rather than the traditional services which were, you know, people went in to help you get up or wash or whatever, not necessarily at the times that were always most convenient but simply because of the system as it is it can't be as flexible as you would want.

### Extract 2: Success from commitment

I think it succeeded first of all because there was, the impetus was there from people who were very strong in the disability movement who were--, had fought for many years to get changes in society that, you know, saw society as disabled really rather than other people and quite rightly so. So I think that was obviously a strong ingredient. I think the commitment of senior officers in the local authority and the structure of the council in Kingston meant that we got support to implement the scheme and to enable it to grow from strength to strength. I think the accountability systems were important because it enabled us to show people that this was money well spent and it wasn't people abusing the system. And I think yeah, the message of spreading the word. And of course alongside that was the fact that Roy Taylor became Chairman of the Disability Committee of the Association of Directors of Social Services and working particularly with Jane and others nationally was eventually able to push--, lobby the government and influence

eventually legislative change that made it all possible nationally. I mean first for disabled people and eventually for older people as well.

### Extract 3: Finishing work with Kingston Council

Well the title changed to Head of Community Care Services and I think that over those years we probably did a considerable amount more with the health service. So another important strand was trying to get the health service to accept the importance of direct payments and the legislative shifts that enables health to pay people direct as well as local authorities. Yeah, huge shift in terms of social services for adults became much more allied to health in many spheres and mental health services were amalgamated with health services. So those were quite big shifts. I think the other huge shift, which was why I eventually decided I'd had enough, was in terms of the government's performance agenda. I mean I do firmly believe that local authorities should be accountable and we should primarily be answerable to service users but there should be reasonable timescales, we shouldn't be keeping people waiting, there should be services that are monitored for quality, all of that absolutely. But the continuous demand for performance indicators that didn't necessarily monitor quality I think, and the continuous nagging of staff to produce data in the end wears you down. That was when I decided I'd had enough of that. But I think I was just lucky in that I had the best years of social services when there was a lot of development money available so we could develop good services that were responsive and that helped people to remain at home. They may not have had direct payments but they were able to be where they wanted to be and I fear that a lot of that's being pruned away more and more.