

Our Rights - issue 1, July 2008

text only version

DAA's newsletter for Disability LIB.

In the interest of solidarity, this newsletter is sent around by email to disabled people and their organisations across the world, and we invite you to forward it freely. We have provided links to internet sites, web pages, radio programmes and video clips, but understand that not all links are technically accessible to all users. From October Our Rights will be available in electronic format and on our website. For our contact details follow this link <http://www.daa.org.uk/contact.htm>

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Thank you to Change and People First for use of their pictures to support the written information.

<http://www.changepeople.co.uk>

<http://www.peoplefirstltd.com/index.php>

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Welcome! Our small team at Disability Awareness in Action (DAA) extends a very warm welcome to disabled people, organisations controlled and run by disabled people (DPOs) and their allies.

A very warm welcome to you all!

- To all our new readers who are part of the Disability LIB family - the DPOs and individuals across the UK who are in the mighty struggle for rights and social change.
- Welcome to all our old friends who used to read the Disability Tribune - we are delighted to be with you again. We have the money for the Our Rights e-bulletins from our alliance with Disability LIB. Welcome to our first e-bulletin, which will introduce who we are, what we do and what we hope to achieve. We are always happy to hear from disabled people and their allies on the issues raised. Contact us by email or via the website.

Please contact: mysay4daa@live.co.uk

Who we are

We are a small team of disabled people working in collaboration with disabled people's organisations and with partners of the Disability LIB project
<http://www.disabilitylib.org.uk/>

What we do

DAA is committed to sharing information and resources on the human rights of disabled people. Our aim is to give disabled people and their organisations information and

resource links to help them take effective action for themselves.

We seek to inform and share concerns, we want to celebrate and share success. We are also aware of failures and shortfalls, and of examples where the law or government policy does not seem to work in our interest. We report on that as well!

Our Rights

Our Rights is a regular monthly e-bulletin. We provide information on human rights issues as they affect disabled people across the world, from diverse backgrounds and with a variety of different impairments. We give updates on policy and the law. We will give you evidence to support your rights - evidence of good and bad practice, evidence that comes from you. We want to build our strengths – together!

What we want to achieve

We are working towards fundamental social change and a better society for all. DAA believes that disabled people can use the law and the framework of human rights as a tool. This means we want to use the ideas behind the law to argue for a better world, in which to live. “ A seed of information can lead to a groundswell of action.”

This action has to come from disabled people themselves. We can increase our impact on social change by joining together. We are very excited at being able to use DAA's network with disabled people all over the world - to play a part in fulfilling our objectives towards the Disability LIB project (details below). Working in solidarity with each other we will achieve more and gain from the commonality of our experience.

Disability LIB partners

Funding Crisis

As many organisations have known all too well these past few years, a serious funding crisis has affected many activities aimed at realising better lives for disabled people.

Six organisations of disabled people and Scope have formed an alliance and secured a £4.2million funding grant from the Big Lottery fund capacity build 200 Disabled People's Organisations. The idea of this project is that the funding crisis can be reduced by increasing information, capacity and effectiveness and wants to go far beyond the 200 DPOs to make their materials and information available to all. This alliance is called Disability LIB (Listen Include Build). The aim is to confront discrimination and disablism, and to secure the full and equal rights of disabled people. Disability LIB will provide disabled people's organisations with information, advice and support that will enable them to be more effective, and to play a full part in achieving their aims .

The project has its own website and central office.

www.disabilitylib.org.uk

Disability LIB
6 Market Road
London
N7 9PW

England UK

Telephone: 0844 800 4331

Email: contact@disabilitylib.org.uk

Buiding on our success – Your involvement sought

This is an example of DAA success and how “ A seed of information can lead to a groundswell of action.”:

“Disability Tribune has had some real successes over the years, including the Global Rights Campaign where we asked you to tell us about your lives. We were inundated with your stories and once gathered together they made an extremely powerful document which we delivered personally to the UN Human Rights Commission on the 3rd December 2001. We are certain that this document influenced the decision to begin the elaboration process for a UN Convention protecting the rights and dignity of disabled people.”

DAA, 2005.

We need to keep the pressure on. Our personal stories are powerful.

Please contact us with your stories on the experiences of disabled people, of how society continues to discriminate and stories of unfair treatment or abuse of our human rights: mysay4daa@live.co.uk

UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People

UN Convention in Easy Read

The full name of this agreement is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We call it the Convention on the Rights of Disabled People. It sets out what countries have to do to make sure that disabled people have the same rights as other people. The basic ideas are that disabled people are free to make their own choices, to be included in society as everyone else and are to be respected for who they are. Governments must make sure it does things so that our rights are protected.

<http://www.officefordisability.gov.uk/docs/international-agreement-rights-disabled-people.pdf>

The dawn of a new era.

<http://www.un.org/sg/annan.shtml>

"Today promises to be the dawn of a new era, an era in which disabled people will no longer have to endure the discriminatory practices and attitudes that have been permitted to prevail for all too long. This Convention is a remarkable and forward-looking document." UN

Secretary-General Kofi Annan

You can read his full speech at

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sgsm10797.doc.htm>

A Celebration: Nothing about us without us! Disabled people have to be at the forefront of action. It is no longer acceptable to have other people speak or act for us. The Convention opens up further possibilities. Listen to disabled people celebrate this potential. A celebration and comments given about the Convention on the Rights of Disabled People. When you first use this service, you will be asked to register your name, email address,

organisation details and country. Text version is also available.

<http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/detail/9606.html>

More details about the celebration on the 12th May can be found here. There is even a video

clip. <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=474>

UN Convention Campaign Coalition

Organisations have formed themselves into a coalition to bring political pressure and work to ensure early – and full – commitment from the UK government. They call for all interested groups to join together to campaign for ‘ratification without reservations’. Further information can be found at

<http://www.un-convention.info/page3.html>

House of Lords discusses Convention We have on record, that disabled people’s organisations are crucial in realising rights, and will be involved when the government takes forward not only the convention but the whole range of disability-related policies.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200708/ldhansrd/text/80709-0001.htm>

Disabled by society Our stories: Forced interventions

Disabled people have long been undergoing a range of therapy, treatment and forms of interventions. I myself have enjoyed the benefits of an Australian Physiotherapist (who looked like he had escaped from the set of a famous TV soap), have received emergency hospital interventions, and am pleased with latest developments in a range of pain management regimes. I chose and agreed to these interventions. They are provided not as a means to ‘correct’ impairment, but upon my request and in a way that leaves me in control. The picture is very different for many disabled people, people living in residential homes, survivors and users of Psychiatry, people with learning difficulties and older people who experience much reported systematic abuse or neglect.

The fact is, today, tomorrow and the next day, many interventions continue in the UK and world-wide, which are cruel or degrading, even torture to disabled people. Disabled people and their allies have been trying to close down a residential school that uses electric shock as a form of punishment for young people with Autism. This intervention is used to punish or 'correct' the children. Young people with Autism were also forced to listen to loud static through a helmet. DAA collects and catalogues evidence of such treatment, and any human rights abuses experienced by disabled people. We invite you to contact us with your stories. Email: mysay4daa@live.co.uk

Article 11 forced interventions

A paper by Tina Minkowitz explains why disabled people argue so strongly against any form of forced interventions. The context within which 'treatment' or interventions that are meant to be 'good for us' takes place is often one of an imbalance of power between the professional or expert and the disabled person. This power disadvantage is in-built into the system of 'treatment and care', that assumes that our impairments are a deficit and need to be corrected.

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/art11suppl.htm>

Forced Treatment even in your own home?

The UK Government's Mental Health Act 2007 introduced the idea of providing forced interventions not only in hospitals, but also in the community. These alarming measures extend forced treatment beyond hospital. They are called Compulsory Treatment Orders. This means that even more power is given to professionals. Far-reaching powers can specify a treatment regime even into the person's own home. It gives powers to decide on and limit their lifestyles, for example, forcing them to take certain medicine, or saying what time they have to be in at night. In Ireland campaigners want their law changed (see below).

Easy Read guide to compulsory treatment orders is given in this link

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/09/03145057/11>

Mental Health Petition

Activist Mary Maddock, psychiatric survivor and founder-member of MindFreedom Ireland presented her petition to the European Union. She wants the law to be changed, because people with mental health issues can at the moment be forced to take medication. This is an example of a forced intervention. Her petition is entitled 'The Illegality of Ireland's Mental Health Act of 2001 as it Concerns the Forced Use of Mind Altering Drugs on Unwilling patients.' A copy of the petition text can be accessed at

<http://www.mindfreedom.org/as/act/inter/mfire/maddock-petitions-ireland>

International news

Easing life for disabled refugees Abdi Salah fled the civil war in his native Somalia at the age of 11. Mr. Salah has polio and is among the estimated 3 million disabled people who have fled conflict, war, or natural disasters. Listen to his story (duration: 3'30"):

<http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/detail/10056.html>

Who has signed the Convention and made it a law in their country?

Here is a list of countries in alphabetical order that have completely agreed to (ratified) the Convention.

- Australia** - 17 July 2008
- Bangladesh** - 30 November 2007
- Croatia** - 15 August 2007
- Cuba** - 6 September 2007
- Ecuador** - 3 April 2008
- Egypt** - 14 April 2008
- El Salvador** - 14 December 2007
- Gabon** - 1 October 2007
- Guinea** - 8 February 2008
- Honduras** - 14 April 2008
- Hungary** - 20 July 2007
- India** - 1 October 2007

- Jamaica** - 30 March 2007
- Jordan** - 31 March 2008
- Kenya** - 19 May 2008
- Mali** - 7 April 2008
- Mexico** - 17 December 2007
- Namibia** - 4 December 2007
- Nicaragua** - 7 December 2007
- Niger** - 24 June 2008
- Panama** - 7 August 2007
- Peru** - 30 January 2008
- Philippines** - 15 April 2008
- Qatar** - 13 May 2008
- San Marino** - 22 February 2008
- Saudi Arabia** - 24 June 2008
- Slovenia** - 24 April 2008
- South Africa** - 30 November 2007
- Spain** - 3 December 2007
- Tunisia** - 2 April 2008

You can access updates on the progress around the world at

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=18&pid=257>

There are 5 regional groups of UN Member States:

- African States
- Asian States
- Eastern European States
- Latin American and Caribbean States
- Western Europe and Other States Group
- Eastern European States

To support the global campaign, go to **Ratify Now!**

<http://ratifynow.org/ratifynow-faq/>

Users and Survivors of Psychiatry

“It is now the task of the world community to bring the ideals that are laid out in the Convention into reality.”

says the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry in February 2008.

European Countries say how rights are progressing

DAA is contributing to information gathering. On the question of how well the countries are doing in getting on

with the Convention, government officials and organisations of disabled people often have conflicting views. A research centre for Human Rights of Disabled People in Finland (VIKE) is conducting a survey on the processes of ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Disabled People in seven European states. The chosen countries are Finland, Germany, Hungary, Serbia, Sweden, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. Further details at <http://www.kynnys.fi/vike.html>

And Finally...

"I am disabled just like I'm female ...

Just like I'm Korean

Just like I'm 20 years old

There are no ifs about it.

Yet non-disabled people enjoy summing this up as not having "hope"

(that's their reasoning for why a lot of us are anti-stem cell)

But the thing is...

I have hope- lots of it. ...

Hope for justice, pride, solidarity.

I just don't waste my hope on silly things

Like wishing I could walk again."

(extract from a poem by Ms Cripp Chick)

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your time. We look forward to hearing from you, do contact us at mysay4daa@live.co.uk We are proud and excited to be part of this struggle to make all our rights a reality.

The next edition will bring you further information and up-dates on the Convention. We also look at the issue of bio-ethics and will, of course, share your stories. Bye for now.