

Taking Control of My Life

What stops people with a learning disability from doing this?

How can we help people to take control and responsibility?



SpeakEasy N.O.W.

People's Parliament Report 2025





This year SpeakEasy N.O.W. Expert Members chose Taking Control of My Life as our People's Parliament topic.



We have been talking to lots of people with a learning disability across Worcestershire, to find out what this means to them.



We wanted to know -



The different things people do and the achievements they are proud of.



What stops people with a learning disability from taking control of their lives?



How can we help people to take more control and responsibility?



What we found out



People with a learning disability are not all the same. Having a learning disability is only one part of who we are.



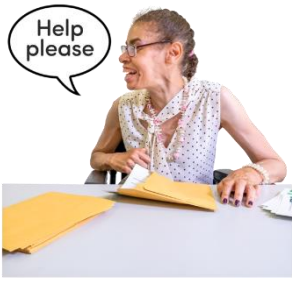
Some people's lives are greatly affected by their learning disability.



They need lots of help and support every day. Some need someone with them all the time.



Others are very independent and need little or no help.



Then there are lots of others in between who need different levels of help for different things.



People with a learning disability have as much right as anyone to lead the best life possible.



For many, this would mean that they can be as independent as possible.



They might still need help and support, but want to be able to make their own decisions. This would give them more control over their lives.



Doing this is not always easy. There are lots of things that can stop this from happening. These are some of the things we've been told.



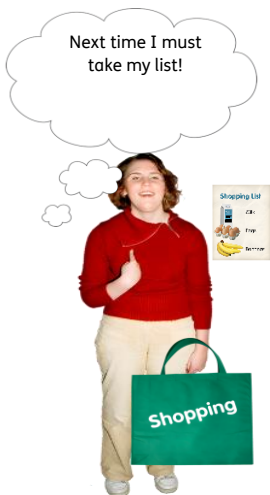
What stops people with a learning disability from taking control of their lives?



Other people often think we're too vulnerable. They worry we'll be at risk and may get hurt or get into trouble. They make decisions for us to keep us safe.



If we do get into difficulties, people assume we always will. Not enough is done to help us get through the difficulty and learn from our mistakes.



People worry we might make poor decisions. Everybody does this from time to time. Why can't we?



We might not make decisions that other people agree with. They can persuade us to change our minds or ignore us. Sometimes this is in our best interests. But not always.



We don't get opportunities to have new experiences and learn new skills. This might be because we don't have enough support or because the support we receive is poor quality.



We might not be able to go to places and events because we have no transport, or we don't feel welcome.



Services and organisations are not easy to contact. You often need to be able to use a computer to do this.



Trying to telephone them is hard with lots of different options to choose from. When we do speak to someone, we may not be able to understand what they're saying, or they can't understand us.



Information isn't always available in a form we can understand. We receive letters that we can't read. We may miss appointments or deadlines. People think we're ignoring them or that we're careless and irresponsible.



People hear the words learning disability and assume things about us. Some people think it means we can't look after ourselves or do the things they do.



If we have a support worker with us people can talk with them not us.



All of these things can create barriers. These barriers prevent people with a learning disability taking control of their lives.



Not everyone wants to take more control of their life. Some people don't want to be more independent and are happy to let other people make decisions for them. They like the life they have and feel happy and safe with the people who care for them.



Some people do not have the ability to take more control. They are very dependent on others for their care and support.



But a lot of us want to have more control and independence and have worked hard to achieve it. We've met a lot of these people and know that it's not always been easy for them.



Some people have achieved a lot of independence and they're happy with how they live their lives.



It may not have always been easy, but they've had good advice and support from family, friends, and different agencies. This has been constant through good times and bad.



They've been encouraged to be more independent, and people respect the life choices they make.



They have their own home and take responsibility for looking after it.



They have paid employment or do voluntary work.



They manage their finances with or without help from others.



They learn to drive and have their own car.



They plan their days. They decide what they do and when they do it.



But sometimes things go wrong.



People get frustrated and are in a hurry to be independent.

They may not have the skills or knowledge they need to take full control of their lives.



They might reject help and support from others. This often happens if it means they have to do something they don't want to do such as paying bills instead of having more money to spend.



Even if people have help and support, they can make poor decisions or act carelessly.



They might lose friends and upset people.



They might do things that put them at risk and make them more vulnerable.



Things happen like getting into debt, losing a job or losing your home.



This is why when people become more independent, they should also become more responsible.



If things go wrong, they should be prepared to put things right. They might need help and advice from others to do this.



Lots of people struggle with being independent, not just people with a learning disability.



Things like being in debt, poverty, homelessness, loneliness, feeling isolated, poor mental health and physical health problems affect everyone.



Having a learning disability and trying to deal with any of these additional things can be hard.



In spite of all this, we know many people with a learning disability who are happy with their lives and the control they have over it.

Some have more control than others.



Some are aiming to take more control and are working hard to learn the skills they need to do this.



How can we help people to take control and responsibility?



➔ Getting the right support at the right time



Involve us in our support planning. This is about our life and how we want to live it.



Make sure our support staff have the right skills and knowledge to help us.



This is not always easy.

It will involve managing risks when we try new things or take more control.



If we make mistakes they need to know when to step in and help or stand back and let us sort it ourselves.



Be able to respond quickly if things go wrong or aren't working well.



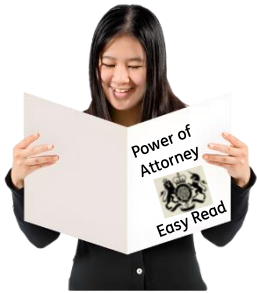
Involve people with a learning disability in staff training.



 Help us to understand



Remove barriers that stop us from getting information and support.



Make sure we have the information we need to manage our health, money, safety and support needs.



Provide information in a way we can understand. Using simple language, short sentences and larger font size.



Make services easier to access and not just available to contact online.



Where online contact is used, make this simpler and easier to use.



Help us to improve our digital skills.



Make telephone contact simpler. More direct contact with a person rather than lots of options to choose from.



 **Celebrate our achievements**



It's important to raise awareness about the things we achieve. This will help others to recognise our potential and not underestimate what we could do.



We are proud to see what people with a learning disability can achieve and wanted to celebrate this.



We have made a short film that shows some of these achievements. Please take the time to watch it and celebrate with us.



A big thank you to everyone who shared their experiences and helped us to make our film.

