

John Evans interview transcript

My name is John Evans and I am currently working with the Department of Health on the User Led Organisation Project. My background is in disability rights and disability legislation. At the same time I work in Europe and I'm on the Board of Directors of the European Disability Forum and The European Network of Independent Living.

One of the difficulties is that the personalisation and transformation of adult social care is taking on quite a high level of activity and responsibility within local authorities but it's not often including user led organisations within that process so we want to see commissioners being able to integrate user led organisations within that organisation and also being able to try and encourage them to be part of that. Because if anybody can actually advise and help direct the transformation of adult social care services it's user led organisations. So, they have a key fundamental role which can enable local authorities to improve their own capacity and their own delivery of services in their areas.

Within the Putting People First milestones that are now out there and each local authority is supposed to be looking at what they're doing and how they're achieving progress. They should be looking at the current milestone which is about user led organisations and about local authorities working together with user led organisations, at least around personal budgets and also with carers. So, I think it's important that the local authority sticks to those milestones and actually does something with it.

The monitoring exercise that the Department of Health is embarking upon is really to look at what the situation is at the end of 2010 to see what local authorities have user led organisations and we would like to then revisit that in 2011 to see if any further progress has been made as a result of that.

The vision I would like to see in terms of the User Led Organisation Project within five years is that every local authority in the country would have a user led organisation and those user led organisations would be working in co-production with the local authorities and we would have a cultural shift where the policies and the services being developed at a local level were not just being developed by a local authority, but they were being developed in a co-productive way with the user led organisations in those areas. And I think if that was the case then we'd have much better services. And if we look at Equality 2025 which is also something that came out of the Improving Life Chances report, which is about having true equality by 2025. I mean that's a long way away, but I would like to think that within five years that we would be well on the way of having a situation where there would be equality of opportunity and much more rights than there are now for disabled people to be engaged in the work of their local authorities.