



all about people

News from BILD

26 September 2011

BILD's journey goes on as charity celebrates 40 years

Kidderminster-based national charity BILD, The British Institute of Learning Disabilities, celebrates their 40th birthday next month and will be launching an Anniversary Fundraising Appeal at their annual conference in Birmingham on 7 October.

BILD was founded in the Lea Castle long stay hospital in Kidderminster in 1971. Their founder, Professor Gerry Simon, believed strongly that there were better ways to support people with learning disabilities than the long stay hospitals of that time. Ever since then, BILD has remained at the forefront of learning disability developments in the UK by highlighting what needs to change, and how, and providing the practical support to people and organisations to do this.

The last 40 years have seen many changes in the lives of people with learning disabilities and their families, among them the closure of the long stay hospitals – including Lea Castle in Kidderminster – and the introduction of local support for people in their own community based on their individual needs.

“There has been great progress over the last 40 years, and people with learning disabilities and their families have been at the heart of it”, said Keith Smith, BILD Chief Executive, “From the start, BILD recognised the need to listen to the experiences of people with learning disabilities, and their families. Their voices, heard through advocacy, have given people with learning disabilities much more choice and control in their lives.”

Local advocacy organisations, like Our Way Self Advocacy in Kidderminster, have done marvellous work supporting local people with learning disabilities, and their families.

“Four decades ago people with learning disabilities were amongst the most powerless people in society”, said Sylvia Lacy of Our Way Self Advocacy, “It was unthinkable that people with learning disabilities would be speaking out and organising themselves to seek better living situations, social and political equality, and decent paid jobs. With support from advocacy and self advocacy organisations, people with learning disabilities have gained the confidence to speak up and make changes.”

“Never in a million years did I think my son would ever live away from home let alone ever have a girlfriend, now he is engaged and getting married!”, said a local parent of a person with a learning disability.

“I feel stronger because now I am given the chance to say how I feel and people actually listen, years ago no-one listened”, said a local self advocate.

But while this progress has worked for some, it hasn't worked for everyone. For many there is still a struggle to be faced. What support you get can depend on where you live - and the budget cuts are making this situation worse. And the abuse at a learning disability specialist hospital shown on Panorama recently has raised serious concerns about some care services and their regulation.

At their annual conference in Birmingham on 7 October BILD will be launching their 40th Anniversary Fundraising Appeal to help safeguard their future. BILD receives no funding from Government and relies on income from their services and donations to cover costs and ensure their work continues.

They are calling on everyone who would like to support their work – and every contribution, large and small can make a difference - to contribute to the appeal by telephoning them on 01562 723010 or online at www.bild.org.uk

ENDS

Notes: Attached is information about the 40th Anniversary Fundraising Appeal.

For more information please contact BILD's Communications Manager, Peter Salisbury on 01562 723010 or email p.salisbury@bild.org.uk

BILD (The British Institute of Learning Disabilities) is based in Kidderminster, Worcestershire and was founded in 1971.

BILD's vision is a society where people with learning disabilities are equal citizens and have access to the support and services they need. We work to make this happen in partnership with people with a learning disability and family carers. They are the real 'experts', knowing what support is needed, and what needs to change to improve the quality of their lives.

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The British Institute of Learning Disabilities

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BILD's 40th Anniversary fundraising appeal: your support can make a real difference

Forty years ago, the British Institute of Learning Disabilities, began a journey. Our founder, Professor Gerry Simon, was a leader in a time of change who believed strongly that there were better ways to support people with learning disabilities than the long stay hospitals of that time. Ever since then, BILD has remained at the forefront by highlighting what needs to change, and how.

The last 40 years have seen many changes in the lives of people with learning disabilities and their families. We've seen the closure of the long stay hospitals – including Lea Castle, where BILD was founded – the introduction of person centred approaches and local support for people in their own community. BILD has long been involved in training and developing the people who provide support, and today we can see a more knowledgeable and skilled workforce.

From the start, BILD recognised the importance of listening to the experiences of people with learning disabilities, and their families. Their voices, heard through advocacy, have given people with learning disabilities much more choice and control in their lives, and ensured greater involvement. Through their own hard work, families and relatives are now rightfully being recognised as expert care partners.

But this progress has worked for some, but not all. For many there is still a struggle to be faced. What support you get can depend on where you live - and the budget cuts are making this situation worse. Many individuals continue to live with older parents, some have limited links in their local communities and some are a target for hate crime. People from black and minority communities, those whose behaviour challenges services and people with profound and multiple disabilities all too often receive inadequate responses to their individual needs. The recent abuse shown on Panorama has raised serious concerns about care planning, safeguarding, commissioning and regulation.

Clearly there is still much to do, and BILD's journey must continue. Your support can help us to do this.

BILD receives no funding from Government and relies on income from our services and donations to cover our costs and ensure our work continues.

As part of BILD's 40th Anniversary appeal we are asking people to show their support for our work by:

- Making a donation
- Setting up a regular monthly donation, from £4 a month to £40 a month. Whatever you can afford will make a real difference
- If you have thought about making a will or leaving a legacy please talk to us about this – we can arrange for your gift to make a specific project or initiative happen

You can make a donation at www.bild.org.uk or you can call 01562 723013 to make a donation by phone or to set up a regular monthly payment.

If you would like to talk to someone about making a will or leaving a legacy or to talk about what specifically your donation could fund, please call me on 01562 723010 or email k.smith@bild.org.uk

Thank you for your support.



Keith Smith
BILD Chief Executive

