



Section three: the conclusions and recommendations

The procedures need to be part of a wider system of participation which offers both a range of opportunities for people to voice their concerns outside the rather confrontational context of complaining and reinforces the message that people's views count.

(Simons 1995a p37)¹

It was clear from the onset of the project that simply making complaints leaflets easier to understand and procedures simpler to follow would never meet the needs of people with the most complex communication needs. As identified by writers on the subject from the 1990s onwards, there is a much wider agenda of service and society responsiveness to the basic human needs of individuals. As the project progressed there was an emerging consensus around what would help people who are seldom heard to be more effectively listened to by others, including ways in which their 'complaints' could be heard. The need to promote and uphold the human rights of people with learning disabilities became the underlying theme of this project.

The rest of this pack contains information on each of the key areas identified by the project with examples of good practice, resources and perhaps most importantly, real life stories about people's attempts to hear from people who are seldom heard.

The six areas of good practice are as follows:

- 1. Getting to know people really well** so you can see things as far as possible from their point of view and spot when they may be unhappy. This very much links into good person centred thinking and planning and there some examples of this that have been shared with us that show how this can work.
- 2. Learning to communicate better** with those people who are seldom heard (a recurring theme which underpins any good practice in supporting people with learning disabilities).
- 3. Raising awareness of the human rights of people who are seldom heard** including the right to complain, both amongst people with learning disabilities and those who support and care for them.



4. Access to appropriate advocacy such as citizen and non-instructed advocacy for all who are unable to represent their own views and feelings easily.

5. Access to complaints buddies - somebody who can look out for them and take action on their behalf. This could be a family member, a friend, a person with learning disabilities, or a paid worker. The people with learning disabilities we consulted on this project were keen on this idea. Several of them felt that they could take on this role for some less able of their friends but expressed the need for support and resources to help them maintain independence and carry out this role.

6. Making use of effective complaints procedures. Although people who are seldom heard are rarely if ever, able to access these themselves it is clear that families, support staff and complaints buddies need to know how to use these systems effectively to complain on behalf of the individual if necessary.

These areas are contained in the section entitled '**The Good Practice Recommendations**'. For each recommendation, there is a folder containing some basic information explaining the rationale for the recommendation together with examples of good practice, people's stories and reference lists. In addition there are resource files for each recommendation with useful materials that will help you to develop your own response to this recommendation.

¹ **I'm not complaining but ... Complaints Procedures in Social Services Departments**, Ken Simons, Joseph Rowntree Foundation (May 1995)