

NDMAC CHRONOLOGY

1970 - 2026

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NDMAC / **The National Disability
Movement Archive
& Collection**

INTRODUCTION

This chronology, commissioned by the National Disability Movement Archive and Collection (NDMAC), focuses on the period January 1st, 1970 to July 31st, 2026, but includes dates and events prior to this that have had an influence on the focus period.

It is a simple timeline of the activities of the UK disability movement and organisations and events that influenced it. It is intended as an introduction to encourage further exploration of the personalities, organisations, issues and events of the fight for Disability rights – it does not list every action, protest or group. This chronology has been drawn from multiple sources but the history of the UK Disability movement is still being made today: in no way should it be regarded as complete or completed.

The stories of the fight for Disability rights in the UK are a mixture of individual and collective actions, large and small, with the contribution of charities and government still being debated and assessed.

The chronology provides significant dates for 3 areas concerning the UK Disability movement:

- Activism & Protest – Disabled led actions to improve the lives of Disabled people
- Organisations – The bodies Disabled people created to fight for their rights, and the other organisations that helped or hindered them
- Politics & Policy – Bills, acts and laws: government policies affecting Disabled people enacted by Disabled people, their allies or opponents

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1890 – 1940

THE BEGINNING

Disabled People have been campaigning for their rights since the earliest years of the 20th Century and this early period reflects many of the trends, issues and avenues for protest that would be followed from 1970 onwards.

Disabled people organised themselves into some of the earliest disability led organizations like the British Deaf Association. They combined their efforts with the efforts of allies, like the trade union movement.

Industrial labour, the daily hazards of modern society, and two world wars created a great many impairments in the early 1900s.

As has always been the case, the influence of charities and politics both helped and hindered the Disability movement, depending on the level of involvement of and consultation with Disabled people themselves.

1890 - Organisations

The first recorded UK Disabled people's organisation is formed - The British Deaf Association

1899 - Organisations

The National League of the Blind and Disabled (NLBD) registered as a Trade Union, remaining as such until 2000. It is also said to be the oldest surviving Disabled persons' organisation in the world. Its first leader was Ben Purse, a piano tuner.

1912 - Organisations, Activism & Protest

The National League of the Blind and Disabled (NLBD) organised its first strike.

1919 - Organisations

With thousands of injured soldiers returning from World War 1, the Central Council for the Care of Cripples was set up. COAC still exists today having changed its name to RADAR and again to Disability Rights UK.

1920 April 5th to 25th - Activism & Protest

The National League of the Blind and Disabled (NLBD) organised a march to Trafalgar Square from Leeds, Manchester and Newport in support of what became the Blind Persons Act of September 1920. This march inspired the 1936 Jarrow March protesting unemployment and poverty.

1922 April - Organisations

The Disabled Drivers' Motor Club (DDMC) was originally formed by 6 First World War ex-servicemen who met while having artificial limbs fitted at St Mary's Hospital, Roehampton.

1930s - Organisations

The Deaf community develops through local clubs, sporting events and social gatherings, despite the efforts of some deaf schools to eradicate the use of sign language.

1936 - Activism & Protest

The National League of the Blind organised a march to London which led to a further Blind Persons Act in 1938.

1944 – 1970

MAKING “A COUNTRY FIT FOR HEROES”

The role of government in helping Disabled people achieve their rights is heightened by the introduction of the welfare state and other measures designed to address the needs and aspirations of returning servicemen and women. However, seeking change through the political process, rather than via the activism of a mass movement of Disabled people, often leads to division in the Disability movement.

Various initiatives to restore the fitness, mobility, daily living skills and morale of Disabled servicemen and women began to spread to the rest of the Disabled population.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Leonard Cheshire, RNIB and the Spastics Society establish residential homes for disabled people. Prior to this the only option for Disabled children and adults was to be (often forcibly) put into mental institutions or hospitals for the chronically sick or elderly, often for the rest of their lives.

Le Court, the first Leonard Cheshire home represented an alternative home for ‘the disabled’. There was an apparently easy-going attitude, a democratic residents’ committee controlling a publication ‘Cheshire Smile’ and a film making unit. However, as local authorities began to pay for more places at these types of homes, they became more strictly managed and began to “medicalise” treatment of their residents and their living arrangements. The desire to escape these increasingly repressive environments and to live independently formed one of the primary goals for Disabled activists in the 1960s and 1970s

Disabled people did not remain passive and many campaigning disability charities formed in the 1940s and 50s. However, none were led by Disabled people.

1944 - Politics & Policy

The Beveridge report establishes the concept of a welfare state with support to those who need it from the “cradle to the grave.” The concept has great appeal throughout British society and particularly to members of the armed forces, contributing to a Labour victory unseating Winston Churchill before the war’s end. Ultimately resulting in the creation of the NHS, it also inadvertently led to an increase in the number of state run residential hospitals and segregated educational establishments.

The 1944 Disability Employment Act promised sheltered employment, reserved occupations and employment quotas for Disabled people.

Sheltered work was to be offered via a network of “British factories.” This network was later named REMPLOY

1946 - Organisations, Politics & Policy

The Invacar, the 1st government sanctioned vehicle for Disabled people, began production. Manufacture was discontinued in 1977 and replaced by the Motability scheme.

The charities MENCAP & MIND are founded.

1948 - Organisations, Politics & Policy

The NHS was founded. The new service extended rehabilitation services previously only offered to returning servicemen and women to workers disabled by industrial accidents.

The Invalid tricycle association was founded.

1948 - Organisations

A wheelchair archery competition between recovering disabled ex-servicemen was held on the lawns of Stoke Mandeville hospital, marking the creation of what would become the Paralympic Games. Originally conceived as a form of constructive rehabilitation, the Games have become the second biggest sporting event on earth.

1951 - Activism & Protest

A ‘silent reproach’ march of 800 Disabled ex-servicemen, members of the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen’s Association, walked to 10 Downing Street. A key moment, when Disabled individuals shifted from being passive recipients of charity to active participants in a social protest movement.

1951 - Organisations

The Greater London Association of Disabled People (GLAD) was set up.

1952 - Organisations

Scope (originally 'The Spastics Society') was founded by 3 parents and a social worker who wanted Disabled children to have equal rights and opportunities.

1959 - Politics & Policy

The Mental Health Act was an act of the UK Parliament. Its main objective was to abolish the distinction between psychiatric hospitals and other types of hospitals and to deinstitutionalise mental health patients and see them treated more by community care. It also defined the term mental disorder for the first time, calling it mental illness as distinct from a learning disability. At the time, 0.4% of the population of England were housed in asylums. The act was designed to make treatment voluntary and informal, and where compulsory, give it a proper legal framework and made as a medical decision, and to move treatment, where possible, away from institutional care to that in the community. Another of the changes introduced by the Act was the abolishment of the category of "moral imbecile". Introduced in 1913, the category, had been defined in such vague terms that it had allowed also mothers of illegitimate children to be regarded as "moral imbeciles" and thus to be placed in an institution for defectives or to be placed under guardianship.

1962 - Activism & Protest

Protests by residents at the Le Court Cheshire home led to changes in the philosophy of the Le Court management committee and other Cheshire Homes, though not before Paul Hunt and other residents were threatened with expulsion.

1963

Disabled architect Selwyn Goldsmith, working against 'architectural disability' and the 'institutional discrimination' of buildings which placed barriers in the way of Disabled people who wanted to use them published his first book.

'Designing for the Disabled' (1963) was the first guidance for architects on disability access whether for wheelchair users, visually impaired people, Deaf people etc. anyone who had difficulty negotiating buildings. It is still used today. His work in Norwich in 1967 led to the introduction of the dropped kerb to British pavements and further developed his theory of Universal design, or architecture conceived for everyone in society.

1965 - Organisations

Founding of The Disablement Income Group (DIG) in Godalming, Surrey. It is considered the first pan-impairment pressure group in Britain, and was created to campaign for the introduction of a full disability income through social security for all Disabled people. DIG was founded by housewives, Megan du Boisson and Berit Moore due their objection to social security disability payments that were dependent on the cause and extent of an impairment. People injured in war or in the workplace were entitled to significantly more support than the other Disabled people. DIG was formed and run by Disabled people and brought disability to the attention of the general public. Its organisation represents the beginnings of the modern disability movement.

1966 - Activism & Protest

Paul Hunt publishes Stigma: The Experience of Disability which explores disabled people's place in and experience of wider UK society.

A demonstration in Trafalgar Square was a landmark rally organised by Disability movement activists calling for fair financial support and pensions according to the nature of the disability. Paul Hunt and members of DIG attended.

1967 - Politics & Policy

The UK Abortion act is passed. In addition to legalising abortion, the act also stated abortion was justified if child was likely to be born "handicapped".

1968

Thalidomide compensation payments agreed after many children were born with physical impairments as a result of the drug being wrongly prescribed to their mothers to alleviate morning sickness. 10,000s of children were effected worldwide.

1968 July 4th - Activism & Protest

DIG organised rally in Trafalgar Square to protest poverty among Disabled people and demanding a national disability income.

1970S

A NEW BEGINNING

In the 1970s, echoing the struggles of other identity focused movements, Disabled people began to found their own organisations to articulate their desire to be allowed to fairly and fully participate in UK society. Campaigners quickly realised that this would only be possible by removing the barriers that had been created to prevent this by nondisabled government, the medical establishment and society in general. The whole concept of disability was to be redefined by its relationship to these barriers.

Many campaigns of the time focussed on access to independent living outside the residential institutions, sufficient income and fairly paid employment. By the end of the decade, individuals and organisations were ready to challenge and remove the barriers that excluded Disabled people. Unlike previous decades, this removal and solutions would be proposed and enacted by Disabled people themselves.

1970 May 29th - Politics & Policy

Labour MP Alf Morris' private members bill received its royal assent, producing the Chronically Disabled and Sick Persons Act 1970 (to commence on 1st October 1972). The provisions of the act placed a legal obligation on local authorities to make access arrangements for Disabled people to public buildings. Section 2 of the act makes specific provision for welfare services such as providing meals at home, help acquiring a radio and television, a library card and other recreational services; assistance with obtaining travel to and from home; assistance with adaptations to the home; for the installation of telephones or special equipment necessary to enable the use of a telephone; for the provision of vehicles. The passage of the bill was assisted by Mary Greaves of the Disablement Income Group (DIG).

1970s - Activism & Protest

A Mental Health Survivors' Movement developed parallel to the development of the Disability Movement, though many members did not identify as disabled, "just different." A diversity of groups appeared, due to the ongoing closure programme of mental hospitals and the growth of 'care in the community'.

1971 September 1st - Politics & Policy

Invalidity benefit is introduced in the UK.

1972 - Activism & Protest

Ed Roberts and his associates establish a Centre for Independent Living (CIL) in Berkeley, California, USA. It offers wheelchair repairs, help with finding housing and work and other advice to Disabled students and the local community. It had a great influence on the Independent living movement in the UK

1972 - Politics & Policy

Labour MP Alf Morris becomes 1st UK Minister for the disabled

1972 onwards

An increasing number of television documentaries (For example, ITV Granada's World in Action and the BBC's Man Alive) bring the daily lives and concerns of Disabled people to a wider audience

1972 September 20th - Activism & Protest

Paul Hunt, a resident of the Le Court Leonard Cheshire home, writes a letter to The Guardian newspaper inviting other Disabled people to form a group to articulate, challenge and resolve the issues effecting their lives.

Later in 1972 Paul Hunt's letter led to the establishment of the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in partnership with Vic Finkelstein. UPIAS rejected charity advocacy for disabled people in preference for political action by a mass movement of Disabled people, developed a new concept of disability which was later codified as the Social model of Disability and rejected the "leading" role of non-disabled experts in working out what was best for Disabled people. Other prominent members include Sian Vasey and Ken & Maggie Davis

1973 March 21st - Organisations

About 100 people meet to discuss forming a Mental Patients Union at Paddington Day Hospital. The majority were patients or ex-patients. Most lived in London and they discovered that this was not the first Mental Patients' Union: some attendees had previously formed the Scottish Union of Mental Patients and a similar group in Oxford. A message was also received from another group in Leeds. A national Mental Patients Union was formed with full membership reserved for patients and ex-patients.

1974 - Activism & Protest

In 1974, after a hard-fought campaign by the charity Enable, all children in Scotland were given the right to go to school. This basic right had previously been denied to children who had learning disabilities.

1975 December 9th - Politics & Policy

The Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons is made a human rights declaration of the General Assembly of the United Nations. It is the 3447th resolution made by the Assembly.

1975

Link – a news and magazine programme for Disabled people first aired on ITV. Presented by Rosalie (later Baroness) Wilkins until 1988, early episodes featured Vic Finkelstein of UPIAS talking about the social model of disability and Very Crossroads, a limited animation cartoon created by Finkelstein featuring a society totally modelled on the requirements of Disabled people to the exclusion of the non-disabled population. Link continued until 1999.

1976 - Organisations, Activism & Protest

Formation of Protection of the Rights of Mental Patients in Therapy. It became the Campaign Against Psychiatric Oppression (CAPO) in 1985.

UPIAS publish The Fundamental Principles of Disability. The text challenges the role the non-disabled, medical establishment, charities and "experts" play in deciding the lives of Disabled people and their place in society. It lays out the fundamentals of a way of understanding Disabled people's lives that will later be called the Social Model of Disability.

Ken and Maggie Davis, two leading members of UPIAS, pioneered independent living in the UK by commissioning their own accessible housing scheme at Grove Road in Sutton in Ashfield. They moved in 1976 after buying the land, working with architects and bringing in adapted fittings from Sweden. The project saw specially designed housing for Disabled people integrated into general housing.

1978 - Organisations

Motability Scheme starts, to provide alternatives to the use of the increasingly inappropriate Invacar.

1979 - Organisations, Politics & Policy

Rosalie Wilkins (a presenter on ITV's LINK programme) presents a film about the USA's Berkeley Centre for Independent Living, entitled "We shall not go away." In 1973 she had presented a film on a Dutch village of Disabled people.

Alf Morris established the Committee on Restrictions Against Disabled People (CORAD). Prominent disability studies academic, Prof Colin Barnes identified the creation of CORAD as the start of the UK movement for disabled people's civil rights because it analysed the restrictions against disabled people systematically, including in education and employment. CORAD's findings were ignored by the incoming new Conservative minister for the disabled, Hugh Rossi MP.

1979 - Activism & Protest

Start of Project 81, a pioneering UK initiative led by residents leaving institutional care. It proved Disabled people could manage their own support, helping create the Independent Living Movement and direct payments.

Formed in 1979 by John Evans and others leaving the Le Court residential home in Hampshire and named in anticipation of 1981, the United Nations International Year of Disabled People. P81 aimed to prove that people with severe impairments could live active lives in the community using state funds to hire their own personal assistants. It sparked the wider UK Independent Living Movement and led to the creation of the Hampshire Centre for Independent Living in 1985 and other CILs elsewhere in the UK. P81 also led to national changes allowing direct payments to the recipient of care, rather than a caring institution.

1979 - Organisations, Activism & Protest

SPOD is created, the association to aid the sexual and personal relationships of people with a disability.

1979 March 31st - Politics & Policy

The first figures for numbers of people claiming sickness and invalidity benefit are published.

1980S

FOR OR OF?

The decade saw the rise of the call for anti-discrimination legislation, the call for buildings and the environment to be made more accessible to Disabled people, and also Disabled people increasingly supporting other rights-oriented campaigns.

1980 - Organisations, Activism & Protest

Foundation of the Liberation Network of Disabled People (LNDP). Heavily influenced by the Women's Movement of the 1970s, they focused on breaking down isolation by finding ways to communicate with each other whether deaf, blind or physically impaired. Many of their ideas were developed by Micheline Mason and others in the organisation's 'In From the Cold' magazine. Selected Principles of LNDP include:

- To seek to abolish all forms of segregation particularly in education settings and residential institutions
- To seek allies amongst able bodied people (i.e. people who will help us fight for ourselves-not on our behalf)
- To seek complete self-determination and control over our representation in the media and to have control over information put out about us.
- To encourage people with disabilities to organise themselves into active
- groups which will discuss the implications of achieving their rights at international, national and local levels, and will seek to change or influence conditions around them.
- To make allies of, and be allies to, all oppressed groups

The people and thinking behind LNDP helped later form the Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE)

1980-1981 - Organisations, Activism & Protest

Disabled people withdrew from a Rehabilitation International Conference in Winnipeg and under the leadership of Henry Enns agreed to set up national representative councils in their countries. In 1981 this led to the formation of the Disabled People's International (DPI) Vic Finkelstein was one of three UK delegates to their opening conference. The DPI's slogan was "Nothing about us without us."

1981 - Organisations, Activism & Protest

The United Nations International Year of Disabled People in 1981 provided opportunities for Disabled people to seek funding to set up groups and organisations run by and for Disabled people.

Founding of the Derbyshire Coalition of Disabled People (DCDP) and Derbyshire Centre for Independent Living, pioneering, disabled-led advocacy organizations by activists including Ken and Maggie Davis. It was the first CIL organization of its kind in Britain, established to promote self-determination, civil rights, and independent living for Disabled people.

Sisters against Disablement is founded by Disabled feminists to promote the concerns and interests of Disabled women. SAS had a large LGBT Membership and became known for picketing feminist events it assessed as inaccessible to disabled people. It later published and distributed guidance on ideal event accessibility.

The term "the Social Model of Disability" is used for the first time, by Mike Oliver in J. Campling's (1981) *The Handicapped Person: A New Perspective for Social Workers*.

1980-1985 - Organisations

The first UK Centres for Independent Living (CILs) established in Hampshire, Derbyshire and Greenwich.

1981 June 13th - Organisations, Activism & Protest

A UPIAS organised meeting established of the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People (BCODP). The BCODP was set up with 7 founding national organisations run by disabled people. It challenged the existing disability establishment, run by charities. From the start the BCODP focused on describing its membership by the unifying social model of disability rather than by specific impairment or by specific campaign. The International Year of the Disabled in 1981 and the need to send delegates to the newly forming Disabled People International conference in Singapore were both strong incentives to forming the organisation.

An early focus of the BCODP was around Independent Living with the first meeting of this committee in 1982. In later years it established the National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL).

By 1995 the BCODP represented 110 Disabled led organisations and a membership of 300,000 disabled people. The BCODP was prominent in the campaigns and protests which led to the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995. The division between the 'of' and 'for' organisations re-emerged when the Rights Now Coalition split over whether the provisions of the DDA were adequate. Disabled-led organisations viewed the DDA as a weak alternative to the comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation they wanted. Pressure from BCODP led the incoming 1997 Labour Government to strengthen the legislation (2001), including education and in 2005 they imposed a proactive duty on the public sector to promote disability equality. After 2005 the strength of the Disability Movement and BCODP waned.

The BCODP had two changes in its name and structure: first in 1997 becoming the British Council of Disabled People (still known as BCODP), and in 2006 becoming the United Kingdom's Disabled People's Council (UKDPC).

In 2014, the UKDPC's last member of paid staff was made redundant, and was then run solely by volunteers and trustees. It ceased to operate as a charity in 2017.

1981 - Politics & Policy

UN International Year for Disabled People. The United Nations designates 1981 as The International Year for Disabled People, (IYDP) although Disabled people did not play a large part in most of its key events. Their response is to challenge the 'for' of the Year and insist on the 'of' aiming at self-organisation. By using the term "THE disabled" the UN reinforced the belief that Disabled people were a homogeneous group. It called for a plan of action with an emphasis on equalization of opportunities, rehabilitation and prevention of disabilities, which led to further criticism that it viewed disability through the lens of the medical model. The slogan of IYDP was "a wheelchair in every home," defined as the right of persons with disabilities to take part fully in the life and development of their societies, enjoy living conditions equal to those of other citizens, and have an equal share in improved conditions resulting from socio-economic development. A major outcome of the International Year of Disabled Persons was the formulation of the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 1982.

The era of the asylum finally began to come to an end after a series of scandals revealed neglect and abuse. In 1981 the Jay Report promoted a 'care in the community' programme for people with learning disabilities and mental health needs. From 1983 onwards, tens of thousands of people left the long-term hospitals and returned to mainstream communities.

1981 - Activism & Protest

British new wave singer-songwriter Ian Dury, a Disabled person, released a song titled "Spasticus Autisticus" in 1981, which was intended as a scathing critique of the UN Year, which he viewed as "patronising" and "crashingly insensitive". The song was initially banned from BBC radio who felt that it disrespected Disabled people.

1982 - Organisations

The Commission of Restrictions Against Disabled People (CORAD) report advised that there should be civil rights legislation for Disabled people and a Commission to implement it. This was turned down by the Government, but CORAD began the campaign for legislation and to challenge the so-called non-disabled disability professionals who supported the status quo.

1983-1993

The UN's International Decade of Disabled Persons ran from 1983 to 1993.

1983 January 1st - Activism & Protest

Picket by Disabled athletes at the Stoke Mandeville international games against a team visiting from the apartheid South Africa.

1983 - Politics & Policy

The Mental Health Act 1983 is passed. It covers the reception, care and treatment of mentally disordered persons, the management of their property and other related matters. In particular, it provides the legislation by which people diagnosed with a mental disorder can be detained in hospital or police custody and have their disorder assessed or treated against their wishes, unofficially known as "sectioning". Its use is reviewed and regulated by the Care Quality Commission. The act has been significantly amended by the Mental Health Act 2007. Notably, the 1983 act classified psychosurgery as a treatment that could only be carried out with a patient's consent.

Care in the Community begin: The British policy of deinstitutionalization, treating, and caring for physically and mentally disabled people in their homes rather than in an institution. Institutional care was the target of widespread criticism during the 1960s and 1970s, but it was not until 1983 that the government of Margaret Thatcher adopted a new policy after the Audit Commission published a report called 'Making a Reality of Community Care' which outlined the advantages of domiciled care.

1983 - Politics & Policy, Activism & Protest

Jack Ashley MP used the ten-minute rule and put forward the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill which would have included establishing a commission with legal powers of enforcement. The Bill did not have government support and was lost. Various research writings claim 9 to 16 attempts to pass a civil rights bill for Disabled people between 1980 and 1995. Disabled people blocked the member's car park at Parliament in 1983 in support of the first attempt.

1983 November 28th - Politics & Policy

A doctor's note is required to claim Invalidity benefit.

1984 - Organisations

Founding of Hampshire Centre for independent living (CIL) in Southampton by Simon Briserden.

1984 November 22nd - Activism & Protest

A meeting was held in Manchester between the authorities and around 70 disabled people on 22 November 1984 to protest inaccessible transport in the city: One of the speakers was the visiting Disabled activist Vic Finkelstein..

1985 - Organisations

Formation of the Voluntary Organisations for Anti-Discrimination Legislation (VOADL). A group of the large national charities for Disabled people, including RADAR (the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation), the Spastics Society (now SCOPE), came together to form a lobby group for anti-discrimination legislation, ADL, also known as civil rights for disabled people. In 1988 the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People agreed to participate in VOADL as an observer organisation.

1986

The One in Four magazine programme for Disabled people launched on BBC2.

The first issue of the listings magazine Disability Arts in London (DAIL) is published.

1986 February - Activism & Protest

GMCDP's Coalition magazine is first published. Edited by Ian Stanton Coalition, it became an important national information source for disabled people.

1986 June 19th - Organisations, Activism & Protest

An event focusing on self-determination for Disabled people is held at County Hall, Manchester. It is attended by more than 100 Disabled people. It results in the formation of the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People (GMCDP). The GMCDP is the U.K.'s oldest Disabled led disability advocacy group. Many of GMCDP's membership were already active in UPIAS, which played a key role in the creation of the BCODP in 1981

Disabled people from GMCDP also successfully lobby for the Greater Manchester Council's Equal Opportunities Unit posts to be reserved for Disabled people. This is possibly the first instance of such designation of posts in the country, prior to the enactment of equalities legislation.

1986 July - Activism & Protest

Coalition magazine featured the campaign against and eventual cancellation of the Artability conference. The Carnegie Foundation had planned to hold a conference in Manchester on 22–24 September 1986 called “Artability - the way ahead for the arts and people with disabilities, to take forward the recommendations of the Attenborough Report on the arts and Disabled people. GMCDP and other organisations of Disabled people objected because they were not consulted, the venue was inaccessible and the philosophy of the conference was medical and therapeutic. It was aimed only at non-disabled policy makers and excluded disabled people. When GMCDP persuaded Manchester City Council to withdraw its support for the planned conference, the Carnegie Council cancelled the event.

Following this, GMCDP worked with Manchester City Council and others to plan and run a better, alternative event, the Manchester Disabled People’s Arts Conference held on 26–27 March 1988.

1986 October 18th - Activism & Protest

Manchester Town Hall is picketed by the Steering Group of the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled people (GMCDP) as it was not accessible.

1986 - Organisations

Survivors Speak Out is founded, a national networking group for mental health service users.

1986 - Politics & Policy

The Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 strengthens the provisions of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and requires local authorities to meet the various needs of disabled people. Section 2 of the Act enabled the appointment of representatives for people with physical and learning disabilities, as well as those with mental illnesses. It was not considered appropriate to offer this role to Disabled people.

1987 October 25th - Activism & Protest

The Deaf Broadcasting Campaign lobby BBC Television Centre (and other TV studios across the country) to demand ‘a daily 30 minute national news programme on at least one television channel, using Sign Language and subtitles as well as voice’.

1988 - Organisations

People First is founded to represent and advocate for the interests of people with learning difficulties.

1988 July 28th - Activism & Protest

A BCODP organised demonstration against the Social Security Act marched from Kennington Park to the DHSS HQ at Elephant and Castle. Protestors were against upcoming cuts in benefits for Disabled people and a government proposal to give a new benefits fund to a charity to operate it. The march may have been the 1st time that the slogan, “Rights not charity” was used by the Disability movement.

This event resulted in a U-turn on the cuts, and soon afterwards the creation of the Independent Living Fund. This major protest was celebrated by the disabled poet, Simon Brisenden, in The Battle for the Elephant and Castle.

1980s to 1990s - Politics & Policy

Successive Conservative governments try to reduce unemployment figures by moving jobless people on to disability benefits.

1989 - Organisations

The British Council of Organisations of Disabled People started the National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL, 1989–2011) as a project, which became an independent organization in the early 2000s before merging with two other organizations to form Disability Rights UK in January 2012.

1989 May 1st - Organisations

The Campaign for Accessible Transport (CAT) group is founded by Tracey Proudlock and others.

1989 May 1st to 1990 September 26th - Activism & Protest

There are multiple demonstrations in support of accessible transport throughout London including Whitehall, Oxford Street & New Oxford Street. Protesters blocked in or chained themselves to buses. Participants included Tracey Proudlock, Sue Elsegood, Allan Sutherland and Kate Brown. The Campaign for accessible transport (CAT) became the first Disabled organisation to use bus blocking as a form of protest. Around 30 people were arrested on New Oxford Street St, with around 12 of these people charged with obstruction at Marlborough Street Court. All charges are subsequently dropped. Newspaper and TV coverage of the events was considerable.

1989 November 11th-1990 June 1st - Activism & Protest

DDANN – Derbyshire Direct Action Now Network protests in Chesterfield town centre about access issues if pedestrianisation plans are followed through.

A protest on the 18th of May, 1994, protesting the blocking of Roger Berry MP's disability civil rights bill.



THE 1990S

RIGHTS NOW!

Campaigning activity by Disabled people for social inclusion reached a high point in the 1990s. This was as a result of Disabled people in the 1970s shifting the focus to societal barriers to participation, rather than a Disabled person's medical status. This was both reflected and enabled by the formation of many groups and organisations of Disabled people, both national and international.

1990 - Organisations

The Alliance for Integration (later Inclusion Education ALLFIE) was set up at The Integration Now conference by parents, ex-pupils, teachers and allies who wanted Disabled children included in unsegregated mainstream schools.

A group of parents took the 1981 Education Act at its word and wanted their disabled children educated alongside their non-disabled peers. Co-founder Micheline Mason introduced social model thinking into this campaigning aim. The Conference agreed that the organisation should be led by Disabled people, with the collaboration of allies so the goal could be achieved. In this respect it was different to many other organisations which were exclusively made up of Disabled people. Micheline Mason became the Secretary and Richard Rieser, a Disabled teacher, became the Chair. The Alliance acted as the hub of a movement of many local struggles around the country

The first Black Disabled People's Network and several black mental health user groups are founded. However, it is noticed that the main core of disability activism in the UK does not involve many Black or Asian people

The Greater London Association of Disabled people (GLAD) AGM votes to try to become an organisation controlled by Disabled people.

Regard is founded by Katherine Gellespie Sells to challenge homophobia in the disabled people's movement and the exclusion of disabled people from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community. In later years, Katherine was instrumental in adding a Disabled People's section to London's annual Pride parade

1990 - Politics & Policy

The Americans with disabilities act (ADA) was passed in the USA. With Federal mechanisms created to enforce its recommendations, it becomes a benchmark for other countries' disability civil rights legislation.

1990 May 27th - Activism & Protest

The Campaign to Stop Patronage picket the LWT building on London's Southbank. 200+ Disabled people demonstrate against the ITV Telethon event, arguing that it represents Disabled people as dependent, pitiable objects of charity.

1990 October 20th - Activism & Protest

The 'Time for Change' Disability Benefits consortium rallies are held in London (Trafalgar Square), Manchester and Glasgow.

1990 November - Organisations

UPIAS was disbanded by agreement of the members and the £50 in assets was given to BCODP, the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People.

1991

Professor Colin Barnes' book "Disabled People in Britain and Discrimination" is published. The book uses official statistics to prove that disability discrimination in the UK exists, despite his findings being denied by the Government of the day.

1991 September 8th - Activism & Protest

A weekend workshop in Manchester led by visiting activists Mike Auberger and Babs Johnson from ADAPT, introduces many British disability activists to the American direct action technique of blocking traffic, in particular buses. This introduction to accessible transport protests finished with the practical learning of going out and blocking three buses on the main road nearby, during the 10th annual general meeting of BCODP, held at Owens Park, on Wilmslow Road in Manchester.

1991 November - Organisations

Survivors' Poetry is founded 'to foster and promote poetry workshops and performances for and by survivors of the mental health system'.

1991 November 22nd - Activism & Protest

In Leeds, 150 Disabled people and their allies picket the BBC Children in Need live broadcast under the banner of the Rights Not Charity Group. 4 Disabled people were arrested and later were released without charge.

1991 December

The BCODP publish 'Disabled People in Britain: A Case for Anti-Discrimination Legislation'.

1992 - Organisations

Disability Awareness in Action established to support Disabled people's self-advocacy and empowerment internationally and to promote and protect disabled people's human rights. It aims to raise awareness of disability issues with governments and policy makers. However, their use of non-social model language remains an obstacle with Disabled people in the UK.

1992-1995 - Organisations

The Rights Now! group was formed. Although VOADL had been successful in pulling together some of the largest disability charities ("organisations for disabled people") they had found that Disabled people's organisations ("organisations of disabled people") were reluctant to join and share knowledge and strategies. This changed when a new, combined organisation was suggested by the executive committee of BCODP and the existing VOADL charity members agreed to the merger. Rights Now had a reported 83 member organisations, including trade unions as well as disabled people's organisations (DPO) and disability charities, and a reported 10,000 individual members. Only Disabled people who were representing a DPO could be an office-holder of Rights Now.

The first Chair of Rights Now was Stephen Bradshaw, chief executive of the Spinal Injuries Association, followed by Rachel Hurst. Rights Now had good links with Parliament through the All-Party Disability Group and its researcher Victoria Scott, who worked for RADAR, and the Rights Now Coordinator, Adam Thomas.

Rights Now! played a key role in the campaign for Disabled people's civil rights legislation which produced the Disability Discrimination Act in November 1994

1992

The BBC form the Disability programmes unit with the aim of producing programmes for Disabled people that will also interest general audience. This was to be accomplished by a workforce of which a large proportion were Disabled people. The DPU helped develop the careers of Sian Vasey, Elspeth Morrison, David Hevey, Mik Scarlett and Damon Rose, while featuring many more figures from the Disability movement in its programming. Noteworthy programmes include the magazine series From the Edge, disability history series The Disabled Century (1999) and the documentary Desperate Dan following the Disabled People's Direct Action Network. The DPU closed in the early 2000s.

1992 March 18th - Activism & Protest

Leeds: Disabled people from the Rights Not Charity group demonstrate at Leeds railway station on the lack of access to travel.

1992 March 22nd-29th

Channel Four launches Disability Week.

1992 April 6th - Politics & Policy

Introduction of Disability Living Allowance.

1992 July 18th - Activism & Protest

Second ITV Telethon demonstration. In London, over a thousand Disabled people hold a protest outside the ITV studios (London Weekend TV) picketing the Telethon live broadcasting under the banner of "Block Telethon." They blockade the studios, harangue celebrity participants as they arrive and successfully invade the studio during the live broadcast. All the while, the crowd outside is entertained by Disabled protest singers such as Ian Stanton and Alan Holdsworth. ITV later abandon the Telethon format and create Comic Relief in consultation with Disabled people and other oppressed groups.

Ian Stanton and other GMCDP members are heavily involved and GMCDP organise two accessible coaches from Manchester to get to the protest.

Two of the main organisers of this protest (and the previous smaller protest against Telethon in 1990) were Alan Holdsworth and Barbara Lisicki. With other Disabled people involved in the 1992 protest they later formed the Disabled People's Direct Action Network (DAN) in 1993.

1992 August - Activism & Protest

A demonstration is held against the visit of US faith healer Morris Cerullo. A group of Disabled people sign an open letter to Cerullo challenging him to cure any of them. Their criticisms gain widespread press coverage.

1992 October

BCODP releases its report 'Disabling Imagery and the Media - An Exploration of the principles for Media Representation of Disabled People.

1992 November 20th - Activism & Protest

The Leeds BBC Children In Need event is demonstrated.

1992 December 3rd - Politics & Policy

Since 1992, this date has been designated by the United Nations as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

1993 - Organisations

Founding of Mad Pride, a mass movement of mental health services, users and their allies. The first known event specifically organized as a Pride event by people who identify as psychiatric survivors/ex-patients was in Toronto, Canada when it was called "Psychiatric Survivor Pride Day", held on September 18, 1993. Mad Pride UK was established in the same year.

1993 January 1st - Organisations, Activism & Protest

Disabled People's Direct Action Network (DAN) is founded at a weekend meeting in Norwich (Ashwelthorpe Hall, the residential HQ of Disabled Drivers Association).

1993 July 18th - Activism & Protest

The first DAN direct action protest is held in Dorset. The action was during the by-election in Christchurch against Rob Hayward, the Conservative candidate, who had previously been an MP for another area and had 'talked out' a bill for disabled people's civil rights in 1991. He failed to win this safe seat.

1993 July - Activism & Protest

Rights Now published What Price Civil Rights? The report provided "substantial evidence that the government [had] grossly overestimated the cost of implementing the Civil Rights Bill", the government figure being £17 billion. The Rights Now report estimated the cost as no more than £5 billion.

1993 - Organisations

The Trades Union Disability Alliance (TUDA) is formed consisting of the disabled members councils of the many Trades Unions within the UK. This firmly re-establishes the relationship many disabled people had with trade unions 1890 - 1936

1993 November 29th - Activism & Protest

Direct Action Network (DAN) disrupts BBC filming of Children in Need in Leeds.

1993-1994 - Politics & Policy

In the 1993/1994 parliamentary session Roger Berry MP won a place in the ballot for a private members bill, and for at least the ninth time since Jack Ashley MP, a Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill was put forward to become a law.

1994 January 1st - Activism & Protest

Direct Action Network (DAN) protest the Tate Gallery over the venue's wheelchair entry policy.

1994 January 20th - Politics & Policy

The Social Services (incapacity for work) bill is instituted.

1994 March 27th - Activism & Protest

Direct Action Network (DAN) holds a demo, attempting to build a wheelchair ramp at 10 Downing Street, arriving with a concrete mixer, wheelbarrow, bucket and trowel. One slogan is "No. 10 to provide the water".

1994 March 28th - Activism & Protest

At Leeds railway station 100 Disabled people demonstrate at "Rights Not Roses," an action against Jimmy Saville opening a flower bed on a station platform, a £40k "garden for the handicapped."

1994 May 6th - Politics & Policy

A national political scandal emerged when it was revealed that the Minister for Disabled People, Nicholas Scott MP (and father of Victoria Scott, who was a strong supporter of Rights Now), had arranged for over 80 wrecking amendments to be put by five backbench MPs who were hostile to the bill, while he maintained he was "neutral" on the matter. This "mis-statement" caused him to be replaced soon afterwards by William Hague MP as the Minister for Disabled People

1994 May 14th - Activism & Protest

Brent Direct Action Network (DAN) demo in Camden, London, outside the New Goodfare café which had posted a sign reading, "Due to lack of space we cannot accommodate for the disabled."

1994 May 18th - Activism & Protest

London, Trafalgar Square, Direct Action Network (DAN) have a giant letter for Prime Minister, John Major.

Direct Action Network (DAN) demo blocks buses and traffic on Whitehall Direct Action Network (DAN) demo in Whitehall outside the Department of Social Security HQ to protest at minister Nicholas Scott MP backbenchers with amendments to talk out a civil rights bill by Dr Roger Berry MP.

1994 May 23rd - Activism & Protest

A group of disabled activists abandoned their wheelchairs and crawled into the House of Commons in an attempt to lobby their MPs. They were turned away at the normal public entrance - which is inaccessible to wheelchair users - and it took five hours before they were allowed into the parliamentary lobby.

1994 July 7th - Activism & Protest

DAN holds a demo, marching from Parliament to Downing Street, protesting real costs of discrimination against disabled people. They lay wreaths.

1994 July 9th - Politics & Policy, Activism & Protest

Perhaps the largest protest Rights Now organised took place in Trafalgar Square and Whitehall, London, with an estimated 2,800 people protesting. Direct Action Network (DAN) took part in the protest with their own action, delivering a giant 'letter' to 10 Downing Street for then-Prime Minister John Major MP.

Sir Nicholas Scott, Minister for Disabled People, had already defeated the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill by filibustering at the report stage. Public outrage at these tactics forced the Government to introduce its own proposals - the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995. A DDA consultation document was launched by new appointed Minister for Disabled People William Hague in an attempt to reach out to Disabled people.

Following the failure of the Roger Berry bill, the next iteration for civil rights was the Harry Barnes bill. A non-partisan report by the House of Commons Library on this bill stated, "The Bill has the overwhelming support of disability groups, who have been campaigning for 10-15 years to establish some form of anti-discrimination legislation."

The same report said of the DDA, while it was still a bill,

"there appears to be unanimous agreement among disability groups on the main ways in which it falls short of the sort of legislation that they desire. There is also general support for the Private Member's Bill introduced by Harry Barnes ... The main objections to the Government's Bill are that:

- The National Disability Council (NDC) will not be powerful enough
- The definition of disability is too narrow
- The scope of the Government's Bill is too limited
- There are too many exemption provisions.

Disability groups object to the fact that the NDC will not have the same sort of enforcement powers that the Commission for Racial Equality or the Equal Opportunities Commission have.

Rights Now is explicitly referenced in this report as one of the 'disability groups' holding these views.

1994 Summer - Activism & Protest

Accessible transport demos commenced across the UK organised by Disabled People's Direct Action Network (DAN). These took place in several major cities in the UK.

1994 September 2nd–3rd - Activism & Protest

DAN hold a direct action in London following assembling at Westminster Central Hall. The Independent on Sunday reports 25 arrests on Saturday.

1984 September 24th & 28th - Activism & Protest

DAN demos are held in Oldham, Greater Manchester, against inaccessible buses.

1994 December 10th - Activism & Protest

Harrods, London. Liz Carr and others occupy part of a shop after previously being barred from entering with powered wheelchairs.

1994 December - Politics & Policy

The DDA receives royal assent.

1995 February 9th - Activism & Protest

Rights Now Day of Action to support a second reading of Harry Barnes's Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill. The 'Big Bus Q' protests saw Disabled people forming large queues at bus stops in protest at buses they couldn't use.

1995 March 30th–April 1st - Activism & Protest

Direct Action Network (DAN) transport protests in Cardiff.

1995 April 13th - Politics & Policy

Social Security incapacity for work act passes into effect.

1995 April 26th-28th - Activism & Protest

Direct Action Network (DAN) march from Rochford, 35 miles to Westminster, against Dr Michael Clark MP trying to stop the civil rights bill proposed by Harry Barnes MP.

1995 April 28th - Activism & Protest

DAN holds a demo outside Parliament against the Disability Discrimination Bill, halts traffic.

1995 August 13th - Activism & Protest

Earls Court, London, "Rights not Miracles" demo against Morris Cerrullo, an evangelical preacher who claimed he could "cure" Disabled people.

1995 October 12th-14th - Activism & Protest

Birmingham - demo outside a trade expo of new buses, as part of a 3-day action about accessible buses.

1995 November 7th - Activism & Protest

DAN holds a demo at Parliament Square, for civil rights law.

1995 November 8th - Politics & Policy

The Disability discrimination act (DDA) passed. The landmark UK legislation makes it illegal to discriminate against disabled people in connection with employment, the provision of goods, facilities and services or the disposal or management of premises. Service providers must now make "reasonable" adjustments to enable disabled people to access their service. However, some disability Civil Rights campaigners are dissatisfied as the act has no agency or powers to enforce its recommendations, and any changes are given a long time period to be enacted. Many also disagree with the involvement of mainstream charities in helping shape and pass the act.

1996 January 1st - Activism & Protest

DAN holds a demo outside Conservative Party HQ in London.

1996 March 11th - Activism & Protest

Direct Action Network (DAN) holds a demo in London at Labour Party HQ, including a 6-hour sit-in.

1996 March 29th-30th - Activism & Protest

DAN Nottingham holds an accessible transport protest outside MP Ken Clarke's office over 2 days, stopping rush hour traffic on the first day, but trapped inside a surface car park by police on second day.

1996 March - Politics & Policy

The community care direct payments act allows Disabled people to directly pay their personal assistants (PAs)

1996

Publication of 'Disability Politics: Understanding our Past, Changing our Future' by Jane Campbell and Mike Oliver. (Routledge).

1996 - Organisations

The National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL) is co-founded by Baroness Jane Campbell DBE of Surbiton, an active leader for the Independent living movement.

1996 June 14th-15th - Activism & Protest

Direct Action Network (DAN) demo outside Alistair Burt's office (MP for Bury North and Minister for Disabled People. Protest abandoned on 15th June when the Manchester city centre bomb exploded. Part of the "Kicking them in the Marginals" campaign.

1996 June 28th-29th - Activism & Protest

DAN holds a demo in Cardiff North and Vale of Glamorgan as part of the "Kicking them in the Marginals" campaign.

1996 July 12th - Activism & Protest

West Yorkshire DAN, transport action on trains at Dewsbury station and on a train arriving from Leeds).

1996 August 14th - Activism & Protest

DAN target buses at protests in Eltham

1996 September 9th - Activism & Protest

DAN targets Hillingdon London Underground station for its locked accessible entrance

1996 September 19th-21st - Activism & Protest

Derbyshire DAN holds a demo to install a ramp at Buxton train station.

1996 October 25th - Activism & Protest

Action at New Pudsey railway station by West Yorkshire DAN.

1997 - Politics & Policy

National disability Council starts work to enforce the reform suggested by the DDA. It had no investigative or enforcement powers.

1997 April 3rd-5th - Activism & Protest

Direct Action Network (DAN) "Going Underground" protests

- 3rd April occupation of offices and lift shaft at the Confederation of Passenger Transport offices, with a repeat in September and a meeting in December
- 4th April – Blockade at London Transport HQ and Baker Street tube station with decoy event at Buckingham Palace
- 5th April – Demos at Labour HQ (Millbank Tower) and the Conservative HQ demo

1997 September 4th-6th - Activism & Protest

DAN targets inaccessible buses in Bristol.

1997 December 22nd - Activism & Protest

Direct Action Network (DAN) and other organisations organised a one-day protest against forthcoming benefit cuts, held in Trafalgar Square. A group left the rally and headed down Whitehall towards the gates of Downing Street. They threw red paint on themselves as they protested in front of the security gates for watching TV news crews. The protest was named after one of the banners, "Blair's Blood".

1998 February 13th - Activism & Protest

Direct Action Network (DAN) co-ordinated demos in five cities across England

- Liverpool: Bootle benefits agency processing centre and buses.
- Bristol Parkway train station
- Nottingham: picket of MP Tom Clarke
- London, Westminster Abbey.
- Oldbury Council House, Sandwell, West Midlands. A new Direct Action Network (DAN) group was established in Birmingham and Sandwell (West Midlands).

1998 March 17th - Activism & Protest

DAN holds a demo at Leeds DHSS offices.

1998 April 5th-8th - Activism & Protest

DAN's exhibition of photographs, press cuttings, and videos, named 10 Years of Direct Action – Disabled People Fighting Back. It was held at Alexandra Suite, Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way, London WC1H.

Over the same dates DAN also demonstrate about accessible transport at the DETR building.

1998 September 27th-30th - Activism & Protest

"Hell in Hull" demo at John Prescott's office in Hull. Prescott was an MP but also serving as Secretary of State for transport.

1999 - Activism & Protest

DAN launches the 'Free Our People' campaign.

1999 April 22nd - Activism & Protest

Free Our People demo in Bournemouth at the AGM of the Association of Directors of Social Services.

1999 - Politics & Policy

The Disability Rights Commission Act 1999 abolished the National Disability Council and replaced it with a Disability Rights Commission. Like the council, the Commission covered England, Scotland and Wales. However unlike the Council it also had power to support individuals seeking to enforce their rights and powers of investigation.

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) was established by the Labour government. At that time, the DRC was the UK's third equality commission alongside the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission. Its chairman from 2000 to 2007 was Bert Massie.

The DRC was charged with reviewing the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and recommending its amendment. It had rights of investigation and enforcement of disability legislation, and was responsible for advising employers on how to secure equal acceptance of disabled employees in the workplace. The DRC replaced an earlier and weaker body, the National Disability Council, established by the Conservatives in the 1990s.

THE 2000S

BACK TO THE FUTURE

The Millennium brought little change to the need for Disabled people to campaign for their rights, illustrated by campaigns for the right to live and to protect the financial support given to those Disabled people out of (or in) work.

The Disability Discrimination Act did not change non-disabled people's negative attitudes towards Disabled people overnight, nor does it protect Disabled people from government's desire to reduce what it sees as costly benefits and services which enable disabled people to exercise choice and control in their daily lives. Many Disabled people and Disability movement campaigners feel that since 1997, successive governments have tried to turn back the clock on Disability rights and have used benefit "reform" as a tactic.

2001 - Politics & Policy

The Special Educational Requirements and Disability (SEND) Act 2001 stated that discrimination occurs when an educational establishment/body either fails to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate individuals with special needs or a disability, or when they give them less favorable treatment.

2001 - Activism & Protest

Disabled academic and activist Paul Darke creates a website criticising Leonard Cheshire homes to highlight their role in institutionalising Disabled people, neglecting those in their care and lavish perks and spending on non-disabled directors and management. He bought the domain www.leonard-cheshire.com after resigning from his posts with the organisation to publicize these issues. Despite the World Intellectual Property Organization ruling against him, the domain name is still unused. Leonard Cheshire have subsequently changed their name to Leonard Cheshire Disability. The case is now cited in legal textbooks.

2001 April 6th-8th - Activism & Protest

London, Direct Action Network (DAN) "Free Our People" actions

- Day 1: Offices of the political parties
- Day 2: Department of Health & Leonard Cheshire organisation
- Day 3: DETR and Parliament.

2002 April 24th-26th - Activism & Protest

DAN hold an action in London.

2002 October 5th - Activism & Protest

DAN picket a Leonard Cheshire evening event at a Manchester hotel.

2003 - Politics & Policy

European Year of Disabled People (EYDP) otherwise known as the European Year of people with Disabilities

2003 - Organisations, Activism & Protest

Not Dead Yet UK formed by Baroness Campbell of Surbiton and other disabled people including Dave Morris, Sian Vasey, Rowan Jade, Mengi Mulchandani and Kevin Fitzpatrick to oppose assisted dying legislation, on the basis that it fundamentally devalues the worth of disabled lives.

2003 - Politics & Policy

Lord Joffe introduces a bill for assisted suicide that fails. Subsequent amended versions also fail.

2003 - Politics & Policy

Disability hate crime is regarded as an aggravating factor under Section 146 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003, allowing a heavier tariff to be used in sentencing than the crime might draw without the hate elements. Section 146 states that the sentencing provisions apply if:

(a) that, at the time of committing the offence, or immediately before or after doing so, the offender demonstrated towards the victim of the offence hostility based on—

(i) the sexual orientation (or presumed sexual orientation) of the victim, or

(ii) a disability (or presumed disability) of the victim, or

(b) that the offence is motivated (wholly or partly)—

(i) by hostility towards persons who are of a particular sexual orientation, or

(ii) by hostility towards persons who have a disability or a particular disability.

2003 March 18th - Politics & Policy

British Sign Language gains formal recognition as an official language in its own right. Though an important advance, this is not full recognition; the language has not yet achieved full legal status.

2003 June 9th – 14th

Birmingham Disability History Week. Birmingham City Council and The Coalition of Disabled People stage a series of linked exhibitions and events, highlighting the growth of the Disabled people's civil rights movement nationally and internationally.

2004 June 1st - Activism & Protest

In Manchester, Direct Action Network (DAN) holds a demo at Disability Rights Commission offices on weak legal rights.

2004 July

Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People receives funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to collate and promote the history of the Disabled people's movement.

2004 October 1st - Politics & Policy

The legal requirement to reasonably adjust buildings to make them fully accessible to Disabled people is activated as the final stage of the access to goods and services provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 comes into force.

2005 - Politics & Policy

The Prime Minister's Strategy Unit published its report 'Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People' setting out recommendations for achieving equality for Disabled people by 2025. This report marks the first official recognition by the government of the social model understanding of disability.

2006 - Politics & Policy

Disabled People International campaigns for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006.

2007 January 1st - Activism & Protest

A protest is held in London at the Department of Transport.

2007 March 30th - Politics & Policy

Launch of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, an international human rights treaty of the United Nations intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Parties to the convention are required to promote, protect, and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities and ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy full equality under the law. The Convention serves as a major catalyst in the global disability rights movement enabling a shift from viewing persons with disabilities as objects of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing them as full and equal members of society, with human rights. The convention was the first U.N. human rights treaty of the twenty-first century.

The text was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 December 2006 and opened for signature on 30 March 2007. Following ratification by the 20th party, it came into force on 3 May 2008. As of April 2025, it has 164 signatories and 193 parties, 192 states and the European Union (which ratified it on 23 December 2010).

2009 - Politics & Policy

The role of the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) is transferred to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), which has powers to issue guidance on, and enforce all the equality legislation, covering race, gender, disability, religion and belief, sexual orientation and age. Many Disabled people felt that this was the government's way of diluting Disabled people's fight for civil rights.

2009 March 1st - Activism & Protest

DAN holds a demo outside the Birmingham council's social services head office.

2009 August 1st - Activism & Protest

London, Trafalgar Square. Direct Action Network (DAN) members support Liz Crow's Resistance performance art on fourth plinth, to discuss the work with the rest of audience and passers-by. Liz appeared in a German SS uniform seated in her wheelchair to highlight the relatively unknown Aktion T4, when the Nazis systematically murdered Disabled people while refining some of the techniques they were to use against Europe's Jews.

2009 November 12th - Politics & Policy

The welfare reform act is passed to reassess the way benefits payments are made to many groups, including Disabled people.

2010 April 8th - Politics & Policy

The Equality Act receives royal assent. Its primary purpose is to consolidate, update and supplement the numerous prior acts and regulations that formed the basis of anti-discrimination law in the UK. This includes the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The act protects people against discrimination, harassment or victimisation in employment, and as users of private and public services based on these protected characteristics: age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, and religion or belief. A good example of the intersectionality that now informs most civil rights legislation.

2010 Autumn/Winter - Activism & Protest

The Black Triangle Campaign starts to oppose attacks on Disabled people via welfare "reform"

2010 - Organisations

Formation of mental health resistance network.

2010 November-December

The first Disability history month is held.

2010 - Politics & Policy

The UK Government approved the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD), which was adopted at the UN in December 2006.

2010 - Politics & Policy

The Equality Act was passed, replacing the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It outlaws direct or indirect discrimination and harassment in employment, vocational education and the provision of goods and services, for a total of nine protected characteristics including disability. However, much has yet to happen to make these Rights a daily reality for the 12 million disabled children and adults in the UK.

2010 October 3rd - Activism & Protest Organisations

Mass protest against welfare cuts in Birmingham, England. This was the first mass protest against the austerity cuts and their impact on Disabled people. It was led by Disabled people under the name of The Disabled Peoples' Protest

As a result, Disabled People Against the Cuts (DPAC) was founded by Linda Burnip and Debbie Jolly to oppose the Coalition and Tory Government's commitment to austerity measures from 2010 onwards, which fell more on Disabled people than any other social group. In the years after 2010, DPAC have played a key role in organizing protest and resistance to benefit cuts, the ending of the Independent Living Fund, the Welfare Reform Act, the Bedroom Tax and a host of other measures.

DPAC later initiated a complaint to the United Nations Convention of Rights for Disabled people against the UK government. This was investigated and the UN found "grave and systematic violations of Disabled people's human rights".

2010 October - Activism & Protest

Mad Pride protests against benefit cuts.

2011 - Politics & Policy

The Welfare Reform Bill proposed the replacement of the Disability Living Allowance with Personal Independence Payments (PIP). This change caused major and repeated disruption to the lives of Disabled people reliant upon benefits when the DWP appointed private contractors to make assessments of their individual needs. Iain Duncan Smith was identified by Disabled activists as the architect of these changes. After investigations by disabled and non-disabled individuals, it seems likely that they claimed lives of thousands of Disabled claimants, either by reductions in their basic quality of life or by suicide induced by the heavy handed assessment process.

2011 March 26th - Activism & Protest

Led by Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) a disabled persons contingent joins a TUC march against the austerity measures introduced by the Conservative Liberal Democrat coalition government. This is the 1st time a disabled contingent has joined a TUC march since the Blind persons march of 1920.

2011 May - Activism & Protest

Launch of the Hardest Hit campaign, organised jointly by the Disability Benefits Consortium and the UK Disabled People's Council. It lobbies the government about the impact of welfare cuts. Around 8,000 disabled people march on Parliament in May 2011 and further protests occur across the country on the 22nd October.

2011 November 22nd - Activism & Protest

Direct Action Network (DAN) pickets the Disability Rights UK annual conference, London. This was DAN's last action.

2012 - Organisations

RADAR is renamed Disability Rights UK following a merger in 2012.

2012 January 28th - Activism & Protest

DPAC and UK uncut stage a protest against the effects of Welfare reform, successfully blocking traffic on Oxford Street and Regent Street for two hours.

2012 August - Activism & Protest

As the country celebrates hosting the 2012 Paralympic games, Disabled people protest against ATOS, one of the private companies contracted to carry out PIP assessments. Later investigations will reveal that the DWP has provided quota guidelines or how many assessments of Disabled people will fail.

2013 March 30th - Activism & Protest

In Scotland, there were two major demonstrations on 30 March 2013 against the changes made by the welfare reform act. Around 3,000 demonstrators took to the streets of Glasgow and 1,000 demonstrators assembled outside of the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh.

2013 April - Politics & Policy

The PIP payment programme is launched.

2013 October 11th - Organisations

DPAC co-founders persuade the UN disability committee to carry out an investigation into the UK under the optional protocol of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

2013 November - Politics & Policy

The Court of Appeal rules that 'the Minister for Disabled People had breached equality duties when making the decision in December 2012 to close the Independent Living Fund'. The government goes ahead with the closure anyway. The ILF was set up in 1988 in order to give disabled people more choice and control to live Independent Lives.

2014 - Politics & Policy

The Care Act 2014 is an Act of Parliament of the UK that received Royal Assent on 14th May 2014, after being introduced on 9th May 2013. The main purpose of the act was to overhaul the existing 60-year-old legislation regarding social care in England. The Care Act sets out in one place, local authority's duties in relation to assessing people's needs and their eligibility for publicly funded care and support

2014 May - Politics & Policy

The Court of Appeal finds that the Department for Work and Pensions' decision to close the Independent Living Fund was not lawful, overturning the High Court decision of April 2013.

2014 January - Activism & Protest

DPAC Mass Action to save the ILF, House of Commons.

2014 - Politics & Policy

Lord Falconer's Assisted Suicide Bill reaches the House of Lords but fails to progress.

2015 January 16th - Activism & Protest Politics & Policy

Not Dead Yet hold a series of rallies around the Houses of Parliament while an assisted dying bill is debated.

2015 June - Politics & Policy

The Independent Living Fund (ILF) closes permanently.

2015 June 9th - Politics & Policy

Rob Marris MP introduces an Assisted Suicide Bill in the House of Commons; it is overwhelmingly rejected (330 to 118).

2015 September 17th - Politics & Policy

'The Coming of Age of the Disability Discrimination Act?' Portcullis House, Houses of Parliament, London. A Debate marking the 20th anniversary of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Led by Lord Chris Holmes, with panel including Baroness Jane Campbell, DBE, and artist Rachel Gadsden.

2018 October - Organisations

The United Nation's Committee on the rights of Disabled persons report into the treatment of Disabled people is published in the UK, especially in relation to welfare policy changes and the provision of benefits. The investigation was requested by Linda Burnip of DPAC in 2013. While it could not force the UK government to make changes, the report revealed a systematic, hostile and abusive attitude to Disabled people by the DWP and other government agencies. The findings were hotly denied by figures in government.

2020 - Politics & Policy

The UK leave the EU and Boris Johnson PM literally downgrades the UK's commitment to the European Convention of Human Rights, cutting all funding to learning disability and autism services

2020 March - Politics & Policy

Covid comes to the UK: figures soon indicate that older and Disabled people are the hardest hit, compared to the rest of the population. As of 2021, official figures indicated that 6 out of 10 people who died from Covid were Disabled people. Governmental confusion about whether to protect these 2 groups and how had a deadly impact at the start of the pandemic. As the pandemic continued it also became apparent that Disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties were more likely to receive "do not resuscitate" (DNRs) orders if they became dangerously ill.

2020 - Politics & Policy

The Covid Virus Bill sees the Care Act torn up. The bill effectively freed local authorities of their duties to provide social care support under the Care Act 2014 and only obliged local authorities to provide support in cases where the Human Rights of Disabled people will be breached.

2024 May 14th - Activism & Protest

Liz Carr's "Better off Dead" documentary examining the pitfalls of assisted dying legislation airs on the BBC.

2026 July - Politics & Policy

Second Commons reading of assisted dying bill: it loses the vote.

Protest placards at the Block Telethon protest in 1992.

