

Disability culture and the way we work with people with disabilities and the organisations that represent them is changing. Below are the main considerations when thinking about the disability movement today. We hope this will serve as a guide for developing an approach to inclusive influencing in what has been a rapidly changing landscape for the disability sector and its relationship with the disability movement in the UK and globally.

- The involvement and participation of people with disabilities through ‘representative organisations’, traditionally called disabled people’s organisations, (DPOs) has now shifted towards the language of the UNCRPD, using the term ‘Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs)’.
- The disability movement accepts that articles 4.3 and 33.3 of the CRPD set the tone on meaningful engagement of people with disabilities in the development and implementation of legislation. This approach also applies to policies developed by States that relate to the CRPD. More crucially, it is increasingly the adopted language for other decision-making processes and service delivery mechanisms.
- The International Disability Alliance (IDA) sets the criteria that most INGOs seem to follow in terms of what constitutes an OPD, saying: “They are global or regional organisations whose mission and objectives are about the promotion of the rights of people with disabilities.” This approach also applies to the domestic OPD federated structure in member States.
- It is no longer acceptable for organisations in the disability sector to continue to view people with disabilities as passive recipients. In adopting the tone of the disability movement’s mantra, “Nothing about us without us”, organisations are making the cultural shift necessary to ensure people with disabilities are not just seen, and treated, as beneficiaries – but also as experts in providing solutions to influence the change needed.

Leonard Cheshire is currently working towards a number of commitments that will strengthen our approach on working with OPDs, individuals and groups of people with disabilities. Below are some guiding principles that will inform our planning as we move ahead.

1. Using the term ‘Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs)’ as this is the preferred international language of CRPD and related frameworks.
2. Stated recognition that OPDs are global, regional or national bodies whose mission and objectives are about the promotion of the rights of people with disabilities and influencing change to ensure their rights are upheld.
3. Progress towards the meaningful participation of OPDs in Leonard Cheshire’s policy influencing work and programme delivery through the development of working practices with clearly defined entry points.
4. Develop criteria for developing strong partnership relationships with OPDs, disability groups, and service providers and research institutions working with people with disabilities and OPDs.
5. Work towards a set of commitments by Leonard Cheshire on meaningful engagement with OPDs, supported by best practice guidelines outlined in this toolkit.