

CSPRD Research Summary

Centre for Social Policy Research and Development

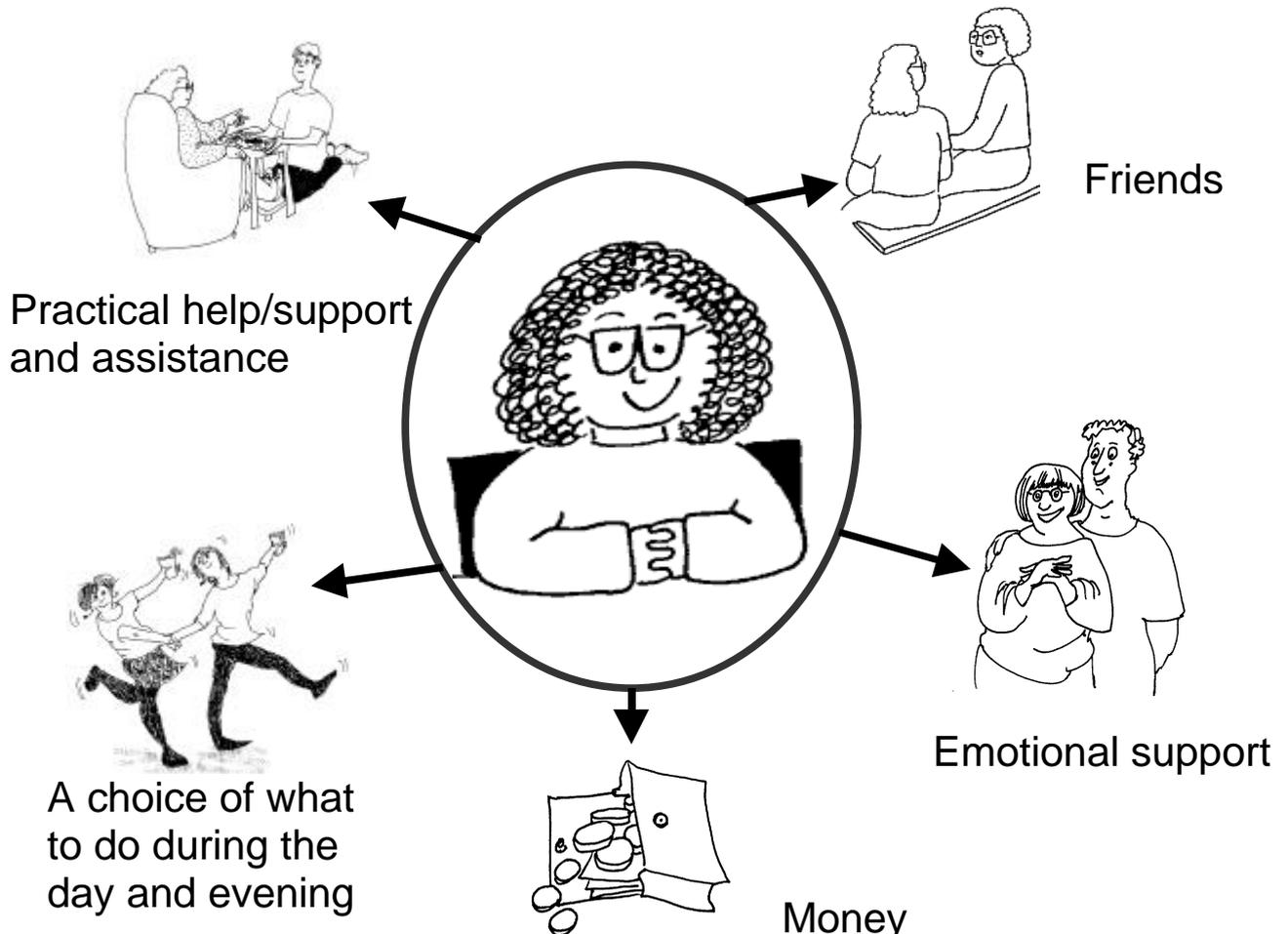
October 2001

Everyday Lives

By **Bridget Whittell and Paul Ramcharan**

We wanted to find out about the everyday lives and experiences of people with learning difficulties living in Wales. We visited and spent time listening and talking to 16 people living with their families, living on their own, and people who had support care staff looking after them in their homes.

People with learning difficulties told us that being happy living in the community was helped by having:



The people we visited had different experiences in these areas:

Practical help/support and assistance



- People living in supported housing had more support from professionals
- People living at home or on their own relied more upon family and friends

Having a choice of what to do during the day and evening

People living on their own, or with a friend or partner, were more likely to:



- Have a job
- Go to college
- Choose what they did in the day and evening



People living at home with their families were more likely to:

- Have less choice about what to do in the day and evening
- Attend Day Centres
- Stay at home in the evenings



In general:



- People living in a rural area were more isolated and it cost more money to get out and about and try different activities
- Some activities did not involve meeting and getting to know other people in the community

Friends and Emotional Support



Some people, including those who could not move around on their own, found it difficult to make and continue friendships with other people in the community.

This was not helped where:



- People (especially those living with their families) did not get help to make friends in the community
- There were few chances to meet other people in the community
- It cost too much money to go to different places to meet people
- There were transport problems, especially for people living in rural areas
- People were not helped to keep their old friends when they moved to live somewhere else
- Local people and children were not friendly and made people with learning disabilities feel afraid and unhappy



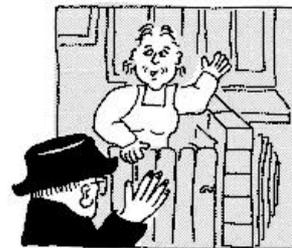
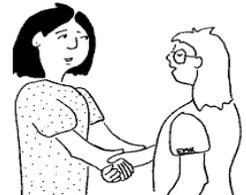
Making and keeping friends was helped by:



- Being given help with letter writing and sending birthday and Christmas cards



- Being given a lift or having transport organised
- Using local shops, cafes, pubs and social clubs regularly
- Spending time or working in the same places as other people in the local community
- Having support in meeting new people, especially when people are shy or need some help
- Getting to know neighbours, shopkeepers and joining local groups such as the church, bingo club, Labour or other social club



Money



Most of the people we spoke to relied on welfare benefit payments. They did not have much money to spend which limited what they could do and where they could go.

Cutbacks in funding in social services also affected the support people received in different ways:

- There was less support for people living at home with their family
- A valued alternative day service was being restructured and reduced
- Budgets and support staff wages for people living in supported housing were being reduced
- Mileage budgets for people living in rural areas were not enough



Things you can do

If you want to find out how you can try to change or improve some of the things that are happening in your life, these are some of the people or places who might be able to help:

- Your friends and family
- Your local People First or other self-advocacy group
- Your advocate or someone else who you trust
- Your support staff or social worker
- Your local college

More about the project

Paul Ramcharan and Bridget Whittell did this project (which finished in 1999) when they worked at the Centre for Social Policy for Research and Development, University of Wales, Bangor. They now both work at the University of Sheffield.



Paul Ramcharan

Paul can be contacted on
☎ 0114 271 4460



Bridget Whittell

Bridget can be contacted on
☎ 01942 736923

This Research Summary is for people with learning disabilities and their supporters. You are free to photocopy this Summary, or pass it on to anyone you know. If you would like a full copy of the Report it costs £10 and can be obtained from Sue Howard, Centre for Social Policy Research and Development, University of Wales, Bangor ☎ 01248 382225. In preparing this summary we have been guided by *Plain Facts* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1997).

Illustrations from the CHANGE Picture Bank and Caroline Firenza