

Impact Report 2020-2021

ABOUT US

The [Association for Real Change](#) (ARC) is a membership organisation supporting anyone who is involved in the planning or delivery of support or services for people with a learning disability.

Our work also benefits people with other support needs such as autism, mental health issues, long-term health problems and physical and sensory disabilities, and we are therefore committed to sharing our learning and experience across all sectors.

ARC's Vision is real change that puts people with learning disabilities at the centre of decision-making, and in the heart of their communities.

ARC's Strategic Priorities are:

Support & Develop - ARC NI is committed to supporting and developing a competent workforce that are well equipped and suitably qualified to serve the learning disability sector to the highest standard.

Connect & Liaise - ARC NI encourages providers of learning disability services, Commissioners and Regulators to work together, learn from each other and share best practice.

Influence & Voice - ARC NI is committed to ensuring the voice of our members and the learning disability sector is strong and we strive to achieve positive change ultimately for people with a learning disability.

ARC Northern Ireland directly supported 46 learning disability providers in 2020-21.

ARC Northern Ireland also directly supports 55 adults with a learning disability in 'Telling It Like It Is' groups, or TILII as they are better known.

REFLECTIONS

2020-21 was the year that the global pandemic, COVID-19, hit Northern Ireland and whilst ARC NI offices were closed for the first three months, the team never worked harder. Like so many other businesses, we had to consider how to continue some elements of business 'as usual', reconfigure other elements and respond to new and emerging needs in exceptional circumstances.

At this point, I would like to thank firstly the [ARC NI team](#), including TILII members, for their dedication, hard work and their versatility in meeting the needs of the learning disability community.

I would also like to thank our members, the Department of Health, the Department for Communities, the Health & Social Care Board and RQIA who worked tirelessly with us to support the learning disability community during a time that can only be described as unprecedented.



Leslie-Anne Newton
Director, ARC NI

SUPPORT & DEVELOP

TILII

ARC Northern Ireland supports 55 people with a learning disability in self-advocacy groups called [Telling It Like It Is \(TILII\)](#). With all face to face group meetings having to be suspended, a reconfigured frontline offer of support was put in place. This included a helpline for TILII members and their family alongside weekly telephone catch up calls. A total of 792 weekly calls were made by ARC staff. A further 243 calls were received from TILII members or their parents/carers through the helpline.

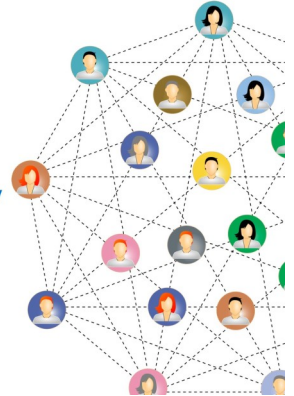
In June we became increasingly concerned for the isolation experienced by TILII members and in particular their mental well-being. In response we moved to deliver frontline weekly face to face house visits in line with Public Health Guidance. A total of 758 home visits were completed.

Face to face TILII group meetings reconvened in September 2020. We facilitated 233 connections between TILII peers at group meetings for those that felt safe to do so. Home visits and telephone calls continued to be put in place for those that were self-isolating.



Over 1,000 calls
to the ARC NI
Hotline connected
NI staff to TILII
members and their
parents/cares during
the lockdown.

"A phone call would not have the same positive impact on Conor. He needs to have face to face contact. These home visits for Conor have been so beneficial. COVID has been hard on Conor who was a very social person. Louise has given him something positive to focus on other than COVID and offered Connor a safe platform to promote his talents." (TILII Family Member)



Workforce

At the start of the pandemic, ARC Northern Ireland suspended all face-to-face training. We reconfigured our training offerings through live online teaching. This began as of October 2020, which also allowed frontline workforce an initial six months to focus on supporting people and services at the start of the pandemic. Remote delivery proved very successful, with ARC Northern Ireland supporting 632 members of the social care workforce with their learning and development.

29%

Delivery of remote training
saw an increase of learners
working in social care.



Members

ARC Northern Ireland listened to the needs of 46 service providers. We quickly heard their significant challenge in securing Personal Protective Equipment during the height of the pandemic. As a short-term offer of support, ARC NI coordinated collaborative PPE orders through a relationship with a trusted supplier. We ensured organisations received over 175,000 masks, 115,000 aprons and 2,478 gloves during May-July 2020.

ARC Northern Ireland offers consultancy support to organisations. We were approached by a member to undertake an independent review of a service which was presenting with issues. A report was compiled, based on feedback from people supported, their family and service staff. This was shared with senior representatives of the organisation.

Coordinated the distribution
of over 97,500 pieces of
PPE per month to ARC NI
Members.



CONNECT & LIAISE

Members

ARC Northern Ireland chaired weekly meetings with its [members](#) from March 2020 and throughout the height of the pandemic. This helped to ensure providers felt connected, could share concerns and have peer support. This was invaluable for organisations. It helped to increase confidence during such unprecedented times. ARC NI worked closely with policy colleagues in the Department of Health, and they, alongside colleagues from Department for Communities, Health and Social Care Board and the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority attended the weekly meetings to ensure up to date information was shared and to enable them to understand the issues experienced by providers of services.



TILII

TILII members were very aware of how lonely, isolating and potentially frightening the lockdown was for people with a learning disability. In response, the TILII team created [TILII TV](#) as a means of communicating with their wider peer group and in discussing community issues. A series of short films, available to anyone, were created by TILII called 'Covid Conversations'. These were a way of trying to encourage people with a learning disability to reconnect with the community.

Wider Learning Disability Community

In 2019, ARC Northern Ireland partnered with Queens University Belfast to deliver a UK-wide research project, '**Getting Our Voices Heard – Safeguarding You Safeguarding Me!**' funded by Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning (DRILL). TILII members and representatives from Compass Advocacy Network (CAN) formed a Peer Researchers group with QUB and met policy makers, learning disability providers and people with a learning disability to explore their views on the involvement of people with a learning disability influencing Safeguarding Policy. The [reports](#) were produced in March 2020.



ARC Northern Ireland planned a range of activities as part of **Learning Disability Week 2020**, with funding from The National Lottery Community Fund, NI. The friendship festival themed pack included 55 pages of free resources accompanied by 11 TILII TV videos. These resources were provided in hard copy to 55 TILII members, digitally to 46 learning disability providers and was hosted on ARC NI website for anyone to access. Lots of people joined in the celebrations with over 20,000 impressions achieved via social media. An evaluation video highlighting all that was achieved is available [here](#).



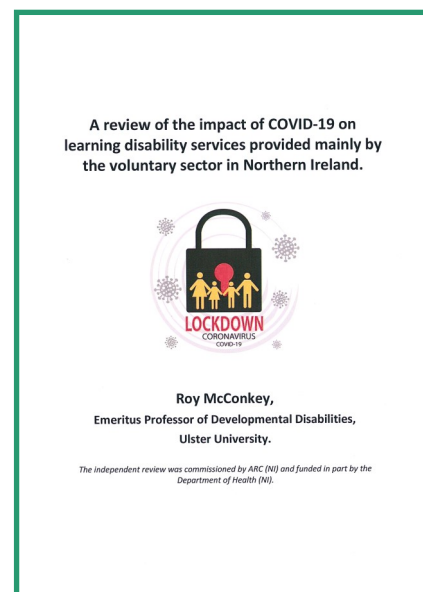
INFLUENCE & VOICE

Members

Supported by the Department of Health, ARC Northern Ireland commissioned an [independent review](#) which aimed to:

1. review and evaluate, from a providers' perspective, what has worked well and not so well during the Covid crisis. This was done with a view to build on positive achievements and ways of working, so as to strengthen the capacity of the sector in the event of a second wave of Covid;
2. identify how to enhance relationships and new ways of working that could deliver better outcomes for people with a learning disability and their families in Northern Ireland;
3. examine the pivotal role of the community and voluntary sector in the ongoing delivery of services and in planning for, and responding to, HSC crises in NI.

The report, shared with the Department of Health and the Health & Social Care Board, highlighted the impact of long-term challenges such as underfunding. It confirmed the pivotal role of partnership working and recommended that learning be used to inform the review of Adult Social Care.



TILII

TILII members who had experienced Muckamore Abbey Hospital met with the Patient Client Council. They shared their thoughts and views on the draft 'Terms of Reference of the Public Inquiry into Muckamore Abbey Hospital'.

TILII members also engaged in the Department of Health led review on restraint and seclusion and on the proposal to introduce an Adult Protection Bill.

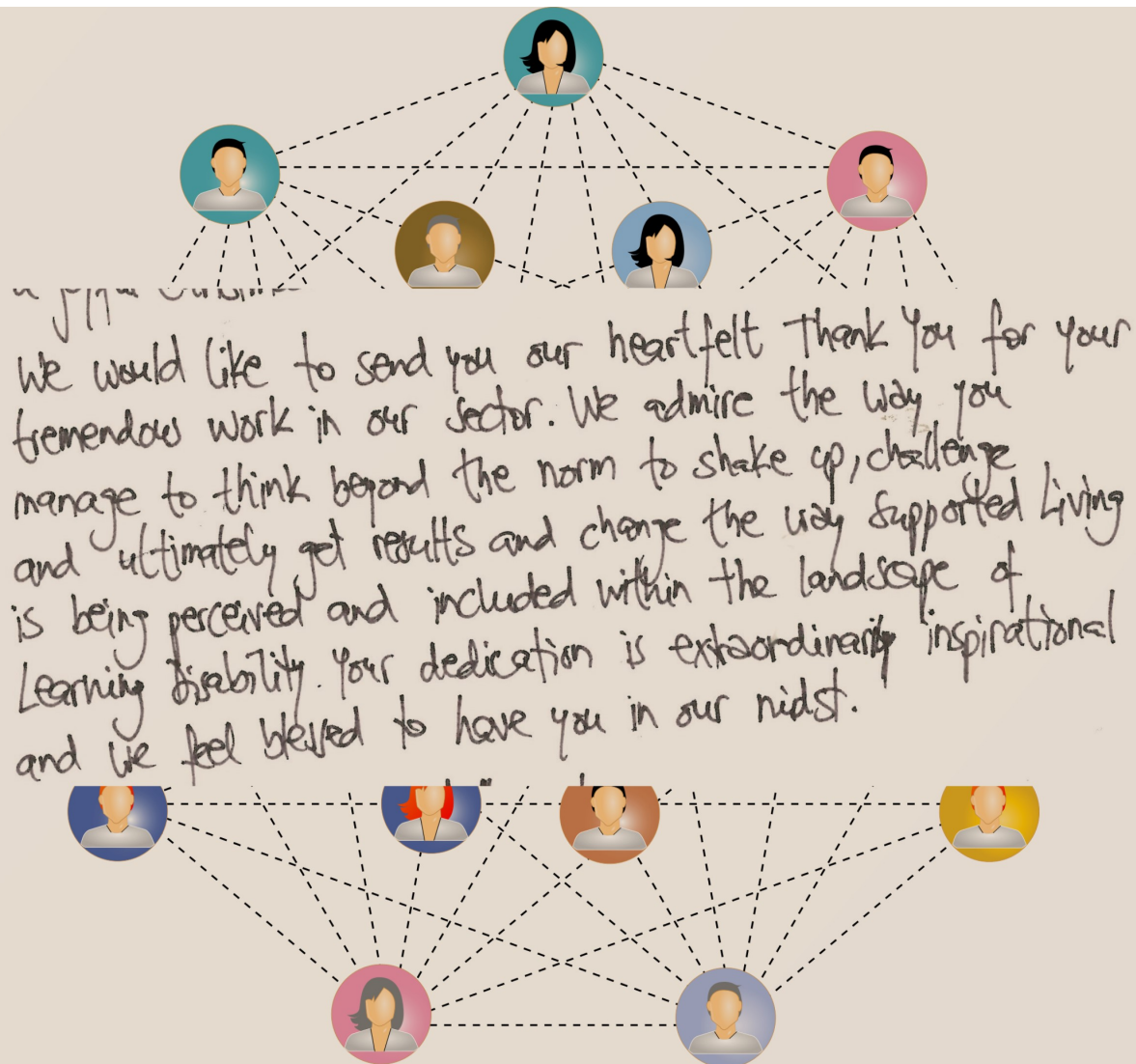
Wider Learning Disability Community

[TILII Translates](#), is an Easy Read, people-led, translation service established to ensure people with a learning disability have accessible information. TILII Translates proved very busy during 2020-21. It secured 22 commissioned pieces of work through customers including Disability Action, the Department of Health and the Northern Ireland Public Ombudsman Service.



ARC Northern Ireland developed and submitted collaborative responses to [public consultations](#). In 2020-21 this included:

- Temporary Amendment of the Health & Social Care Framework Document for the period of June 2020 – May 2022
- Programme for Government – Draft Outcomes Framework
- Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031
- Legislative options to inform the development of an Adult Protection Bill for Northern Ireland



Association for Real Changes operates across the UK.

You will find more information on how our strategic vision is being delivered across the UK, as well as information on how to join or support our organisation, on our websites.

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