



The Cheshire Foundation in Ireland Policy on Independence & Choice (Ref. SD-001)

Policy statement

Our view, as an organisation, is that the Cheshire philosophy fully complements the objectives of the Independent Living Movement. Cheshire Foundation policy is that all Cheshire services actively promote independence and choice. In particular, services must be provided in ways which maximise *individual* choice and control.

Purpose of this document

This document sets out the Cheshire Foundation's policy in relation to the promotion of independence and choice within Cheshire services. It explains how the Cheshire philosophy and ethos fit with the Independent Living concept.

Scope of this policy

This policy is binding on all Cheshire Foundation services, employees, committee members and volunteers.

References to other policies & documents

None at this date.

Guidance notes

This policy is supported by Guidance Notes (see page 2) which form part of the approved policy.

Approval of the Board of Trustees

This policy (and supporting Guidance Notes) has been approved by the Board of Trustees of the Foundation.



Definitions & Guidance Notes

Definitions

The following definitions apply throughout this document:

- The Foundation** The Cheshire Foundation in Ireland
- Independent Living:** Defined as living like everyone else, having the right to self determination, to exert control over one’s life, to have opportunities to make decisions, take responsibility and to pursue activities of one’s own choosing regardless of disability. (*Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities*)
- Cheshire Home:** A Cheshire Home should be a place of shelter physically and of encouragement spiritually; a place in which the residents can acquire a sense of belonging, and of ownership, by contributing in any way within their capabilities to its functioning and development; a place to share with others and from which to help others less fortunate; and a place in which to gain confidence and develop independence and interests; a place of hopeful endeavour not of passive disinterest. (*Singapore Declaration*)

Cheshire philosophy

The philosophy, ethos and vision of Leonard Cheshire complement the objectives being pursued by the Independent Living Movement. This is illustrated by the following quotations from Leonard Cheshire’s book *The Hidden World* (1981) which are also quoted in the Foundation’s *Hand Book of Care* (1990).

- “...what we should be aiming at is to give each individual person the greatest possible choice as regards all aspects of living,”
- “it is self evident that everything possible should be done to help the person concerned to achieve maximum independence,”
- “.....the goal should be defined as freedom to choose....”

Practical application of the Cheshire philosophy

Independent living is not and should not be about what a person can physically do. It is more what a person emotionally, spiritually and intellectually chooses to do with his/her life.

By focusing on the core issue of **choice**, Cheshire services aspire to implement the Independent Living ideal in practical, realistic ways. In our services, we are trying to create an environment where choice occurs at various levels, as shown in the diagram. We are also trying to ensure that service users can make *informed* choices – i.e., are aware of alternative courses of action or challenging options which they may want to consider.

People’s choices cover a spectrum from deciding to move into mainstream housing, to the decision to enter a personal relationship; to what colour clothes to wear on a particular day. But whatever the type or scale of choice involved, the practical promotion of **individual choice**, and the related promotion of **individual control**, are at the centre of what we are trying to do.

We recognise that implementation of this philosophy is not easy and we do not claim to have yet achieved its full implementation throughout our services. However, **the constant challenge to put this ideal into practice must be a central feature of life for all involved in Cheshire services.**

