



## The History of Independent Living

The Independent Living (IL) movement emerged in America in the 1960s during a socially and politically active time. Its origins and growth are closely tied to the African-American civil rights movement, as well as to the women's rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s. Disability rights activists connected these movements and their values, and disability rights became a civil rights issue. As a result, a long history of segregation, dehumanisation and institutionalisation were contested by ideas of empowerment and equality.

The beginnings of the IL movement can be traced to University College (UC) Berkeley in California. Ed Roberts was a defining figure; in 1962, he became the first person living with paralysis to attend UC Berkeley. Influenced by the political and protest culture, as well as the barriers experienced by students with disabilities, Roberts and others came together to advocate for change for people with disabilities. They challenged notions of disability and the place of people with disabilities in society.

In 1972, after graduation and with funding from a federal grant, disabled students established the world's first Centre for Independent Living (CIL) in Berkeley. Around

the same time, CILs in Houston, Texas and Boston, Massachusetts were also established.

The CILs worked towards establishing access to Personal Assistant (PA) services, accessible and affordable housing, and inclusion in the community. Berkeley CIL, in particular, was very involved in helping other CILs to get started. A technical assistance project was set up to support the establishment of CILs and to share their philosophy and mission. Within ten years, there were 200 CILs in the United States (US), and the concept began to spread throughout Europe. The first CIL in Ireland, CIL Carmichael House, was established in March 1992; today, there are 22 CILs in Ireland.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dublincil.org/history.asp>