

# “I am here”

## The Article 19 Project



## Plain language version

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P. Milner & B. Mirfin-Veitch (PhD)

Donald Beasley Institute

[www.donaldbeasley.org.nz](http://www.donaldbeasley.org.nz)



TE HUNGA HAUA MAURI MO NGA TANGATA KATOA

The Article 19 research project looks at the rights of 12 disabled people with high and complex support needs. The rights looked at were the rights to live in and be included in the community. The disabled people involved were from across the country and were aged between twenty and fifty two.

The Disabled People in the project used support to do every day tasks where they live and to get around their community and or understand things. The disabled people involved in the project told their story in different ways. Some talked to us, some pointed to pictures, used gestures, smiled, moved eyes, and or used computers.

New Zealand has signed an international law about the rights of Disabled people called The United Nations Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) identifies the right of disabled people to live in the community with choices equal to others. New Zealand has an obligation to ensure this right because it signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Article 19 research found that the right to choose where you live was limited for disabled people. Five of the twelve disabled people who took part in the research project lived with their family and one boarded with a family. This was because of limited options. Community group homes were seen as the only other option that could meet the disabled person's needs. It was feared that people's lives would be worse in a community group home.

Four people who took part in the research project lived in a community group home with other disabled people. The home was closed to the people living in it between 9:30 and 3:30 pm. People who lived in a community group home could not choose who they lived with or who came into their room. Two people owned or rented their home. The people who owned or rented their home told us that it gave them more control over their home. These two people received home support, but received limited support to take part in their community.

Families that continued to support their disabled son or daughter in the family home had limited support.

Most people in the research felt they had few friends and only one person had a partner. The few friends that the people identified were family, family friends and staff. Only one person belonged to a club that also included non-disabled members.

Where people lived affected their relationship and connection with their community. People living in a family home had more chances for natural and everyday activities and friendships. There was no set programme. People living in group homes experienced and came into limited contact with the community through set programmes. The programmes were so set that some people could describe their weeks six months in advance.

The programmes tended to focus on tasks and activities in a limited number of public places like the library, swimming pools, a shop and cafés where disabled people were taken. These are often places where people go to do things rather than to meet people and make friends. Often people went to these places during work hours when few people of their age group would be present. Staff could sometimes accidentally act as a barrier or block to other friendships being made because they stuck to the set programme. As a result, people in community group homes found it difficult to make friends.

People talked about the things that made it hard to take part in the community like not having a job, not having information in ways that they could easily read or understand. People reported that a lack of money, support or equipment (resources) limited where they could go and what they could do in the community. Only one person was employed and that was in a part time casual job. Difficulty getting to or into houses and other places also limited who people could visit. People told us that individual programmes prevented the sharing of money, support, equipment and goals with other disabled people. People in the research had limited access to communication aides and devices (e.g. readers, talking books, etc).

Despite 30 years of social policy aimed at including people in the community, disabled people told us that they were not included in their community. Their living arrangements and chances to form friendships and connections were limited by government policies, the practices of service providers, the attitudes of people in the community and the built environment. Disabled people are still being denied the right to choose who they live with, to choose a place of their own to live and to be part of the community.

