



Centre for  
Independent  
Living CIC

**How Should ULO's  
Approach Culture and  
Values? An Example  
from SPECTRUM**



## Aim of document:

- To show, from SPECTRUM Centre for Independent Living's experience, how User Led Organisations (ULO) can develop organisational culture and values which are appropriate to ULO's based on equality and rights

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<https://spiritdisabilityplatform.wordpress.com/>

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## Introduction

Most User Led Organisations are created with aims focused around equality and rights for a group or community of People. From SPECTRUM, that community is Disabled People<sup>1</sup>. We hope that this publication of the culture and values which SPECTRUM has developed will be of assistance to other ULO's

## SPECTRUM's Culture and Values

The following definition of culture suits SPECTRUM:

“A pattern of basic assumptions – invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration – that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” [*Organisational Culture and Leadership, Schein, 1985*]

SPECTRUM's culture comprises the attitudes, experiences, beliefs, mission, vision, aims and values of the organisation.

This shared culture defines why we work together, what we seek to achieve and how we should achieve this. For SPECTRUM to be strong, successful and effective, it is important that everyone within the organisation 'buys-in' to this shared understanding to be able to work together effectively. It follows therefore, that SPECTRUM has to ensure that its induction and working practices provide an environment for our culture to be accepted by all those involved.

It is also important to note that, as a part of the 'Disability Movement', SPECTRUM's culture has been developed and shared by those organisations that also 'belong' to the Movement. This Movement is an important part of what SPECTRUM is.

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<sup>1</sup> By Disabled People we refer to people with any form of impairment, including people with a physical, sensory, intellectual, psychological, emotional, age related or any other hidden impairment(s). We therefore include people with learning difficulties, Deaf People, Blind and visually impaired people, mental health system users and survivors, people living with chronic illness and Older People with age related impairments.



SPECTRUM's leaders and managers have a particular responsibility to nurture the culture of the organisation; particularly in their own practices and values.

SPECTRUM's management style is non-hierarchical, open and transparent. SPECTRUM believes that all those involved in the organisation should have equal rights to speak out, and to be listened to. We engage all parts of the organisation in our planning processes.

Above everything else, SPECTRUM's central cultural belief is that Disabled People own, run, manage and control SPECTRUM. We are deliberately an organisation '*for the people, by the people*'.

## Our Values

SPECTRUM's values define the ethos and ethics of the organisation:

- SPECTRUM is run, controlled and managed by Disabled People [*A Disabled People's User Led Organisation (DPULO)*]
- SPECTRUM is democratically accountable to a membership consisting of Disabled People and non-disabled allies. Only Disabled members have a vote
- SPECTRUM is non-impairment specific, we welcome and include all Disabled People irrespective of their impairments. By 'Disabled People' we refer to people with a physical, sensory, intellectual, psychological, emotional, or any other hidden impairment. We therefore include people with learning difficulties, mental health system survivors, cancer survivors and those living with HIV/AIDS
- SPECTRUM works to and promotes the Social Model of Disability and the philosophy of Independent Living, which includes the '*12 Basic Rights*'. This enables the identification of barriers that limit independence and the provision of support services which help reduce and remove barriers to inclusion
- SPECTRUM believes that Disabled People's lives should be self-determined and based on human rights rather than depending on charitable goodwill
- SPECTRUM believes that all Disabled People should have choice and control over all aspects of their lives, and a right to live independently
- SPECTRUM is non-discriminatory in all aspects of our work. We do not discriminate against any group or individual and recognise



that Disabled People often belong to other groups that also experience discrimination. We call this multiple oppression

- SPECTRUM promotes equality and freedom of speech and practices it throughout our activities. We are open and transparent and encourage ideas, encouragement and criticism from all, irrespective of status or role – all input is valued equally
- SPECTRUM believes all people should be treated with respect and dignity at all times
- SPECTRUM is above all, a people-based organisation, we presume trust, and create a safe and empowering environment which is encouraging, and collaborative
- SPECTRUM believes that all organisations promoting empowerment and social change should be peer based and fully accountable to, and representative of, the community they work within. Our community is Disabled People
- SPECTRUM is committed to positive risk assessment methods, ensuring we assess risk and remove barrier to enable, rather than prevent, involvement, choice & control and empowerment
- SPECTRUM celebrates progressive social policy innovation
- SPECTRUM are pragmatists, understanding limitations of systems, people and resources and we find realistic methods to remove barriers and empower through realistic expectations. But we encourage ambition and challenge dogma and segregation
- SPECTRUM promotes a positive image of Disabled People, encouraging Disabled People to develop a positive self image of who they are
- SPECTRUM uses empowering and accessible language, chosen by Disabled People and other oppressed groups, to describe how they wish to be viewed and treated





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