

**Social History of Learning Disability Conference**  
**10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> July 2018**  
**The Open University, Milton Keynes**

**Advocacy and the social history of learning  
disability:**

**Family and Self-advocacy**

CALL FOR PAPERS

Our Conferences present the exciting and creative ways people have been studying, thinking about and telling others about the history of learning disability. This includes research by self-advocates, academics, community groups, students, families and practitioners. This research has taken many different – and often very creative – forms.



Our 2018 conference will be on **the history of family and self-advocacy** in relation to people with learning disabilities.



We have seen a change in the context in which self-advocacy operates, with many groups struggling while others flourish. In 2017 the English National Forum of People with Learning Disabilities and the National Valuing Families Forum lost their funding; while Wales has the infrastructure of All Wales People First.

The traditional advocates for families - large organisations like Mencap and National Autistic Society - have been challenged by new initiatives like 7 days of Action and Justice for LB; and by different forms of advocacy practised through the arts and theatre. We are interested in papers on any aspect of the history of family advocacy and self-advocacy, and we particularly encourage papers on how these two types of advocacies can effectively work together. We welcome your ideas for conference presentations on any of these issues:

- What can we learn from the history of family and self-advocacy?
- How are self-advocacy and / or family-advocacy changing; and how can they flourish?
- What are the challenges of researching advocacy and self-advocacy?

- What are the barriers to families and self-advocates working together, and how can they be tackled?
- What are the shared agendas of family and self-advocacy when it comes to a good life for people with learning disabilities?
- How does social media impact on advocacy of all types?
- What (if any) are the ethical concerns affecting family and self-advocates working together?
- What lessons can family advocates learn from self-advocates and vice versa, and how we can share these?



We welcome submissions from a range of perspectives, and from a range of different people. We also want to include **international perspectives**, so we would like to see papers from the UK and abroad. We know that research on the history of learning disability is being done in all sorts of interesting ways. We want to capture the breadth of this work. Finally, we approach the social history of learning disability from the point of view that '**today's stories are tomorrow's history**'. So we are interested in how research about contemporary issues is being done, as contemporary research will, of course, be capturing stories that will become tomorrow's history!

## **A note on our conferences:**

The annual Social History of Learning Disability (SHLD) Research Group Conferences at the Open University bring together people with learning disabilities, families, academics, practitioners, advocacy groups, service providers and other interested people to explore and document the past and its influence on the present and future. To date much of the published work of the group has covered the history of the long stay learning disability institutions, the development of community based support and services, and individual life histories. Our experience is that stories and testimonies from people with learning disabilities, families, and others closely involved have afforded very valuable insight as to what works well, both in the past and present, in addition to highlighting potential barriers to achieving a good life and how these can be overcome.

Please be aware that our conferences are inclusive events, and papers will need to be accessible to people with learning disabilities (please see attached guidelines on accessible presentations and abstracts).



SHLD Group website: [www.open.ac.uk/hsc/lds/site](http://www.open.ac.uk/hsc/lds/site)

**Submitting an abstract:**

**Abstracts will be reviewed by members of the SHLD group, which include people with learning disabilities. Please send a short (up to one page) accessible summary of your proposed paper by Monday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018 to Lee Woodham at the following address:**

**Shld-conference@open.ac.uk**

OR

Lee Woodham,  
Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies  
The Open University, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

***Video and storyboard abstracts:*** If you are interested in submitting a video or storyboard abstract for your presentation, please contact Liz Tilley to discuss: [Elizabeth.Tilley@open.ac.uk](mailto:Elizabeth.Tilley@open.ac.uk)