

The disability movement is mourning the loss of one of its "quiet leaders", Stephen Bradshaw, the first director of the user-led Spinal Injuries Association (SIA).

Leading figures in the SIA and other disabled activists have been paying tribute to Bradshaw as a "visionary" activist and campaigner, and to his personal warmth, tenacity and determination.

Bradshaw, who died last week in Stoke Mandeville Hospital, following a short illness, was a founding member of SIA and its first director.

The charity said he was a "driving force" behind its growth and that it was his "single-minded manner and commitment that enabled the association to grow from a small self-help group to its present position as the leading user-led organisation of and for spinal cord injured people".

He was also a founder member of the British Council of Disabled People (BCODP), representing SIA at its first meeting in 1981, and also chaired Rights Now!, the coalition of user-led and non-user led organisations that fought for civil rights for disabled people.

Bradshaw was awarded an OBE in 1994, and after he retired in 2001 he worked as a consultant for SIA.

Friends and colleagues have this week paid tribute to him on [SIA's website](#) .

Baroness [Jane] Campbell, who first worked closely with Bradshaw when he was chairing Rights Now!, posted a message praising his "relentless ability to look for a solution when others would have long given up".

She said: "He patiently worked with every single member to find common ground so we could move forward together and fight for the Disability Discrimination Act with one voice.

"Quite frankly, I don't know how he achieved it, but there we all were in the end, organisations of and for disabled people, marching together across Westminster Bridge to Parliament, to demand our rights to equality."

She said he had played a "fundamental" role in the disability movement as "one of the quiet leaders who strengthened our armoury by keeping everyone communicating".

Professor Mike Oliver, the disabled academic, said in his tribute on the website that Bradshaw had played a key role in BCODP's formation, by allowing the SIA office to run the administration of the new organisation until it was "strong enough to support itself".

But he also said Bradshaw was a "visionary" who "knew a good idea when he saw one", backing ideas such as "no-fault compensation schemes which would have eradicated the ambulance-chasing spectacle we see today", and "drive from the wheelchair vans long before WAVs (wheelchair accessible vehicles) became a key part of many of our lives".

Jonathan Fogerty, SIA's chair, said Bradshaw was a "warm, charming and funny man", who "lived an extraordinary life and dedicated so much of it to bettering the lives of those of us living with SCI (spinal cord injury)".

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**News provided by John Pring at [www.disabilitynewsservice.com](http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com)**