

Inclusion Scotland's Annual Report

April 1 2020 – March 31 2021



**Inclusion
Scotland**

Disabled People's Organisation

Our voices ■ Our choices

www.inclusionscotland.org

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Senior Management Report

This year had a devastating impact on thousands of disabled people's lives, as our own and others' research has shown. As well as loss of and threats to our rights to life, we have seen how years of austerity have left an unprepared, inaccessible and unequal society.

The Inclusion Scotland team shone. **Teams** adapted to **continue to deliver** our project work **throughout lockdown** and delivered beyond expectation. Staff gathered and reported on disabled people's experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic. We used this evidence to call for action to meet our human rights.

Towards the end of this year we were disappointed to say farewell to our CEO Dr Sally Witcher OBE. Over the last 7 years Sally took our small, ambitious organisation from strength-to-strength and we have felt the loss of her incredible leadership.

As always, without our members and supporters - without your involvement - we would not be able to report on all we've achieved throughout this exceptional year. **Thank you!**

Pauline Nolan

on behalf of the Senior Management Team
(Interim Directors)

Convenor's Report

I am honoured to introduce Inclusion Scotland's 2020-2021 Annual Report. It has been a truly unprecedented year of challenges for everyone, and the team has risen, time and again, to each one, with resilience, skill, knowledge, and compassion.

The staff team, and the board, have seen significant changes throughout the last year. We have said goodbye to Sally Witcher as CEO, and I would like to thank her for her incredible work over the years – Inclusion Scotland would not be where it is today without her, and she will be missed. I would also like to thank those that have stood down from the board during this year – Terry Robinson, Derek Kelter, and Irena Paterson. They have been stalwarts, and their presence within the disability movement will continue to be felt. My heartfelt thanks to them all, on behalf of the board, the staff, and, of course, our members. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome aboard our new CEO, Moira Tasker, who joins us in July, and look forward to working with her in future.

Foremost, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of everyone – both our members, the staff, and the board. Covid came along and upended everything. In many cases with tragic consequences. It would also be remiss of me to not thank the wider efforts of public services to manage in exceptional circumstances.

The truly shocking and shameful, statistics of how Covid, and the early responses to it, have affected disabled people are sobering. The team early on set about data collecting and researching the lived experience of disabled people in the face of the pandemic. What that research threw into the light was the unavoidable fact of systemic failures in our treatment by others over decades, on both a national and local level.

In taking that research, and directly feeding it back to Scottish Government, Inclusion Scotland has managed to shift the locus of policy formation into lived experience. The most notable success ranged from the practical (BSL alongside the First Minister's Covid briefings), to the high profile (getting a member of the People Led Policy Panel onto the review panel of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care).

The Feeley Review marks a clear change, and opportunity, in thinking around social care. Something disabled people have been calling for, for decades. Coupled with the report of the National Taskforce for Human Rights Leadership, recommending a bold and innovative mass incorporation of human rights conventions into Scots Law, government has been shown a clear way ahead. It is now up to all of us – both as disabled individuals, and as DPOs - to ensure that the push back on these two reports is challenged at every turn. With the full incorporation of the UNCRPD, Scotland would be transformed, for the better, for disabled people. Our human rights would be protected, and our inclusion throughout society at every level be mandatory. No longer would we be easily shut out of policy and thought of as tertiary (at best) in decisions that affect us. 'Nothing about us, without us' would have true legislative weight.

I close by wishing everyone a healthier, happier, less stressful year ahead.

Leo Starrs-Cunningham
Convenor



Influencing Policy – Key Outputs

The Covid-19 pandemic

Covid-19, and many of the actions taken to address it, hit disabled people hard. Disabled people were not consulted on emergency planning or responses to Covid-19 and we felt the effects. 1 in 6 deaths in Scotland were disabled people.

At Inclusion Scotland, we spent the Covid-19 pandemic desperately trying to make disabled people's voices heard. We researched disabled people's experiences of Covid-19 and reported our findings to decision makers so they know what is really happening outside of Holyrood. By sharing their experiences, disabled people influenced national plans on how Scotland builds forward better.

Policy Outputs on Covid-19 from April 2020 to March 2021

9 MSP BRIEFINGS RELATED TO COVID-19

1 MP BRIEFING RELATED TO COVID-19

2 CONSULTATION RESPONSES ON COVID-19



3 ORAL EVIDENCE SESSIONS ON DISABLED PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE OF COVID-19



7 WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS ON COVID-19



3 RESEARCH REPORTS ON COVID-19



OVER 1000 RESPONSES TO OUR COVID-19 RESEARCH



Disabled people suffered from the Covid-19 virus but we also suffered from the responses to it because of a failure to include us in society.

This has highlighted the importance of our continuing to fight for better emergency planning, with disabled people, now and in the future.

We got funding from the National Emergencies Trust to fund projects run by Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) across Scotland to address the impact of the pandemic. These projects covered things like independent living, isolation, and financial advice. We had 12 applications and we were able to make 6 small grants to DPOs. In partnership with Foundation Scotland, we also secured funding for a further 4 DPOs.

Influencing access to accessible housing

After years lobbying and highlighting the chronic shortage of accessible and adapted housing in Scotland, the Scottish Government has committed to introducing new building standards that will underpin a new Scottish Accessible Homes Standard from 2025 to 2026!

Influencing Brexit

We monitored the impacts of our Exit of the European Union (or 'Brexit') on disabled people and made the Scottish Government aware that the cost of mobility aids from Europe had increased, and there are concerns over the availability of medication and Personal Assistants. The Scottish Government then committed to monitoring and mitigating these where possible.

Influencing climate action

Action: Many of the actions to address climate change make life more difficult for disabled people. In November 2020 we brought together disabled people, decision makers and climate activists to discuss climate change and disability inclusion.

Result: We will advocate to involve disabled people and our organisations in policy making so our action on climate change does not alienate or discriminate against disabled people.

Influencing disabled people's human rights

After Inclusion Scotland explored how and why we should, the Scottish Government agreed to incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) into Scot's law.



A few weeks ago, the COVID-19 Committee heard powerful evidence from Inclusion Scotland, which represents disabled groups.

Donald Cameron MSP,
Convener Covid-19 Committee,
Scottish Parliament,
17 March 2021

A survey that was conducted by the charity Inclusion Scotland has identified worrying and sometimes horrific evidence from parents of children with additional support needs.

Willie Rennie MSP, Scottish
Parliament, 21 April 2020



Influencing disabled people's access to justice

Through our partnership with the Scottish Just Law Centre, we got disabled university students extra time for exams reinstated and got a local council to agree to send accessible communications to a disabled man – after 19 years.

Influencing Social Security

We achieved changes to regulations for Disability Assistance, Fraud Investigation and Winter Heating Assistance to better support disabled people.

Influencing access to Social Care Support

We researched and reported on the stark effects of the removal of vital social care support during Covid-19 and gave evidence to the Independent Review of Adult Social Care that change is overdue.



We heard very powerful evidence from Inclusion Scotland.

Humza Yousaf MSP,
Cabinet Secretary for Justice,
Scottish Parliament,
10 March 2021



Influencing the 2021 Scottish Parliament Election:

We published our manifesto for the 2021 Scottish Parliament election and shared it with the main Scottish political parties to help inform the drafting of their election manifestos. You can find this on our website www.inclusionScotland.org

Research

This year our research found:

- > Life has not got fairer for disabled people since the Scottish Government published its 'A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People' delivery plan in 2016.
- > What disabled people thought of the draft Adult Disability Payment Regulations.
- > Disabled people's experiences of Covid-19.

Policy Outputs from April 2020 to March 2021

18 
**BRIEFINGS
FOR MEMBERS
OF THE
SCOTTISH
PARLIAMENT**

1 
**BRIEFING
FOR MPS IN THE
IN THE
HOUSE OF
COMMONS**

MENTIONED IN
 **10**
**SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT
DEBATES BY 12
DIFFERENT MSPS
INCLUDING 2 SCOTTISH
GOVERNMENT
CABINET SECRETARIES**

11 **WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS TO
SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT COMMITTEES**

3 
**WRITTEN
SUBMISSIONS
TO UK
COMMITTEES
PARLIAMENT**

7 **OCCASIONS
OF GIVING
EVIDENCE
TO SCOTTISH
PARLIAMENT
COMMITTEES
INQUIRIES**

11 
**CONSULTATIONS
RESPONSES TO THE
SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT
AND OTHER
PUBLIC BODIES**

Influencing Policy Through Our Research

Thank you to everyone who has taken part in our research over the past year. Your contribution really helps us to make sure disabled people's voices are heard.

This year saw the end of our work on the Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning (DRILL). We were a lead partner in this innovative 5-year UK-wide programme of research. Funded by the Big Lottery Community, DRILL promoted co-production in research projects to empower disabled people to have direct influence on decisions that impact on their independent living. Learn more about the different research projects in Scotland on our website.

Promoting Participation

In employment

From April 2020 to March 2021 Inclusion Scotland:

**Worked
with 53
employers**

**Delivered
192 hours
of mock
interviews**

**Delivered
32
internships**

Through our internship programme for disabled people, we continued to show employers how slight changes to their recruitment practices make them more inclusive.



These workshops are really eye-opening as well as practical. I'd recommend them to everybody, whatever your role. Everybody has the power to make life easier for others.

Unlocking your Employerability workshop participant

Fantastic training with so much information and insight. Would highly recommend to any employer looking to prioritise and really make a difference to disability inclusion.

Unlocking your EmployerAbility workshop participant





We were receiving low numbers of applicants from disabled candidates. Inclusion Scotland were able to support by helping to tailor Glenmorangie job specifications, job adverts and support at interview. The recruitment team at Glenmorangie began to implement advice, including;

- > Adding inclusive statements to job adverts and being more mindful of language used.
- > Using anonymised applications and CVs.
- > Advertising on websites specifically targeting disabled people.

Following a subsequent recruitment process, with a post ring-fenced for [a disabled person], we received over 25 applications from disabled candidates, further narrowing this to four people and made a hire at the beginning of March 2021.

Lindsey Danks, HR Business Partner, Glenmorangie



This year we supported employers to navigate the impact of Covid-19. We developed tools such as our Guidance on Accessible and Effective Remote Working and our new ebulletin for employers, EmployerAbility, for employers who value inclusion and want to get it right! This quarterly newsletter shares insights and practical tools for employers to use to improve their practice.

We launched our **“Unlocking your EmployerAbility”** training, funded through the Workplace Equality Fund. This training shares learning from our internship programme through tools, templates and workshops that support employers to become more inclusive.



To be honest, we could have appointed any of the 5 interviewed. I cannot believe they cannot get permanent employment, they are fantastic, it's the highest calibre of interviewee I have seen in many a year.

Richard Ogston,
Careers Manager, University Abertay

It has been a pleasure working with you and a valuable experience to learn and develop our understanding of inclusion. I've found the whole process and experience, inspiring and insightful.

Nicola Anderson,
CEO, FinTech Scotland



In leadership roles

Through our Access to Public Appointments project, disabled people shadowed publicly appointed Boards. Participants learned about the work of Board members, whilst Boards learnt how they can remove the barriers to disabled people becoming members.

In January 2021 we published 8 recommendations to address disabled people's underrepresentation on public boards.

We delivered our Lived Experience Leadership pilot project, funded by the National Lottery Communities Fund, online. The project aimed to develop training opportunities for aspiring disabled leaders. This included supporting disabled people to recognise and use their own experience of being disabled to create change. Eight participants developed their own leadership goals, completed an Open University Leadership course and other training, and shadowed leaders from different sectors. We will report the recommendations from the project's co-production group over the coming year.

In politics

Our Access to Politics work continued to support disabled people to get involved in politics at all levels. We consulted with political parties and other stakeholders on how to keep and improve disabled people's access during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We launched our Guidance on Accessing Politics to support disabled people to get more involved in politics, from how to contact your local representative to getting involved with a political party.

The Access to Elected Office Fund (Scotland) supports disabled people to run as a candidate in Scottish elections by covering the costs of reasonable adjustments. As of March 2021, 13 recipients were running as candidates in the Scottish Parliament election.

From March 2020 to April 2021 The Access to Elected Office Fund:



We supported Disability Wales and the Welsh Government to set up their own Access to Elected Office Fund pilot for the Welsh Senedd (Parliament) elections in May 2021.

In Policy

This year we have welcomed 15 new members to our People Led Policy Panel on Adult Social Care Support, made up of deaf and disabled people and unpaid carers. The panel have continued to use their experience of social care support to shape and influence policy. Following the **announcement of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care** the panel were the first group to meet with Derek Feeley who led the Review. Derek Feeley invited one of our members onto his expert advisory group. **The PLPP sent its own written submission to the review and informed our own** and a MSP briefing for the parliamentary debate on the review recommendations.



In her Programme for Government speech that launched this review, the First Minister said, “this is a time to be bold”. The good news is that everyone we spoke to agrees with her. What follows is a plan for how. It will take time. It has taken over 50 years for our current system to form. It will take investment. It will take partnership. But we have an opportunity to create a system of social care support where everyone in Scotland has the opportunity to flourish. If not now, when?

Derek Feeley,
Independent Review of Adult
Social Care, February 2021.



In the Highlands

The year started with the launch of a new Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) in Highland, HighAbility, the first pan-impairment DPO in the area for nearly two decades. Now an independent organisation, we work closely with them and provide support.

In Autumn we launched our Highland Covid-19 Disability Forum in partnership with NHS Highland, University of

Highlands and Islands and The Highland Council. Through this forum we consulted disabled people in the Highlands on Covid-19 and responses to it.

In January, we hosted our "Highland Covid-19 Disability Summit", which brought disabled people in the highlands together to discuss NHS and Council services, devolution of disability benefits and digital accessibility.

Highland promoting participation: facts and figures

OVER

180

PEOPLE
RESPONDED TO
OUR HIGHLAND
SURVEY

190

PEOPLE CAME TO
OUR ACCESSIBLE
ONLINE HIGHLAND
SUMMIT

97%

RATED THE
ACCESSIBILITY
OF THE SUMMIT
AS 'GOOD' OR
'EXCELLENT',
THANKS TO
ABILITYNET.

AFTER THE EVENT, TWO THIRDS
OF SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS SAID
THEY WERE NOW MORE LIKELY TO
DIGITALLY ENGAGE WITH PUBLIC
SERVICES.

8 IN 10 PARTICIPANTS SAID THEY
HAD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF
THE NEW ISSUES FACE BY DISABLED
PEOPLE DURING COVID-19.

Our Board

Terry Robinson,
Convenor

Leo Starrs-Cunningham,
Deputy Convenor

Gillian Lawrence,
Treasurer

Andrew Mason

Derek Kelter

Fiona Kumari-Campbell

Irena Paterson

James Elder-Woodward

Kirstein Rummery

Michael Greaves Mackintosh

Ryan McMullan

Taryn Cotton

Balkishan Agrawal

Kim Dams



Thank You

To Dr Sally Witcher (OBE)

for leading Inclusion Scotland for 7 years – we are forever grateful.

To Deirdre Henderson,

our former People-Led Policy Officer for all her work developing the People Led Policy Panel from scratch and her work on social care support policy.

Dr Sue Kelly,

who retired in September 2019, for all her work for Inclusion Scotland since 2012.

Philippa Bonnella

for her work on the National Emergencies Trust Emergency Disabled People's Organisations Covid-19 Fund; and, interim support to our senior management team and help finding a new CEO.

Thanks to **Skills Development Scotland and The Law Society of Scotland** for your contribution and support for our work at the Herald Diversity Conference.

JustRight Scotland and the Scottish Just Law Centre for support for disabled people's access to justice and production of templates and information.

AbilityNet for supporting online delivery of our bigger events.

Board members Terry Robinson, Derek Kelter, and Irena Paterson

who stood down this year.

Thank you for all your hard work.

Special thanks to **Adobe, Anderson Strathern, Microsoft, Skyscanner, Glasgow Science Centre and Passion 4 Social** for your partnership with our Employerability training.

To Maddi Cassell, who left in March 2021, for her hard work developing and supporting our National Lottery Funded Lived Experience Leadership (LEL) Pilot project.

To all the members of the **LEL project's co-production group**.

To the **National Emergencies Trust** for emergency pandemic funding for DPOs.

To Disability Action Northern Ireland, Disability Wales, and Inclusion London, our partners in the **National Emergencies Trust** funding project.

To our partners in the **LEL project: National Lottery (funders), Lead Scotland, Tripod Training, the Open University and Duncan Wallace**.

We would like to give individual thanks to Blair Lochrie- Microsoft, Anja Salinger-Carsley - Adobe, Rob Marrs - Law Society of Scotland, Heather Hepburn - Sky Scanner and Andrew Brown - Anderson Strathern for your time and continued support.



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**Inclusion
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