



Our Rights, Right Now Inclusion Scotland's Annual Conference 2021



A short report about disabled people's lived experience and why we need our rights, right now.



Inclusion Scotland is Scotland's national Disabled People's Organisation.



A Disabled People's Organisation is an organisation that is run by disabled people.



Our Rights, Right Now online Annual Conference brought together disabled people and Disabled People's Organisations from across Scotland.



The aim was to learn, to connect and to share both experiences and solutions.



This short report is about disabled people's everyday lived experiences. People shared their experiences at the conference.



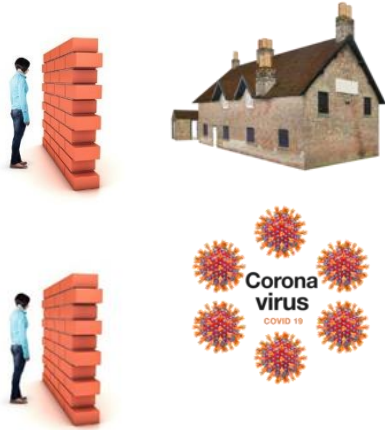
Disabled people spoke about:



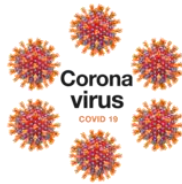
- Being denied support services



- Problems with how organisations and institutions work. These structures can be difficult and hard to understand.



- Barriers for people who live in rural areas.



- Barriers caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and how it continues to make daily living difficult.



Many attendees talked about intersectional barriers.

This means they experienced inequality due to their race, gender or sexuality as well as being disabled.

As one person said, “**Rights don’t count - rights just don’t count now.**”

Our Rights, Right Now

Inclusion Scotland’s Conference confirmed what we already know.





As disabled people we do not enjoy our human rights. We do not get to be part of society.



The conference called for Our Rights to be the rights we enjoy Right Now.



Disabled people have waited too long to enjoy the rights that non-disabled people have.



We are going through the pandemic like everyone else but the impact of it affects disabled people much more.



It strips disabled people of our rights and increases the inequalities we face.



Lots of people think that we are 'getting there' with Covid but disabled people do not agree.



Lots of disabled people lost the support they need at the start of the pandemic. Not all the support has been put back in place.



Some disabled people are still shielding. This means staying at home and not seeing people. The support to do this has stopped but disabled people know best.

Not many people know this is happening.



Right Now because Scottish Government has plans to make a new Scottish Human Rights law.



This new law is a chance to put things right so that disabled people can enjoy all our rights.



We have been telling decision makers and people who are service providers like health services about the barriers we face for a long time. We have been telling them what needs to change. **The time for change is now.**



Participation

Disabled people need to be involved in decisions that affect us. We have lived experience that will make sure things happen the right way.



This means all decisions and not just those that are only about disabled people.



#NothingAboutUsWithoutUs
 For this to happen decision makers and service providers need to understand that we are not just disabled people.



We are employers, workers, learners, parents and carers.

Our rights **“are indivisible, and you can’t meet one right without meeting others.”**

‘indivisible’ means you cannot split them up



We live in different parts of the country. We are more likely to live in poverty because we have to spend more money because of our impairment.



Decision makers and service providers already have the best resource to help them make the right decisions.



Scotland’s disabled people know what is needed and we know what works best for us.



Public services like health, the police, housing and social work need to make sure we are involved. They need to give us the right support so that we can take part and be leaders too.



This might be things like communicating with us in Easy Read and using British Sign Language.



They should make sure staff have all the things they need and the right information and training.



Many towns and cities **changed the rules** about street furniture to help restaurants and pubs. They did not ask disabled people about this.



Now, many disabled people cannot get into town or use the shops and other services that are there.



The pandemic is still an emergency.



There will be other emergencies in the future. This might be things like flooding, not enough food and other pandemics.



Scotland must not make the same mistakes again.



Disabled people must be involved in making decisions about planning for emergencies in the future.



At the Conference one person said they had to wait outside a healthcare building in the cold because of changes to the system.



The cold made it difficult for them to look after their health.



Other people talked about not being involved.



Other people said they had been asked what they thought but it made no difference and they were ignored.



Disabled people have been sharing our lived experiences and our solutions for what needs to happen for a long time.



Now is the time for disabled people need to see action.



Post code lottery

There is still a postcode lottery in Scotland. This means that the services and support you get depends on which area you live in.



There are national policies and rules but this is not always what happens in all the areas of Scotland.



Social care support is an example of where there is a post code lottery.



It is not easy to move house to live in another council area.



There are plans for a new National Care Service. This might mean things will change.



At the Conference disabled people said that the new service will need to think about the differences for people who live in cities and towns, and those who live in the country.



In the country, when a Personal Assistant or carer is ill, there are fewer people to take their place.



Disabled people who live in rural areas said it is harder for them to make a complaint when things go wrong.



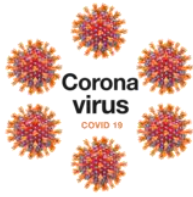
It is easier to be anonymous in cities as there are more people.



In cities there is less chance of becoming known as a “troublemaker” and having support delayed or stopped.



Mental health services are different in different areas.



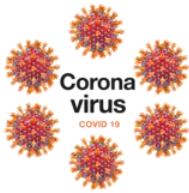
More people need help with mental health because of the pandemic. Lots of people were lonely.



There is not enough counselling services. Some rural areas have no services at all.



Many individuals are having to pay for the support they need.



One person spoke about their experience during Covid and how where they lived had a devastating impact.



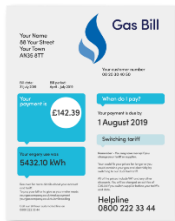
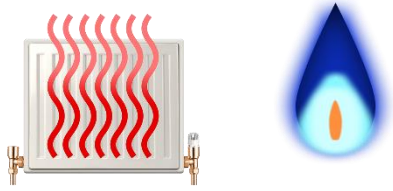
“I lost approximately 3 stone in weight during lockdown and had a shielding letter telling me I could get priority delivery slots from several different supermarkets. However, those supermarkets (which are a 200+ mile round trip from me) don't deliver to homes here.”

The Scottish
WELFARE FUND



One person had problems with the Scottish Welfare Fund. They asked for help to pay for heating. Their heating systems runs on oil.

Only people with gas or electric systems could get money.



Another person spoke about how expensive fuel bills are because no one can come to read the meter.



Cuts, cuts and more cuts

Services for disabled people have been getting cut for years. This is because of funding cuts and austerity. People have lost essential services.



Austerity is the result of the UK government cutting spending to save money.

Disabled people spoke about what the cuts mean to them.

Social Care Support was cut again because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It has still not been returned to the same level it was before the pandemic.



One person spoke about being a carer for elderly parents who were admitted to hospital and their care package was stopped. It has not been returned.





Now, their parents are stuck in a community Hospital.



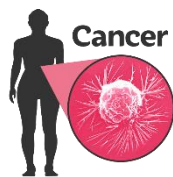
Some people spoke about being pushed back into going out to work when there is a risk to their lives and those they live with or care for.



Getting to work, or to other places, on public transport is a risk. Bus and train services have been cut. People are being forced to use taxi services to get about. These are expensive.



One person spoke about cuts to pay for British Sign Language for Deaf people. This means they cannot use the services and support they need.



Others spoke about long waits for health services. People had to wait for treatment for cancer.



Lots more people now need help from mental health services because of the pandemic.



Disabled people are under a lot of stress.



Some people have lost their job and have less money. Some people are scared they will lose their job.



Many have lost the social care support they need.



Some disabled people are also carers. This has been very stressful for them because there is not enough support.



There are fewer opportunities for people to relax and have a break.



Anxiety and isolation are affecting disabled people's mental health in lots of ways.



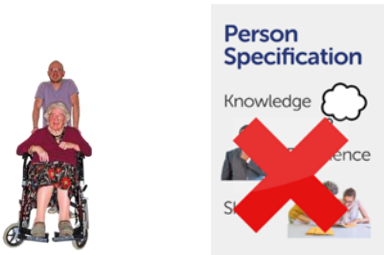
Lost in the System



Disabled people need to use different services. Sometimes the organisations who provide these services make it difficult for disabled people to get the support they need.



Some organisations have poor attitudes to disabled people.



One person said there was a job advert for social care staff. It said people who applied did not need to have any qualifications.



They said this “**sends out the wrong message**”. It ignores the fact that there are lots of skills need. And that people will get training.



Carers and Personal Assistants come into people’s private homes and lives to carry out difficult tasks.



Personal Assistants are very important. Everyone should understand this. They help disabled people to contribute to society.



One person said that in some countries carers and personal assistants are seen as important.


Social Care (Self-directed
Support) (Scotland) Act
2013




Social Care (Self-directed
Support) (Scotland) Act
2013

People also spoke about what should be happening and what is really happening – **“The Self-Directed Support Act was very clear but Local Authorities didn’t implement it properly.”**

The Self-Directed Support Act made it the law that people can chose how they get support.

Implement means that put into place.



Disabled people are given money by their Council to employ their own staff.



But the Council can pay their own staff better wages. This means disabled people do not get the staff they need. People want to get a higher wage.



Many services can only be used if you have access to digital

This means internet access plus a smartphones/computer or tablet and the internet. It means being able to use all these things.



Without access to digital disabled people are missing out on services like social security, getting a vaccine and appointments to see a doctor.



Digital options can be inaccessible. This means that it does not work for everyone.



Many disabled people simply do not have enough money to buy the equipment or pay for Wi-Fi.



One person asked their housing association if they could put in a better connection to the internet.

The housing association said no.



An advocate spoke about trying to support a disabled person in court. The judge told them to 'be quiet'.



The advocate spoke about how disabled inmates are worse off than others in the criminal justice system.



Sometimes they are sent to a more accessible prison hundreds of miles away. This means they do not get as many visits from their family.



Charities and community groups got funding to help with things like food during the Covid-19 pandemic.

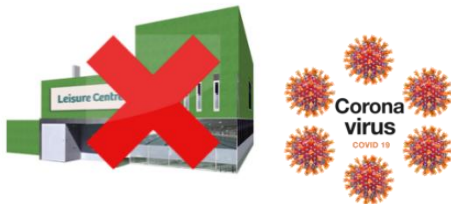


Some of these groups did not think about disabled people.

One person shared an example of a food distribution point which was in a container unit. They could not get into it.



One person spoke about how there is little understanding of Deaf culture throughout social work. There is very little being done to change this.



Another spoke about being banned from going to their gym. They tried to tell people not to get close to them because of Covid.



Some people said they were abused because they could not wear a mask.

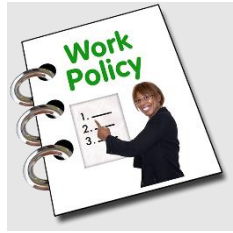
More people who do not need wheelchair car parking spaces are parking in them.



These are not new things but people agreed they are being **“ramped up.”**



Some people who provide services are very helpful. They understand they need to make changes for disabled people.



But sometimes their organisation makes it difficult for them to do this.

Our final message is not a new one



People who make decisions in Scotland need to listen to disabled people and take action. They need to **“stop the tokenism”**.



Tokenism is when only one person of a certain group is included. When one person's experience being used to represent everyone in that group's lived experience.



More disabled people should be involved in making the decisions.



Our voices ■ Our choices

Work with Inclusion Scotland.



Help remove the barriers disabled people face everyday. Help us to enjoy our equal rights.



Our voices ■ Our choices



Inclusion Scotland is a 'Disabled People's Organisation' – led by disabled people ourselves

Inclusion Scotland works to achieve positive changes to policy and practice, so that we disabled people are fully included throughout all Scottish society as equal citizens.

You can become a member of Inclusion Scotland by visiting our website.

Membership is free and open to disabled people, disabled people's organisations and our supporters.

<https://inclusionScotland.org/become-a-member>

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