



Disabled People's Views of the Fairer Scotland For Disabled People Delivery Plan



Our voices ■ Our choices

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Introduction

In 2016, the Scottish Government published its delivery plan for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People called [A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People](#). The Plan set out the things the Scottish Government was going to do over 5 years to 2021 to remove barriers faced by disabled people across all areas of life.

The plan is due to finish at the end of 2021. But has anything changed for disabled people in the four years of the plan?

To find out Inclusion Scotland ran a short survey from Tuesday 10 November 2020 until Tuesday 17 November 2020 to ask disabled people their views. We received 164 responses. This briefing is a short summary of the findings.

We acknowledge that our survey was short and simple – its purpose was to get a general understanding of whether disabled people perceived changes since 2016. The results show the need for proper evaluation of the plan and communication with disabled people about what progress has or has not been made.

Since 2016, has life in Scotland got fairer for disabled people?

We asked people if they thought life in Scotland has got fairer for disabled people since 2016. **Three quarters (75%) of respondents said no, 8% said yes and 17% said they weren't sure.**

The Five Ambitions

The Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Delivery Plan is grouped around 5 ambitions. We asked respondents to tell us if they thought

things in these areas have got better, got worse, or stayed the same for disabled people.

1. Support services

We asked people if they thought support services for disabled people had got better, got worse or stayed the same since 2016. Half (49%) said support services had got worse, around a third (34%) said they had stayed the same, 9% said they had got better and 8% said they were not sure.

What are the issues?

1. Support services are insufficiently funded to provide people with the support they need. Social care budgets have been cut and many disabled people are expected to pay towards their care.

“This is partly just my experience; I had good support in place with the local authority, but budget cuts meant that only the high and critical risk clients were kept. I was deemed low-medium risk so I lost some personal care services I couldn't replace myself.”

2. Disabled people can't get access to support services because eligibility criteria are often restrictive or unclear.

“Similarly, access to services can be restrictive- got to get significantly 'worse' before you can get better if you don't tick all the boxes i.e. have

involvement from authorities statutory agencies, NHS, social work education etc etc.”

3. There is inconsistency within and between local authority areas in access to, and quality of, services.

“Too many variations between postcodes, across life span, transitions, status within family, community, what is recognised as Disability etc. Disjointed services poor communication insufficient funding not sustainable long term or guaranteed to continue.”

4. Inaccessibility of services and a lack of understanding within services make it difficult for disabled people to access them.

“Social workers are driven by a protectionist risk agenda which promotes control not equality let alone equity especially for children and families. The lack of understanding of disability related issues in social work (and other professional training is still shameful).”

2. Good incomes and fairer working lives

We asked people if they thought employment opportunities and working conditions for disabled people had got better, got worse or stayed the same since 2016. **Almost half (44%) said employment opportunities**

and working conditions had got worse, around a quarter (25%) said they had stayed the same, 7% said they had got better and 24% said they were not sure.

What are the issues?

1. There is still not enough opportunities for disabled people to get into work.

“Nothing has changed despite all the promises and good intentions. Being disabled means being last in line for well paid, meaningful employment or so it seems to me. Organisations are always happy for disabled people to volunteer but not so keen on employing them in 'proper' jobs.”

2. There are still issues with employer's attitudes towards disabled people which prevent disabled people getting and staying in work.

“Despite better working conditions in terms of law, policy, employers making reasonable adjustments etc things are worse. You have to actually make it in to employment in the first place to benefit from any positive changes. Even then, how are all the nuanced injustices, 'micro-aggressions' that are very dis-abling handled? Are they even seen? Understood?”

3. Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic are going to negatively impact disabled people's employment.

“I know that opportunities for everyone have been diminishing, with Brexit looming.”

“Covid-19 has had a massive and disproportionate impact on disabled people. When a company is struggling, we're the first ones out the door.”

3. Places that are accessible to everyone

We asked people if they thought the accessibility of places (housing, transport, the environment) had got better, got worse or stayed the same since 2016. **Almost half (43%) said the accessibility of places had stayed the same, around a third (31%) said they had got worse, 16% said they had got better and 10% said they were not sure.**

What are the issues?

1. There is not enough accessible housing and disabled people are still living in unsuitable accommodation which does not meet their needs.

“I still have to be carried in and out of my house because of a one size fits all approach to ramp solutions. I was dropped during this process last month and sustained deep bruising to one knee which took three weeks to go away, making indoor wheelchair transfers very difficult in the meantime.”

2. Transport is inaccessible and unreliable. Disabled people are still unable to use public transport in a consistent way.

“Access to help when travel by train is patchy and apparently should be booked well in advance. Disabled people travel every day by public transport, and we should be able to turn up just like anyone else.”

3. The built environment is often inaccessible and initiatives like ‘shared spaces’ and others which promote active travel have had particular detrimental impacts on disabled people.

“Changes to pavement and cycling areas, especially to enable cycling, [have] made local walking and wheelchair routes in Edinburgh a nightmare for people using wheelchairs or walking aids.”

4. The Covid-19 crisis has had particular negative impacts on the accessibility of places.

“Changes to stores and streets in response to pandemic failed to take account of access - there are several supermarkets I can no longer shop at.”

4. Protected rights

We asked people if they thought the accessibility and fairness of the justice system had got better, got worse or stayed the same since 2016. **40% of respondents said they were not sure, 29% said it had stayed the same, 24% said it had got worse and 7% said it had got better.**

What are the issues?

Respondents pointed to a number of issues related to the inaccessibility of the justice system:

1. Disabled people still have to 'fight for rights' and have difficulties raising actions under equality law and other legislation to challenge discrimination.

“Due to lack of funding for law centres, CAB etc it has been a detrimental period for disabled people, the solicitors/law centres manly concentrate on homelessness, immigration etc rather than community care /SDS care & support.”

2. Court buildings are not always physically accessible.

“The accessibility of many old court buildings remains poor whilst online access to justice has improved many disabled people are not online and find justice difficult to access”

3. Lack of understanding of accessibility and inclusive communication within the justice system prevents disabled people taking part.

“As above. Deafness is forgotten about when it is not about BSL users. There is no way for people to contact the police if they can't use a phone or have a smartphone. We need another way of making contact. Solicitors need deaf awareness training especially when we don't use BSL. Too often interviews with solicitors and/or police do not provide ENTs but will book BSL Interpreters. Useless! And a breach of my human rights as well as a waste of public money.”

5. Active participation

We asked people if they thought the participation of disabled people in daily and public life had got better, got worse or stayed the same since 2016. **Most people said participation of disabled people in daily and public life had either stayed the same (36%) or got worse (31%), 19% said it had got better and 14% said they were not sure.**

What are the issues?

1. The main barrier to participation in public and daily life is not having basic support needs met.

“So many disabled people are not receiving the support they once had and have been pushed out of the way meaning they are left unable to participate in daily public life.”

2. Participation measures to involve disabled people are not always genuine or effective.

“I haven't observed any real change in regards to this. Still examples of tokenism as opposed to genuine participation.”

3. While some respondents noted improvements in the participation of disabled people, this was often accompanied by a caveat that it is not enough and more needs to be done.

“There have been a few helpful initiatives to support disabled people to become more involved in public life. However, after 4 years the results, apart from a few notable examples, have generally been disappointing.”

4. Participation opportunities are not always accessible.

“I have attended so many meetings online where there is no attempt to bring in someone to provide live captions even when asked. Let's just use the captions provided which for most times don't make sense. This is not just bad practice but a breach of my rights to participate.”

5. The Covid-19 crisis has impacted on participation, including positive and negative impacts of online opportunities.

“Got worse due to Covid restrictions. I and many others have been in the house for months.”

“Marginally better for those able to access the digital world, new opportunities have arose for those unable to travel to events e.g. due to lack of support, alternative care, finance and health. However if the opportunities for digital inclusion for all meetings will be the same going forward who knows.

Finally, we asked if people had any other comments. Respondents said that more needs to happen to make Scotland a fairer place for disabled people.

People want meaningful, sustained change, including:

1. Stronger action:

“This is so incredibly important and timely now with COVID and I think any policy or law change has to be clear, comprehensive, with no room for wriggling out of duties and responsibility to be properly inclusive of ALL.”

2. Meaningful engagement with disabled people:

“Involve us in the processes! Use our ideas.”

3. Increased/adequate funding for delivering services:

“Fairer Scotland for disabled people takes more than words it takes actual cash funding! Councils can’t conjure it from their ever shrinking budgets. The delivery Plan needs a relaunch and to be back by resources not making bricks without straw.”

4. Increased awareness and understanding of accessibility:

“Make it more accessible, more inclusive communication approach. Communication is everybody’s business, especially for deaf people including hearing loss.”

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