

Report Recommendations - *An Affront to Dignity, Inclusion and Equality: Coronavirus and the impact of law, policy and practice on people with disabilities in the United Kingdom*

In the following areas our Report urges the government to:

On reforming the Coronavirus Act 2020, disability rights and mitigating effects of the pandemic

- 1. Undertake an immediate review of legislation passed during the coronavirus crisis and communication thereof.** In doing so, we ask that the government change this legislation and all related policymaking to meet its duties under the Equality Act 2010, and commitments to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and take steps to avoid or mitigate any potential disadvantage for disabled people.
- 2. Implement recommendations made by [the 2016 House of Lords Select Committee Report on the Equality Act 2010 and Disability](#), and by [the Women and Equalities Committee](#),** on enhancing the enforcement of the Equality Act 2010, both by removing deterrents to individuals bringing disability discrimination cases; and by measures which embed the monitoring and enforcement of relevant duties in the work of regulatory and inspection bodies.
- 3. Undertake an inquiry on the impact of COVID-19 on disabled people to examine why this group has carried such a heavy burden for the pandemic, including the scale of Covid-19 related deaths.**
- 4. Establish a Covid-19 Disability Inclusive Response and Recovery Group, of experts by experience with disabilities and Disabled People's Organisations, to ensure disabled people are central to decision-making on the economic and social recovery to the pandemic and guidance.**
- 5. Produce a disability inclusive Covid-19 response and recovery action plan, with this Group and the Equality and Human Rights Commission, which reflects the multiple and intersecting identities of, and forms of discrimination faced by, persons with disabilities, in line with the [United Nation's guidance](#).** This action plan must ensure that infection-reduction policies and practices are developed and implemented in ways that do not disadvantage or exclude disabled people and must be designed to mitigate the immediate impacts of the coronavirus crisis, along with the long-term economic and social consequences of the pandemic.

On accessibility of government communications and consultation

- 6. Involve people with disabilities and the Covid-19 Disability Inclusive Response and Recovery Group at every stage of the development of communications messaging.**
- 7. Ensure all public health information is accessible for disabled people.** This includes providing information inclusive formats such as captioning, sign language, Easy Read, and formats usable by electronic screen readers. Accessible public health information should also be distributed directly to community networks of disabled people.
- 8. Ensure the communications on policies at times of crisis do not produce negative narratives which create further discrimination against those with disabilities and other protective characteristics.**
- 9. Ask these seven questions when developing government communications:** i) If I am asking people to do something, does it seem easy? ii) Does it seem simple? iii) Am I making assumptions of privilege that could alienate some people I am addressing? iv) Am I confusing wellness with illness? It is important to consider everyone's health. But people who are ill often

have specific needs that are different. v) Is there a danger what I say now conflicts with what I have said in the past in a way that singles out disabled people? vi) Am I ignoring people's hardship? vii) Am I falsely equating people's situations?

*On disabled people's access to **healthcare services***

10. Ensure that disabled people have access to health care services they need over the course of the outbreak. This includes regular health care services, but also services related to COVID-19 treatment. Disabled people must have access to scarce health resources such as ventilators on an equal basis with others.
11. Ensure that the reasonable adjustments disabled people had in place for healthcare services prior to the COVID-19 outbreak remain operational. This includes any [provision of water, sanitation, health care waste management, hygiene and environmental cleaning infrastructure in healthcare facilities](#), care services and transportation.

*On **shielding the vulnerable***

12. Ensure advice to shielding people takes account of their caring responsibilities and relational welfare.
13. Ensure pandemic response and recovery measures better accommodate those shielding to promote their wellbeing. For example, if a future lockdown is needed, to provide times of the day when only those shielding are permitted outside.

*On the **social care of disabled people***

14. Repeal the so-called 'easements' of local authorities' duties under the Care Act 2014 as soon as is feasible.
15. Reconsider reliance on European Convention on Human Rights to provide a minimum level of protection for social care users, given their limited effectiveness in this context, and add a duty to protect from a risk of abuse and neglect.
16. Establish an emergency cross-party working group to produce a White Paper setting out draft new legislation to ensure that social care is adequately, fairly and sustainably funded to ensure the dignity of its users and workers.
17. Provide local authorities with resources to enable them to hold Citizens' Assemblies for *Homes fit for the Health of the Nation*, in order to place disabled people's independent living at the heart of 'building back better'.

*On **people with learning disabilities***

18. End the longstanding disregard and dehumanisation of learning disabled people by enshrining the human rights model of disability in law, focusing on the inherent dignity and inestimable value of each human being and placing the individual centre stage in all decisions affecting their lives.

*On **mental health***

19. Reverse the [modification of mental health and mental capacity legislation](#) under Section 10 and [Schedule 8](#) of the Coronavirus Act 2020.

*On disabled people's **access to food***

20. Produce urgent guidance on supporting access to food for disabled people during the current coronavirus crisis and future pandemics which is aligned with duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the United Kingdom's commitment to the UNCRPD.

*On disabled people's access to **education** during the pandemic*

21. Reverse the so-called 'relaxation' of duties on local authorities to provide Educational Health Care Action Plans to young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.