CHESHIRE DPAC SUBMISSION FOR THE UNITED NATIONS SHADOW REPORT

Cheshire Disabled People Against Cuts was founded in February 2020 in response to the impact of austerity measures on disabled people in our sub-region of the North West of England, the continuing failure by central and local government to uphold the UNCRPD articles, underrepresentation of disabled people in local government and public life in Cheshire and regional NW government, rising disability hate crime, and continuing cuts to public services used disproportionately by disabled people.

1. Cheshire West and Chester Council cut disabled people’s services by 1.3 million in the 2021-22 budget[[1]](#footnote-1). These cuts included a £31,000 cut to the council’s Equalities and Diversity budget, and the closure of three respite care homes[[2]](#footnote-2). The ruling Labour Party group members seek to obfuscate the reality and scale of the cuts, by referring to them as ‘’efficiency measures’’, ‘’streamlining of service’’, ‘’rationalisation’’, ‘’savings,’’ and similar politically preferred language. In April 2021 local members of the Labour Party were instructed by senior party role holders not to refer to the cuts as ‘’cuts.’’ Labour Party councillors—including disabled councillors—are ‘whipped’ to vote through the cuts. Voting against the cuts would result in disciplinary action, including the threat of having the ‘whip withdrawn’ i.e., suspension from the Labour Group / Party. In April 2021 two Cheshire West and Chester Labour Party councillors told two town councillors they would be ‘’reported’’ for raising the cuts to disabled people’s services at a town council meeting, and that they should remain quiet as speaking out would ‘’worry disabled people.’’ One of the CWAC councillors told members they were ‘’proud’’ of the budget. This behaviour is illustrative of a local political culture which is institutionally hostile to disability rights activism, with widespread ignorance of disabled people’s rights, and of the social model.
2. In 2021 hate crime increased across England by an average of 9%. Rates of hate crime in Cheshire West and Chester rose by 16%. Racial hate crime is the main type recorded across the authority, but higher than normal rates of disability hate crime were recorded in the town of Northwich in 2021, with spikes recorded in March and June 2021. [[3]](#footnote-3) In December 2021 the Cheshire Disabled People’s Panel—an alliance of Cheshire-area DDPOs—submitted evidence to the Cheshire West and Chester Hate Crime Strategy Focus Group from CDPP member organisation the People’s Choice Group (a support group for people with learning disabilities/difficulties and autistic spectrum conditions across Cheshire West and Chester), which indicates the rise in disability hate crime in Northwich may be linked to the cutting of a preventative programme called Safe in Town. [[4]](#footnote-4) CDPAC wrote to the Northwich-area Member of Parliament Mike Amesbury MP and Cheshire West and Chester Council Leader Cllr Louise Gittins on 8 December. As of 27 December, we have received no response from the MP. Cllr Gittins notified us that senior council officers will be meeting with the disabled people who raised the concerns with PCG, and have committed to seeking funding to relaunch Safe in Town. The CDPP have also secured Cllr Gittins support for a regional – NW England — hate crime strategy for public transport, which is tabled for discussion at Transport for the North’s January 2022 meeting. Cllr Gittins has confirmed that this proposal has the support of the Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, and the Liverpool Metro Mayor Steve Rotherham. CDPAC and the CDPP are working closely with our allies in the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People and the Greater Manchester Mayor’s Disabled People’s Panel to organise regionally across local authority and unitary authority boundaries in order to maximise DDPO knowledge and expertise-sharing, and our collective campaigning capacity.

1. See attached Appendix D Cheshire West and Chester Council Budget Proposals 2021-2025 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://action.unison.org.uk/page/84763/petition/1?locale=en-GB [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See the attached September 2021 Hate Crime data from the Cheshire Constabulary [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See letter to Mike Amesbury MP and Cllr Louise Gittins, Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)