DID YOUR LIFE GET BETTER OR WORSE SINCE 2017?

1. **How do you think the government is doing on protecting our human rights?**

* Issues still exist and have existed for a long time with no notable improvement.
* Unanimously agreed that things had got worse since 2017.

1. **What are they doing well?**

* More accessible toilets
* Better signage for disabled toilets – clearly states not all disability is visible
* More programmes on TV with BSL interpreters/subtitles – although still a way to go (noted that deaf people do not get a discount on TV license – discrepancy between those with hearing impairments and visual impairments)
* More changing rooms than 5 years ago – this was only following a ten year campaign
* “buses work better for some”
* Personal Care is better
* More inclusion in the media/soaps. E.g. Strictly Come Dancing/comedians

1. **What are they not doing well?**

**Intersectionality**

All participants felt that the Government were continuing to make decisions without the involvement/consultation of disabled people or DPO’s. It was strongly felt that support organisations representing people with disabled people were underfunded and therefore were unable to effectively be involved in the planning and implementation of all legislation and measures that affect the lives of people with disabilities. Underfunding also led to less services and support being available to people with disability

* Not consulting disabled people or DPO’s
* The world got behind other movements such as BLM/Women’s rights but don’t get behind the disability movement – could be due to medicalisation, pity and charity.
* National District strategy had no DPOs involved!
* Less funding for DPOs – generally
* No funding for overhead costs, charity research
* People used to leave money in their will for charities but this has suffered
* People are leaving donations to pets rather than disability organisations
* Society is leading the way and the government has to catch up
* The government are taking credit (for society)
* Society doesn’t always find the best way

**Equality and none discrimination**

Participants felt that disabled people continued to face barriers and discrimination and that this had become worse over lockdown. It was felt that the Equality Act is not being enforced and other legislation, such as GDPR, is being used to diminish individual rights. It was also felt that longstanding access issues/barriers continue to exist despite significant work by the disabled peoples’ movement to have these eradicated. Overall, participants felt that disabled people continued to be discriminated against.

* Lack of enforcement of the Equality Act
* Using other legislations to excuse lack of access (such as Listed Buildings, GDPR)
* In 2017 there was no GDPR, now it’s an excuse for everything
* GDPR is designed to protect us, but it has been misinterpreted by people, so it has become a barrier.
* Banks, DWP, AA etc. expecting deaf people to speak over the phone (Ridiculous!)
* COVID is used as an excuse not to provide services with reasonable adjustments.
* BSL interpreters not provided for COVID announcements
* ‘Fake News’ misinformation and false impressions
* Lack of accessible, easy read information
* Electric and gas bills (paper) not in the correct format
* ‘Nobody explains things’ feeling like there is no choice – particularly when visiting GP/Hospitals etc. No choice of where and how I live.
* Still feel invisible – access needs (people don’t see if I ‘get forgotten’)

**Awareness raising**

Participants felt that there was still negative stereotypes and prejudice towards people with disabilities and that there was very little being done in the way of raising awareness. Although it was felt that disabled people in the media (comedians/strictly come dancing) had helped raise some awareness, there was still a lot to do as the impression given was that things were now better. Participants raised the issue of staff and services having no real understanding of disabilities or the needs of disabled people and therefore disabled people faced considerable barriers when trying to access services.

* Not enough training (in reference to those who interact with people)
* This is not just an issue for deaf people, it includes for example those with dementia or learning difficulties
* Banks, DWP, AA etc. expecting deaf people to speak over the phone (Ridiculous!)
* Lack of accessible, easy read information
* Electric and gas bills (paper) not in the correct format
* COVID is used as an excuse not to provide reasonable adjustments.
* Police Bill – more rights for police to arrest/prosecute protestors – this results in stifling/ discouraging voices of disabled people
* Using other legislations to excuse lack of access (such as Listed Buildings, GDPR)
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**Accessibility**

Participants felt that accessibility continues to be a huge issue, both in terms of physical access and access to information. Wheelchair access continues to be an issue with poor maintenance of roads and pavements. Also the issue of a lack of inclusive transport service that meets the needs of disabled people was raised.

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* COVID is used as an excuse not to provide services reasonable adjustments.
* Using other legislations to excuse lack of access (such as Listed Buildings, GDPR)
* There continue to be access problems for those who are deaf/blind
* BSL interpreters not provided for COVID announcements
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* Banks, DWP, AA etc. expecting deaf people to speak over the phone (Ridiculous!)
* Electric and gas bills (paper) not in the correct format?
* ‘Nobody explains things’ feeling like there is no choice – particularly when visiting GP/Hospitals etc. No choice of where and how I live.
* Still feel invisible – access needs (people don’t see if I ‘get forgotten’)
* Poor condition of pavements
* Crossings are too steep; they need to be dropped
* Not easy to go to places, due to needing support when I need it
* There is not a lot of public transport available that is accessible – when people want it
* The access bus system now does not meet the needs of peoples’ lives and is not flexible
* Private hire vehicles continue to discriminate (2x cost)
* PIP doesn’t cover the true cost of my needs – especially transport
* More accessibility problems – road works, signage, remote services (digital exclusion)
* Access busses are never full, we need smaller ones with more drivers and you have to book two days in advance!

**Right to life**

Participants felt that there were many barriers in place that stopped disabled people from living independent lives. Disabled people seem to be forced to remain dependent on others and made to feel that they are not equal to others. The barriers in day-to-day life stop disabled people from being part of the diversity of humankind.

* + Mental health of individuals has got worse, with limited support
  + Access to services is harder
  + COVID is used as an excuse not to provide services such as reasonable adjustments.
  + There continues to be access problems for those who are deaf/blind
  + Lack of enforcement of the Equality Act
  + BSL interpreters not provided for COVID announcements
  + Lack of accessible, easy read information
  + Electric and gas bills (paper) not in the correct format?
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  + PIP doesn’t cover the true cost of my needs – especially transport
  + More accessibility problems – road works, signage, remote services
  + Nowhere to meet for people and people have dropped off the radar
  + Access busses are never full, we need smaller ones with more drivers and you have to book two days in advance!
  + The access bus system now does not meet the needs of peoples’ lives and is not flexible
  + Couldn’t access normal day to day activities
  + Technology is taking over
  + Lack of information and understanding
  + People don’t know how to talk with people with LD

**Access to justice**

Participants raised concerns around being able to access justice when considering lack of BSL interpreters and financial aid. The new Police Bill was also felt to have the real potential to stifle voice and the disability movement. It was felt that people are being discouraged from appealing decisions that have an impact on human rights and access to justice.

* + Police Bill – more rights for police to arrest/prosecute protestors – this results in stifling/ discouraging voices of disabled people
  + There continue to be access problems for those who are deaf/blind
  + Scrapping of legal aid – No replacement, which restricts access to justice
  + Lack of enforcement of the Equality Act

**Living independently and being included in the community**

* + Participants reported that many barriers continue to exist to living independent full lives and that these barriers stopped individuals from being included within the community. Barriers such as

difficulties in accessing services, getting to places and having accessible information meant that people with disabilities continue to have to rely on others to fulfil their basic needs. It was unanimous that things had got worse during COVID with once deaf participant reporting having to rely on a complete stranger who was passing by to assist with accessing an NHS service. Although the issues raised were longstanding (well before 2017), it was agreed that there was no improvement in the last 4 years and in fact, things had got worse.

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* Private hire vehicles discriminate (2x cost)
* PIP doesn’t cover the true cost of my needs – especially transport
* More accessibility problems – road works, signage, remote services
* Nowhere to meet for people and people have dropped off the radar
* Access busses are never full, we need smaller ones with more drivers and you have to book two days in advance!
* The access bus system now does not meet the needs of people’s lives and is not flexible
* Deaf clubs and other clubs have suffered because of lack of funding
* Couldn’t access normal day to day activities
* Technology is taking over
* Lack of information and understanding
* People don’t know how to talk with people with LD

**Freedom of expression and opinion and access to information**

Deaf participants confirmed that access to services has become increasingly harder. All communication is over the phone and there are no reasonable adjustments put into place to make this easier. Deaf participants gave several examples of when access to services was hindered because they were unable to “speak” on the phone, despite being with a fully qualified interpreter registered with NRCPD. Deaf participants reported that GDPR rules are used as a barrier to giving information over the phone.

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* Technology is taking over – tablets were widely provided, but no training on how to use them
* Lack of information and understanding
* People don’t know how to talk with people with LD

**Health**

Participants reported significant barriers to accessing GPs/hospitals, particularly over COVID. Individuals are still expected to use friends and family to support with communication and understanding and it was felt that control was taken out of the hands of people with disabilities. Participants felt that there was little to no privacy for people with disabilities and all unanimously reported that many of the barriers to access health continue to exist with little sign of improving.

* Not enough training (in reference to those who interact with people)
* This is not just an issue for deaf people, it includes for example those with other issues i.e. dementia, learning difficulties
* Mental health of individuals is worse, but funding has been cut – biproduct of discrimination already being faced
* COVID is used as an excuse not to provide services such as reasonable adjustments.
* There continue to be access problems for those who are deaf/blind
* BSL interpreters not provided for COVID announcements
* Lack of accessible, easy read information
* ‘Nobody explains things’ feeling like there is no choice – particularly when visiting GP/Hospitals etc. No choice of where and how I live.
* People continue to make decisions for people with disabilities
* Doctors surgery problems: The time it takes, asking questions over and over again, it is hard for everyone over the phone but increasingly difficult for those with hearing impairments/learning difficulties.

**Work and employment**

Participants reported significant difficulties with accessing support for both employment and education. It was felt that there were not enough employment opportunities and that the benefit system did not accurately support people through processes.

* + There continue to be access problems for those who are deaf/blind
  + Lack of enforcement of the Equality Act
  + Need more employment opportunities – more supported employment needed
  + Access to services is harder
  + Young carers should be able to go to school and bot be responsible for adults

**Adequate standard of living and social protection**

Participants reported that, due to a number of barriers, people with disabilities continued to struggle to have a good standard of life and social protection. Lack of support and access has meant that people with disabilities struggle to access basic information and support and are still expected to rely on others to make decisions and advocate for them. Barriers to access to justice has resulted in people not being able to challenge decisions and as a result have felt let down by services.

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  + Access busses are never full, we need smaller ones with more drivers and you have to book two days in advance!
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**Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport**

Participants reported many barriers to actively participate in life. It was felt that issues around finances, transport, access to services, lack of accessible information and general attitudes of the public hinder many people with disabilities from actively taking part in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport. It was unanimously reported that these issues have been long standing with little to no improvement since 2017.

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  + There continue to be access problems for those who are deaf/blind
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  + Not easy to go to places, due to needing support when I need it
  + Poor condition of pavements
  + Crossings are too steep; they need to be dropped
  + There is not a lot of public transport available that is accessible – when people want/need it
  + Private hire vehicles discriminate (2x cost)
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Along with the above, Participants felt that people with disabilities have been ignored, particularly during COVID. Although it was acknowledged that there was more support for disabled people through COVID, this was only accessed by those known to GPs, council support services etc. It was recognised that COVID was “bad” for everyone, it was felt by some that the government have not helped enough throughout COVID (no contact/no extra money or advice or support provided), particularly for carers who were felt to have been treated poorly. It was unanimously agreed that although the whole country was in crisis, people with a disability were an afterthought.

The participants agreed that the situation for people with disabilities has got significantly worse and that bullying has now almost become accepted.

4. What needs to change?

* The Government!
* Need an integrated, inclusive and cost-effective transport system
* More accessible information that is of a consistent standard everywhere, including understandable signs and wayfinding
* The commissioning process/funding needs to cover the real costs and be sustainable to the organisation so that they do not set the organisation up to fail, or to compete with other organisations
* Better legislation by disabled people, from the start
* To credit their time and value their ideas
* Better recognition of Intersectionality/multiple discrimination (health issues)
* More investment on things such as:
  + Skills and training
  + Increase funding
  + Benefit increases
  + More appropriate allocation of funding
  + By society – every employer should allow DP to apply for jobs
* The BSL act needs to happen
* Reasonable Adjustments.
* More training for people who work with people to learn how to speak with people with different conditions
* Pavements need to be dropped if they are too steep
* Need more employment opportunities