Bristol and South West event – 19/11/2021

Situation is worse since 2017.

“I’m sick being told it can’t be done because of COVID”

Can’t get hospital appointments because of Covid backlog.

Things are moving backwards for disabled people everywhere and especially independent living. There are more cut-backs on the way. I believe that funding-wise disabled people are bottom of the pile. Disabled people seem to have to fight for their funding.

Founder of Where Is The Interpreter Campaign – for Deaf Sign Language users massive impact on lives and employment. Such a lack of information. Communication based on English. I raised £13,000 through a crowd-funder to take a legal challenge. The ruling was that the government must provide an interpreter either at the same location or through in-vision. Crises or events will happen in our time but they never think about us. Ridiculous to have to do that sort of campaigning. Climate change or coronavirus – they don’t even think what we need – we need to think about people’s access.

Because they don’t have disabled people telling them, and it’s all done by non-disabled people, they don’t understand. Disabled people should be included in emergency planning.

National strategy group – they are toothless, what are they doing?, where is our representation?, we are experts in our own experience, they need to get the right representation, they don’t have the right people so they fail, has been failure after failure

No accessible information for anyone on the national situation

Also no accessible information about the local situation, eg vaccinations/when the local tip is open/all aspects

No inclusion of disabled people or our issues in disaster planning.

Throwing everyone from hospitals into care homes. Bristol did better than other areas but still difficulties for people living in their own homes to access PPE for their Personal Assistants.

“it’s not that they don’t know, it’s that they don’t care”

National Disability Strategy – insufficient consultation by the government. Used their own consultation networks which aren’t good enough and don’t have enough Deaf and disabled people involved. Worked out as something like 25 people per region but these include charities as well as DDPOs, so probably not more than 5 Deaf or Disabled people per region.

When disabled people raised issues with the government about lack of accessibility and issues with the national disability strategy survey, the government refused to budge. They also never thought to get feedback on proposals – just had the survey and then brought out the green paper not for consultation.

More of a sense of disabled people being gas-lit and set up against other groups in a competition for funding.

No responsibility is ever taken – central government blames local government who blames central government.

Disabled people are held responsible for our own deaths from Covid.

Intersectionality used to demonise. “Daily Mail on a mega-scale”

£20 uplift – came at a time when people not usually on it came onto it. It wasn’t about disabled people but about everyone else they wanted to keep happy.

It feels like a constant attack.

Getting back to normal agenda is about taking away things that help disabled people eg public toilets, pavements.

Gains [in accessibility from lockdown] being lost as quickly as they came.

This is led by politicians – who say outrageous things such as you won’t catch Covid by going back to work, women will lose their careers if they have to work from home…etc

Government messaging leads to attacks and hostility.

If you are anxious or concerned about what’s happening, it’s treated like a mental health problem. Linked with pretending Covid had gone away. For those still trying to stay safe it’s then a case of being locked away indefinitely.

Schools – all mitigations have been stopped. Parents are fined and threatened children being taken away if don’t send them in.

Government continually referred to disable people in care homes and over a certain age as older rather than disabled people whereas a high percentage of people in this age group are disabled – a way of hiding the disproportionate impact on disabled people.

Took away Covid restrictions – bunch of people mainly non-disabled people including MPs decided they were sick of them. So disabled people now having to choose between staying safe and taking part in day-to-day life.

Measures brought in to reduce climate impact discriminating against disabled people, eg e-scooters dangerous on the pavement but if they were effective in cutting care use couldn’t they be used on the roads?

Recent findings by investigative journalists on people receiving homecare in their own homes – found deathrate increased enormously but only 9% due to Covid. Significant number probably due to not getting the treatment or therapy they needed – very worrying statistics.

All happening within the context of same government having dismantled access to justice/appeals/rights

* Trying to remove access to judicial review
* Already taken away legal aid
* Ability to challenge is being taken away so there’s nothing we can do
* Yet

Yesterday I was at a meeting at GMCDP – speaker mentioned disabled mothers with young children being taken into care because easier than giving them the support they need to manage

Upset me “being a disabled Mum who brought up children I was lucky, the system didn’t help me, but friends did.”

Really shocked no progress on access to healthcare since 2017 – issues haven’t changed and are still outstanding. Should be a priority issue.

Government should be asking Deaf and Disabled people which out of all the recommendations from 2017 are most important to address and also how.

Trying to cut back on direct payments – very worrying. Will put people more at risk than they already are. Already hard enough to find Personal Assistants.

Attention on the breaches of Deaf and Disabled People’s rights – Convention is very complicated but if your rights are not being upheld there is something there.

Inaccessibility exacerbated by Covid. People without access are those most in poverty who don’t have digital access.

Local Council has cut homes for disabled people.

“I hate that social care is so separate from the NHS and I hate that the principle you are treated when you it is not upheld in social care. As a former GP I have seen this.”

Bus regulations – accessible spaces for wheelchair users unenforceable – not been done even though they promised they would.

**Submission from Bristol Independent Living Group (BRIL) to come covering:**

* Local issues around accessibility of information
* Misuse of Mental capacity Act in care homes
* Police treatment of people living with mental distress
* NHS hospital visiting rules left to disabled campaigners to challenge