Disabled People’s Right to Life

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 | Fri, 26 Mar 2021, 00:25 |  |  |
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| to rebecca.hilsanrath, adam.sowerbutts, rachel.perkins |

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Dear Rebecca Hilsenrath,

We are writing in relation to the findings of the recent Care Quality Commission report: *Protect, Respect, Connect – decisions about living and dying well during COVID-19.*

This is an issue we have been concerned about since the early months of the pandemic when reports first surfaced of unlawful blanket DNACPR decisions being applied to group home residents and attempts to coerce individual disabled people into agreeing to DNACPRs.

We would welcome information about what plans the EHRC has under your new relationship with the CQC to follow up on these findings and use your powers to ensure that the report’s recommendations are implemented, alongside taking action on the wider question of disability discrimination within the health system?

The scale of disproportionate deaths of disabled people from Covid-19 in the UK have not been an inevitable consequence of underlying health conditions; policy and practice within supposedly universal services have unquestionably played a role. It is necessary to understand the full extent to which discrimination has occurred in order to learn lessons for the future. At the same time, organisational change on issues as ingrained within the health system as devaluation of disabled people’s lives will not happen without enforcement.

Disabled people make up 21% of the UK population which more than justifies prioritising work to protect our rights. There can be fewer issues of such importance to the role and remit of the EHRC than loss of life on this scale due to direct discrimination.

We understand that the EHRC is working to a reduced budget but would nevertheless urge that the additional question of benefit deaths remains very much on your agenda. It is abhorrent that death has, in the words of disabled journalist Frances Ryan, become an everyday part of the benefits system. There could and should be adequate measures in place to prevent the routine operation of our social security system from causing such terrible tragedies. An independent inquiry is needed to challenge the normalisation of death within the DWP and ensure that effective safeguards are finally put in place.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Ellen Clifford, Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) national Steering Group

Ellen Morrison, Labour NEC Disabled Members Rep

Linda Burnip, co-founder Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC)

Mark Harrison, Reclaiming Our Futures Alliance (ROFA)

Gail Ward, Hand to Mouth

Andy MIthcell, @ImaJSAClaimant

Anita Bellows, DPAC

Paula Peters, DPAC

CC

Adam Sowerbutts (legal director)

Rachel Perkins (chair of disability advisory committee)