



Glasgow Disability Alliance
Confident Connected Contributing

Manifesto for Equality Now (Holyrood 2021)

Disabled people face **barriers, inequality and poorer outcomes** across all areas of life. Poverty, prejudice, and lack of understanding prevent us from accessing vital **services and information**; accessible **housing, transport, environments**; equal opportunities in **education, employment**; civic **participation and social connections**.

Exacerbated by austerity, these inequalities have now been **supercharged by the COVID-19 pandemic, with responses eroding rights and leaving disabled people behind**. Read more in our COVID19 report '[Supercharged: a human catastrophe](#)'.

For decades, disabled people have been striving to influence change: to eradicate barriers, accelerate equality and realise our Human Rights. **It is clearer now than ever that disabled people's equality will benefit the whole of society**. Only by embedding our voices and lived experience in the decision-making process, will barriers and inequalities be eradicated so we can all flourish in an Equal Scotland.

The pandemic has taken a gruelling toll on those who were already worst off. We must **act now to supercharge disabled people's voices**, and lived experience expertise: to mitigate these widening inequalities, and ensure disabled people are never again left behind.



Disabled people call upon Holyrood electoral candidates to commit to these pledges:

1. Overhaul Equalities and Human Rights Infrastructure

- a Incorporate UNCRPD and All Our Rights into Scots Law.
- b Establish Disability Commissioner and Law Centre.
- c Fund Disabled People Led Organisations.
- d Strengthen Public Sector Equality Duty to drive change.



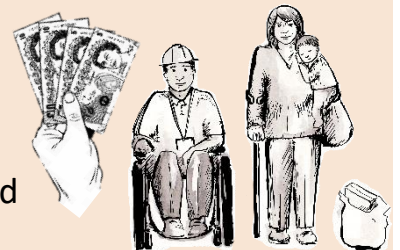
2. Deliver Health & Social Care which uphold rights & equality

- a Fast-track access to COVID-hit services.
- b Scrap Care Tax and Re-open Independent Living Fund.
- c Co-design a National Care Service with participation and rights built in, accountable to a Minister for Social Care.
- d Embed Right to Housing in health and social care planning.
- e Cultivate a No Wrong Door approach to remove barriers.



3. Tackle Disability Poverty and Employment Gap

- a Co-design actions, targets and accessible supports to halve the disability employment gap.
- b Uprate and improve disability benefits.
- c Create disability-specific Child poverty actions.
- d Take urgent action on inequality for young disabled people in education, work and training.



4. Invest in Social Connections & Empowered Communities

- a Invest in inclusive, holistic community supports.
- b Equality-proof place-based approaches.
- c Eradicate digital exclusion.
- d Co-design new ways to eradicate Hate Crime.



5. Co-design an Equal Scotland: embed lived experience

- a Embed and measure rights to participate.
- b Co-design emergency resilience plans.
- c Embed Human Rights and Equality focus for all local participation.
- d Shift power by empowering frontline workers to meaningfully co-design and improve outcomes.



1. Overhaul Equalities and Human Rights Infrastructure

25 years since the Disability Discrimination Act, too many of our fundamental rights are still out of reach, with too little recourse, and austerity mindsets blocking the systemic change we need.

To close the gap between promise and practice, we call for the following actions:

a Incorporate **UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCRPD)** and **all our rights into Scots Law** including rights to housing, social care, independent living and participation.



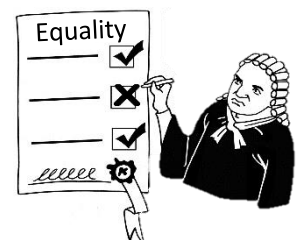
b Establish an **Office of the Disability Commissioner and a well-resourced Disability Law Centre** to empower disabled people to claim their rights and seek redress when they are not upheld.



c Invest in **Funding for Disabled people led organisations** to build capacity and collective voice for disabled people to play an active role in the system change needed to make rights real and build a Fairer Scotland.



d **Strengthen Public Sector Equality Duty:** embed accessibility and inclusion criteria in all public spend, with a reporting framework co-designed with and monitored by disabled people.



2. Deliver Health and Social Care which uphold rights and advance equality

Disabled people - more reliant on health and social care services - have borne the brunt of progressive cuts to services throughout austerity, and cliff-edge closures during COVID.

83% of GDA members surveyed said they face **barriers to accessing support they need**, when they need it.



a

Urgently **fast track disabled people's access to vital public services cut or reduced during COVID19:** especially mental health support, social care, housing supports, and all healthcare



b

Scrap care tax and re-open the Independent Living Fund to help urgently address disabled people's poverty and unmet social care needs.



c

Resource and co-design a National Social Care System that actively supports human rights, and embeds accountability and participation in decision making including at highest levels of budget setting. Appoint a Minister for Social Care.



d

Embed the Right to an Adequate Home into health and social care planning, to support and harness the vital role housing plays in tackling inequality and enabling health, wellbeing and independent living.



e

Cultivate a **'No Wrong Door' approach across health, social care, housing and other public services with leadership to drive culture change:** build flexible, adaptable, connected services with people at the centre. Increase **advocacy / community connector** provision to help remove barriers and improve pathways.



3. Tackle disability poverty and employment gap

Before COVID disabled people were already:

3x

more likely to be living in poverty



Twice

as likely to be unemployed

£570

average disability-related extra costs (monthly)

3x

as likely to have no qualifications

£1000

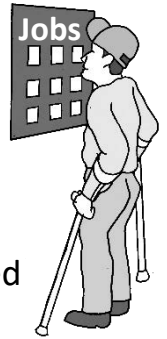
monthly disability-related extra costs faced by 1 in 5 disabled adults, 1 in 4 families of disabled children.

Half

as likely to be educated to degree level

3x

as likely to be not in education, employment or training by age 19



COVID's impact on poverty, education and employment is already hitting disabled people hardest. To stop these inequalities widening any further:

- a** Co-design **urgent actions to stop the Disability Employment Gap widening further**: mitigate unequal impacts of COVID recession on disabled workers and jobseekers.



- Overhaul employability supports: **prioritise funding for accessible services** that meet disabled people's needs and aspirations. Resource and build on successful **disabled-people led models**.

- Embed **targets and best practice** commitments for **recruiting and retaining more disabled workers** amongst Scottish Government's cross-sector partnerships.



- b** Urgently **uprate Disability Benefits** in response to COVID, alongside Universal Credit; **improve eligibility criteria** for Disability Assistance; and invest in **accessible welfare rights advice services**.



- c** Create **Child Poverty Targets** with co-designed actions to **tackle specific causes of poverty for disabled children** and young people, and children of disabled parents.



- d** Urgently co-design **actions and targets to tackle inequality in young disabled people's access to education, qualifications, employment and training** – all exacerbated by COVID. Create dedicated employability support and accessible opportunities for young disabled people within Young Person's Guarantee.



4. Invest in Social Connections and empowered communities

Disabled people are **twice as likely** to face **isolation and loneliness** (linked to poorer health and life outcomes)



82%

of GDA members surveyed during COVID were concerned about isolation

71%

of GDA members surveyed in 2017 found it **difficult to take part in things in their local communities**, due to physical barriers, stigma, lack of accessible information, undermining resilience.

80%

of members surveyed were **not aware of any local support services** they could access during the pandemic and lockdown. Many relied on GDA to provide this information and accessible supports.

a

Invest in inclusive, holistic community supports - such as peer support networks, community connectors, community learning and development - to build disabled people's capacity and connect them to information, services, opportunities and each other, **tackling isolation and building resilient, inclusive communities** that leave no-one behind.



b

Equality-proof all Place-based approaches: evidence shows that place-based approaches can widen inequality. Strengthen Equality Duty to ensure **Equalities led communities of identity** are built into all planning and decision making.



c

Eradicate digital exclusion – provide broadband as a universal service, with inclusive digital coaching resourced as a Community Learning and Development/ employability priority.



d

Co-design a new approach to prevent and eradicate Hate Crime and harassment: including a revised Third Party Reporting scheme, improving police and community responses, and a National awareness raising campaign.



5. Co-design an Equal Scotland: embed lived experience

Barriers to equality can only be removed if disabled people's lived experience is at the heart of planning and decision making.

The groundwork for empowerment is there, but urgently needs to be strengthened and upheld.



a Embed **Rights to participation in National Performance Framework** as lever for meaningful involvement e.g. budget setting and decisions at Local Authority / Integrated Joint Board level; set **indicators and a collaborative monitoring process** co-designed with disabled people and other Equalities-led communities.



b Urgently **co-design Emergency resilience plans** to ensure disabled people are **never again left behind** when a crisis hits.



c Put **Equality and Human Rights at the heart of local participatory decision making**. Building on progress towards participatory budgeting and local democratic renewal, **resource equality-led communities** – including disabled people led organisations - to build capacity and ensure local decision making is informed by diverse lived experience.



d Shift **balance of power by embedding values-based leadership and a learning culture which empower frontline workers** to collaborate as equal partners with the communities they serve: meaningfully co-designing, improving relationships, responsiveness and outcomes.



Glasgow Disability Alliance is led by and for disabled people, with over 5000 disabled members. Throughout the pandemic, GDA has spoken directly with over 6000 disabled people. We have supported hundreds to get online and join some of the 600 online sessions we have run during this time. This Manifesto draws together the ideas and solutions our members have shared to the many barriers we face. Thanks to everyone who has invested time sharing their lived experience expertise to create this vision for An Equal Scotland where disabled people can flourish. **Work with us for Equality Now.**



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