

To: Forum for Empowering Communities Group

On: 9 September 2021

Report by: Chair, Renfrewshire Access Panel

Inequalities, Participation and Human Rights before, during and beyond COVID19

1. Summary

- 1.1 In August 2020, Glasgow Disability Alliance (GDA) produced Supercharged: a human catastrophe as a marker for the culmination of views gathered from their members during the first lockdown. It found:
- 80% didn't know where to turn to for help in their local communities in terms of information, advice, services or supports;
 - 82% were worried about social isolation and loneliness; and
 - 60% face digital exclusion- either the device, the connectivity or the confidence to use digital equipment.
- 1.2 The report is attached for the interest of the Forum members and comments are welcome.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the report.

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Glasgow Disability Alliance
Confident Connected Contributing

Summary Briefing Aug 2020
For full report visit www.gda.scot
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Supercharged: A Human Catastrophe

Inequalities, Participation and Human Rights before, during and beyond COVID19: Summary Briefing



Before COVID-19, disabled people were already facing a 'Human Catastrophe': decades of inequality made worse by austerity. The pandemic and responses have **supercharged the inequalities** we already faced, and created new ones, with long-term impacts. **Disabled people's voices will be vital** to ensure Scotland's social and economic recovery leave no-one behind.

Over 20 years GDA has built a **disabled people-led community of interest**, connecting 5000 disabled people across Glasgow – we quickly mobilised this infrastructure to engage our members' lived experience and expertise, and develop a **COVID-response shaped and led by disabled people**.

This summary shares:

- **Headlines issues** raised by disabled people through this engagement
- Details of **responses we put in place** (16th March - 31st July, and ongoing)
- **Recommendations for actions** our governments and leaders must take, to tackle these Supercharged Inequalities.

Poverty and Food Insecurity

Disabled people already **3 times as likely** to be **living in poverty & facing food insecurity**.

GDA's COVID engagement showed:

57% worried about money

47% worried about access to food



Supercharged	Cost of living increase	Barriers to food support
	Social Security barriers and delays	Shielding entitlement gaps and delays
	Employment impacts	Support cut too soon

GDA Rights Now

137 individuals supported through
199 phone/ online appointments
To gain **£191, 115.47** (March-July)

GDA Lifeline

Food, medications and essentials
delivered to **1,251 individuals**
in **874 households**

Response

Information Gap

Disabled people already face barriers to information and are **4 times more digitally excluded**

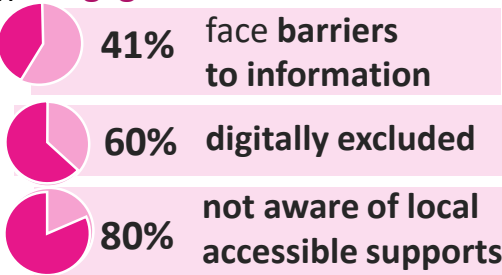
Supercharged

“No-one provides accessible information, so I don’t know what advice to follow or what support is out there”.

“I don’t have internet so it’s GDA that keeps me informed of my rights and what’s happening.”

GDA’s COVID

engagement showed:



GDA Engagement

Response

8500+ Phone calls made/received
20,000 accessible info mailouts
5000+ signposting referrals

GDA Connects

393 digital support calls
200+ devices / equipment provided with coaching & support to get online

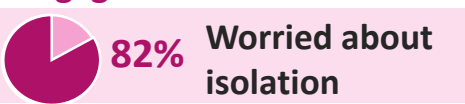


Isolation and Exclusion

Disabled people **twice as likely to face isolation**. **71% have difficulty taking part in things locally** due to lack of access, support, information, or negative attitudes (GDA Action research 2018)

GDA’s COVID

engagement showed:



Supercharged

Vital supports cut or withdrawn

Digital exclusion – no social contact

Increase in barriers, hostility and Hate Crime in public spaces

Virus-fears escalated by treatment rationing and DNARs



GDA Learning

Response

218 online sessions with **200+** learners
188 received digital coaching to access activities
85 peer support group sessions

Sessions have included: local history, recycled crafts, tea and chat, literature appreciation, printmaking, mindful

Mental and Physical Health Inequalities

NHS Scotland cancelled 73% of planned treatment in April, including for heart and respiratory conditions, neurological conditions, and 53% of cancer treatment.

GDA's COVID engagement showed:

Worried about mental or physical health

90%



Supercharged

Pain management services curtailed

Rationing of treatment & DNARs threatened basic rights and Equality

Support for long term mental health conditions withdrawn

Lockdown worsening existing conditions: lack of mobility, therapies stopped



GDA Wellbeing: one-to-one support and advice for Health and Wellbeing

Response

676 referrals

563 follow up calls

300+ connected to supports eg befriending, counselling, peer support

86 online Health and Wellbeing sessions including chair-based exercise, tai chi, mindfulness, relaxation, coping with anxiety, healthy cooking

Social Care Crisis

While responses centred on protecting the NHS, our Social Care system all but collapsed. Nearly half of all COVID deaths happened in Care Homes; and many disabled people were left even more vulnerable, with vital support withdrawn when they most needed it.

GDA's COVID engagement showed:

Worried about social care support

47%



Supercharged

2000+ care packages cut in Glasgow from 20 March – many with no notice and no follow up

Many left with no support to wash, eat, take medications – or forced to rely on other vulnerable family, friends, neighbours



GDA Future Visions: holistic support to tackle barriers to choice and control

Response

57 people received tailored support including life coaching, peer support, group CBT, and practical support to cut through barriers and access services e.g. equipment,

918 disabled people supported to share lived experience of Social Care
227 signed up to contribute lived experience to ongoing Social Care Reforms.

GDA's Recommendations

1 Supercharge involvement of disabled people in recovery planning

- a **Embed Lived Experience** in recovery planning locally and nationally, including resilience planning, and redesign of public spaces
- b **Ensure Place-based approaches are Equalities-proofed:** invest in Equalities training, and parallel equalities-led approaches
- c **Embed Participation in National Performance Framework:** capture benefits of participation for democracy, wellbeing, tackling inequalities
- d **Invest in inclusive learning and community development:** build aspirations & participation through online and offline capacity building
- e **Promote inclusive, accessible communication for all,** involving disabled people in communications planning, equal access to information



2 Supercharge Rights implementation and monitoring

- a **Embed UNCRPD in Scots Law:** Revoke Coronavirus Act, investigate unequal impacts on disabled people's human rights.
- b **Co-design a Disability Equality Action Plan** with learning from COVID and a Fairer Scotland; including a Disability Poverty Strategy
- c **Reinforce Employment Action Plan** commitments & ambitions: involve disabled people to mitigate COVID-impacts on disability employment gap.
- d **Tackle Rising Hate Crime** improve reporting, responses, awareness: fund and co-design a better Third Party Reporting Scheme.
- e **Empower Public Sector Staff to deliver Human Rights,** cut through bureaucracy, act with kindness: Equalities training and collaboration



3 Supercharge Support existing, emerging and responding to gaps

- a **Extend Shielding list, develop resilience registers for future crises**
Informed by lived experience and better data collection
- b **Invest in keeping vital supports** which emerged during COVID but tackle deep inequalities and build resilience: digital, wellbeing, food supports
- c **Elevate Social Care** to protect rights & resilience: re-open ILF, establish a National Social Care Agency, co-designed for dignity, respect, human rights
- d **Fast-track disabled people's access to vital services** to address unequal impacts of lockdown on our mental & physical health: care, housing
- e **Invest in holistic, empowering support to tackle barriers** faced e.g. GDA's Future Visions model - with disabled people in the lead to navigate pathways, unblock barriers, achieve goals, participate and fulfil potential.

