



**Disabled People's Organisations Sharing Experiences During Covid 19**  
**Zoom Meetings Evaluation Form**

June 2021



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### ***Executive Summary***

The key themes occurring throughout this survey are the following –

- The benefits and strength of being able to network and collaborate with other Disabled Peoples' Organisations (DPOs)
- The lack of understanding of the key DPO issues within the broader voluntary and community sector
- The strength in being able to talk about our own issues, rather than those set by others
- The reassurance of discovering that there are other organisations with the same values
- The range of issues that we would like to talk about as a cohort of organisations, and
- The need to involve other organisations where appropriate, to avoid duplication and to draw on their expertise – e.g. Disability Rights UK, ROFA.

### ***Background***

27 Disabled People's Organisations attended nine Zoom meetings, with 2-4 people at each event.

There was no set agenda for these events, which all followed the same basic pattern whereby we each described –

- our organisations and the services we provide
- our Covid responses
- whether we had kept our premises open or not
- any new services we had developed in response to the pandemic
- any future plans or predictions, including if and when we plan to return to our premises, and
- anything else we would like to talk about.

Because the events were deliberately kept small there was plenty of time for each person to talk, to ask questions and offer advice where appropriate.

Following each event I sent each person a link to an online survey to gather opinions about these Forum events. Thirteen people completed a questionnaire and here I present the results.

### ***Did you find this meeting interesting?***

All 13 people said Yes.

### ***Why did you say that?***

13 people answered this question.

Seven of these organisations answered in relation to how good it was to meet up with their peers –

Really interesting conversation and useful to understand the experiences of a DDPO in a different part of the country..

Good opportunity to meet with other DPO leaders

Great discussion and peer support.

It was good to meet with people

just nice to chat to others who know what we do and hear what they did

Met people did not know with interesting ideas and perspectives

Opportunity to find out the experience of organisations similar to ours

It can be very difficult for DPO CEOs to meet each other, so this is an opportunity for this to happen. Most, if not all, expressed how good it was just to talk with other people who are in their position. This is at the heart of why I created this project. In the coming year I will create similar opportunities for people at other organisational levels to talk to each other.

Five people talked about DPO operational; issues –

Found out about other organisations and how they were managing

## **DPO Zoom meetings feedback**

good to hear what others are doing

Interesting to see different attitudes and approaches of other ULOs

It is helpful to share experiences from a range of different organisations and hear what is working elsewhere.

Reassuring that there are other DPULO's out there, interesting to hear about what others are doing.

Above all else this idea of 'reassurance' came through during the actual Forum events and throughout the responses to this questionnaire.

DPOs form a very specific sub-sector within the broad voluntary and community sector. It can be very isolating working within these organisations across the country, often – for a variety of reasons – with little or no contact with any other DPO. This was always intended as an opportunity for these organisations to talk openly with each other.

One person answered this question in relation to using this as a possibility for future collaboration –

Something new with a possible wider network collaboration

### ***Did you find the meeting useful?***

12 people said Yes to this question.

### ***Why did you say that?***

Five people talked about usefulness in relation to operational DPO matters –

Also, wide range of topics discussed and some useful shared information

Hearing how others were dealing with the lockdown and realising we were all trying to continue to do our best for people in our areas and that we have some things in common.

Helpful to put our actions into context - additional thinking time about the impact of some of the things that are happening. When you explain what you are doing to someone else it makes you take a step back from the day to day frantic response to immediate needs and activity and explain why you have done something.

Interesting to hear about the challenges we all face and work being done to support disabled citizens during the pandemic

Helped my thought process re future direction of DPO's

Reaffirmed our approach to me

This seems to have provided an opportunity for reflection and objectivity for the participants. In 'normal' times this can be very difficult to find for these people, let alone in a time of pandemic .

Two people found the contacts they made useful –

### **Contacts**

gave us a connection with others

Two people found it useful to hear about the experiences of other DPOs –

## DPO Zoom meetings feedback

Interesting to understand Disability Cornwall's perspective.

New ideas and perspectives

And one person simply replied "Great".

### ***Would you like to have future Zoom meetings with other DPOs?***

Eleven people said Yes, while two said No.

#### ***Why did you say that?***

Ten DPOs answered this question in relation to operational matters –

Again to find out how they are dealing with situations.

Get to know how other groups work and swap ideas

Helpful to pick up tips from other parts of the country. Previously when we had a Legal Aid contract we used to meet with others regionally so we could discuss issues without feeling under pressure from local potential competitors - we get fewer opportunities to do this and it is good to network with likeminded organisations that are dealing with similar issues .

I think it could be a way of exchanging good ideas on best practice.

sharing knowledge and support

Useful to share experiences and share ideas

New ideas and perspectives

Share ideas, possibility of partnership working, peer support.

Share information, peer support between staff and look at common issues/problems

I want to be a part of a larger network

This collaboration could strengthen the DPO sector across the country as organisations share what works well and pass on new ideas to each other with ease. This strengthens the idea of the need for a regular network reaching across the country.

Of the two DPOs which answered negatively one thought there was little else to talk about in relation to Covid -

I am not sure there is anything to add about Covid now as we move forward

While the other said they were already well connected to other DPOs –

i have lots of networking opportunities already and no time/capacity for more.

There are three clear disability networks in England, namely DR UK, ROFA, and the Disability Unit's network. However not all DPOs are members of these, and each is used for specific purposes, rather than to provide DPO-directed networking activity. The fact that there are these other networks was stated by one DPO –

I would, but I would like them to link in with existing structures and initiatives or it could actually increase fragmentation and zoom fatigue etc..

## **DPO Zoom meetings feedback**

### ***What would you like future Zoom meetings to be about? What would be useful to you as a DPO?***

13 DPOs answered this question, each with their own specific subjects. Two used this question to talk about working more collaboratively –

Other organisations input

How we can act collectively to influence policy and priorities, but again I think this needs to link closely with ROFA etc.

It is important to avoid duplication, to recognise where the strengths lie within the sector as a whole, and to call on other organisations for their input when this is helpful.

Three DPOs talked about DPO operational issues

More about us to start with and how we work

sharing knowledge and support ideas

Similar - future strategies

Two DPOs mentioned how to involve younger disabled people –

How to better reach disabled people, how to get their buy-in and involvement for research, service design etc. Also, younger people and involving younger disabled people in ULOs

Recruiting staff (particularly young disabled people) Issues caused through COVID Look at joint research

The other DPOs talked about –

### **Payroll issues**

I would like to know what payroll and accounts/financial record-keeping software other CIL type DPULO's with a similar number (1000+) of PA employer customers are using and their views on how good/useful the software is.

### **Volunteers**

Feel it is good to keep them fairly short and have a topic for discussion to keep on track. Volunteer recruitment and management issues for DPO's would be interesting. Where do you find people, how do you maintain their engagement, how do you ensure that volunteers help the organisation rather than create problems for it.

### **The role of DPOs**

Future role of DPO's. Collaborative working

### **Wellbeing services**

Perhaps some ideas on how to set up wellbeing or befriending services. The ins and outs of home visiting and good practice for the future.

### ***Would you like to be part of a national Zoom DPO meeting?***

11 people answered yes, two answered no.

## **DPO Zoom meetings feedback**

***If you answered Yes, what would you like this national meeting to be about?***

Ten people answered this question.

Eight DPOs mentioned **Networking** and the strength of collaboration here –

I think we both mentioned about how we were encouraged/impressed at large meetings, seeing so many active DPULOs, having a large meeting like that but breaking off into smaller breakout rooms might be useful and fire us up again.

It absolutely must be linked/part of Disability Rights UK DPULO network rather than starting new

Networking

New ideas and perspectives

good to have a network

Having a collective voice on issues such as underfunded local government and health (local CCGs) contracts - hidden true cost of these. Lack of 'level playing field' between big charities FOR disabled people and small/medium DPULOs. Sharing ideas on innovative models of service/support for local disabled people. Funding diversification options Partnership work with statutory and private sector - good and bad examples

Future role of DPO's. Collaborative working

General disability stuff, topics of the day etc

Which new services have continued –

How DPOs have been and continue to be affected and what if any new services they have implemented that others could consider for their communities that can be speedily implemented on a day to day basis.

One person who answered negatively said –

Find larger meetings become less productive

### ***Conclusions***

There is strong support within this group of organisations for greater opportunities for collaborative working, with other DPOs as well as with other larger organisations. Whether the future lies with larger and smaller Zoom meetings, or a mixture of both, there was strong support for this work to continue.