



**Disabled People's Organisations Sharing Experiences During  
Covid 19**

**Project Report 2 – DPO Buildings and Services During the  
Pandemic**

June 2021



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## DPO Buildings/Services

### ***Executive Summary***

- Most DPOs kept their premises open in some capacity during the pandemic
- Most of the DPOs stated they had started delivering some or all their services remotely
- Organisational 'agility' is one strength shown by many DPOs in a variety of ways during the pandemic
- This is an agility that many much larger disability charities have found more difficult, as the larger organisations saw the pandemic in terms of a loss of income as charity shops and other fundraising activities had to stop, resulting in negative impacts on service delivery
- The sharing of premises with other organisations might prove fruitful in the longer term, providing more ways to access the DPO, and potentially attracting a new and more diverse client base
- There will be digital access issues for many disabled people as services move online. Particular groups of disabled people, including people with a visual impairment or learning difficulty might have problems accessing online materials
- Disabled people form the poorest sections of society may not have enough money to buy computers, mobile phones or ipads, and the subscription costs charged by internet service providers
- The very people targeted by DPOs can be the most difficult to reach through online provision, and this can become a costly process for the DPO to facilitate
- Volunteering for a DPO can be problematic if the staff are homeworking and the premises are not open
- Many DPOs provided 'Wellbeing' services to reach the most isolated and excluded disabled people, living alone in a time of a pandemic
- DPO agility means that the local needs of the hardest to reach groups can be met. This was recognised by some Local Authorities which provided financial help to DPOs
- DPOs are –
  - Flexible
  - Versatile
  - Able to meet the needs of local disabled people
  - Timely, and
  - Case-specific.
- This pandemic has really brought to the fore the value of lived experience leaders and their organisations.
- DPOs rely on intermittent, often project-specific funding avenues. This means that these organisations can be at risk of closure at any time
- The move to work more online is a process that some DPOs describe as something they had started before the pandemic arrived, though since its arrival more online activity has started
- The biggest issue discussed here was the numbers of DPO clients/customers who do not have digital access
- Disabled people are the poorest people in our society, which is a situation that is not going to improve any time soon. Buying technology is not high on a list when having enough food and warmth are already major personal issues

## DPO Buildings/Services

- Most DPOs continued running their usual projects/services during the pandemic
- The services that have been difficult to keep operating have been those requiring face-to-face contact, group work and social activities
- Some of the services that have been impossible to run are income-generators for DPOs, including meeting room hire

### ***Project Introduction***

In March 2020 the government initiated the first national lockdown in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. As the death toll rose, with over two thirds of the total mortality figures being disabled people<sup>i</sup>, many disabled people were either told by the government to shield or decided for themselves to do so.

This impacted all sectors of the economy including Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs). These organisations found themselves at the frontline of service delivery, whilst also having to physically shut their premises to reduce human to human contact.

In February 2021 we devised and sent an online questionnaire to 115 DPOs across England. This was an incredibly difficult time for DPOs, managed, controlled and staffed by disabled people, as workloads were often increasing, staff and volunteers were working from home, and the government were issuing new deadlines about when it would be safe to open and go back to work.

Many disabled people were experiencing increased mental health difficulties<sup>ii</sup> at this time because of the pandemic, which affected the staff, volunteers clients and customers of DPOs. The questionnaire was targeted at understanding whether and how DPOs are operating in these difficult circumstances. This brief document presents some findings from this questionnaire, and can either be read alone or with the other documents in this series.

I have grouped the data from these questionnaires into three documents –

- 1 – DPO Staff
- 2 – DPO Buildings and services during the pandemic
- 3 – DPO Future Concerns.

In this document I will look at DPO Buildings and Services during the pandemic.

### ***DPO Premises***

Have you kept your organisation's premises open and running during the Covid pandemic?

36 answered

21 yes

16 no

One DPO answered both Yes and No to show it had kept partly open.

***DPO reopening***

Of the 19 people who answered the question

If No when, if ever, do you plan to re-open?

there were six emergent themes, grouped here from the largest to the smallest.

Four people said they were following government guidelines and would return “when government advice says safe to do so”.

One DPO said

“When it is allowed for us to meet up as a committee and our disabled members, carers group.”

Four DPOs gave dates in relation to this question, from soon to relatively far away –

Service has continued remotely - looking going back to the office in April

End of May early June

June 2021

2022.

Three of these DPOs said that they were currently partially open

“On the other hand, we only have a single office! We have a new Admin worker started so they are working from the office for a few weeks plus staff are beginning to work from the office one day a week - in shifts. This is the first complete week this has happened.”

“We are in a rented office space and have been partially in the building though it was shut during the initial lock down.”

Three DPOs said they didn't know when they would reopen, with one saying –

“Unsure. We have already given up 50% of our premises.”

Three DPOs said they had given up their premises –

Organisation is now remote we have given up the lease of the office and undecided whether we want or need a premises.”

Two DPOs said they didn't have a premises anyway –

“I've put "yes" as we've not had a change - we don't have premises so this question is N/A”

“We don't have premises, all our staff work from home.”

***Key DPO Changes***

35 people answered Question 15

‘Have you made any key changes to your organisation as a result of the pandemic?’

## DPO Buildings/Services

29 have made changes, while 6 haven't. The most common answer was that 20 of the DPOs stated they had started delivering their services remotely –

Enabled home working for all staff. Once lockdown is over we will look to bringing people back into the office

Working from home and not allowing clients in the office.

One DPO recognised that during the pandemic many other organisations or services stopped entirely –

Get staff working from home, deliver services remotely, adopt new agile ways of working, fill gaps as other services stopped delivering.

This organisational 'agility' is one strength shown by many DPOs in a variety of ways during the pandemic. It is an agility that many much larger disability charities have found more difficult, as the larger organisations saw the pandemic in terms of a loss of income as charity shops and other fundraising activities had to stop, resulting in negative impacts on local service delivery.

One of the key impacts of the pandemic on the way services were delivered was that face-to-face meetings became either very difficult or impossible –

Given up the office, now working 100% remotely. Not seeing clients face to face.

Because home working became the 'new norm' many DPOs questioned the need to return to the offices –

Halved our offices in favour of investing in further homeworking and use of other premises across the community.

In many ways this sharing of premises might prove more fruitful in the longer term, providing more ways to access the DPO, and potentially attracting a new and more diverse client base.

One DPO outlined a range of issues linked to greater homeworking for their staff and clients –

invested a lot in the online communication, change the way we operate, more difficult to support disabled people who want to visit our centre, we had to adjust our work to meet their needs. some staff not doing work well at home, very challenging to encourage them do their work.

The organisations that seem to have coped the best during this pandemic are those which have been able to be the most agile on an ongoing basis –

We have adapted services to meet need differently throughout

The next four issues were discussed by two DPOs each. The first was how they have had to take their services online as a result of closing their premises –

Events are now online

more online presence, redesign of some service provision

There will be access issues for many disabled people as services move online. Particular groups of disabled people, including people with a visual impairment or learning difficulty might have problems accessing online materials. Disabled people

## DPO Buildings/Services

form the poorest section of society and can have difficulty with accessing enough money to buy computers, mobile phones or ipads, as well as the subscription costs charged by internet service providers.

The very people targeted by DPOs can be the most difficult to reach through online provision, and this can become a costly process for the DPO. In fact one of these two DPOs stated later in the questionnaire –

don't have the resources/time to be sufficiently digitally inclusive.

There is an argument here to ensure DPOs, which reach the most disadvantaged and excluded members of their local communities, are sufficiently well funded to make them as fully accessible as possible.

Two of the DPOs mentioned 'Volunteers' here –

Employed volunteer coordinator, taken on more volunteers, started providing social activities, providing weekly befriending calls to members which we didn't do before.

more part time staff covering activities previously undertaken by vols

Volunteering for a DPO can be problematic if the staff are homeworking and the premises are not open. Many of the volunteers might also be shielding due to underlying health conditions.

The provision of 'Wellbeing' services to reach the most isolated and excluded disabled people, living alone in a time of a pandemic, is an activity that many DPOs talked about in response to several questions, including this one –

More pro active and delivering services that we do not normally do, e.g. food delivery and shopping, handyperson, more in depth case work etc

We have always focused on peer support and voice and influence work. With the needs that emerged with Covid, we are now running additional projects that are about getting people digitally connected and building up their confidence to go out and about again. This sort of 'personal' support is new to us.

This shows how the versatility of the DPO can mean that the local needs of the hardest to reach groups are met. This was recognised by some Local Authorities which provided financial help to meet these needs.

Two DPOs raised funding issues here, which are not pandemic related, but will have serious implications for their organisations –

Main stream of lottery funding ends in April.

Planning for our demise as an organisation

DPOs rely on intermittent, often project-specific funding avenues. This means that these organisations can be at risk of closure at any time, particularly as competition for scarce resources increases.

One DPO spoke about how they had become more reliant on the phone for their service delivery –

## DPO Buildings/Services

Currently delivering welfare benefits support by phone rather than face to face.

Although this means that the individual can receive some support, it is not as good as the face to face support normally provided by these organisations.

The responses to this question clearly demonstrate the value of DPO provision. These organisations are –

- Flexible
- Versatile
- Able to meet the needs of local disabled people
- Timely, and
- Case-specific.

This pandemic has really brought to the fore the value of lived experience leaders and their organisations.

### ***Technical Ability***

36 DPOs answered Question 17

Have you had the technical ability to move activities/services online?

31 said Yes, while 5 said No.

Thirteen organisations talked about how they had worked online, including through Zoom, the most mentioned piece of software with eight mentions –

In very limited ways! We have used Zoom. We don't have any subscriptions to online collaboration tools, remote access to our files stored on the office server etc - just the ability to talk to each other and run peer support using Zoom.

At its most basic level it is possible to run a DPO remotely with little training into new ways of working. This would mean that visits to the office would probably be required, at least on an intermittent basis by some staff members, but the conversations between staff members and with clients are able to continue thanks to the technology available.

Of course in order to work remotely the relevant technology is required –

use a lot of Zoom. Had to buy new laptops for staff working at home, we were lucky to get funding to cover them

Signed up for A zoom account and all becoming familiar with the other available platforms. We have started using BT One Phone so we have kept our office number, all staff have been equipped to work from home.

The move to work more online is a process that eleven DPOs describe as something they had started before the pandemic arrived, though since its arrival more online activity has started –

2 years ago we used to office365 and cloud based working which enabled staff to work remotely from the office, our services have moved to either on-line face to face meetings or telephone. Our self advocacy group has set up a

## DPO Buildings/Services

number of sessions using zoom, as have our inclusive cycling project running physical activity sessions on zoom.

Already doing as much online as possible prior to Covid

One DPO said –

We were already doing everything on line because of our impairments

During one of the online Forum meetings we held as part of this project one DPO discussed how running their management committee meetings online had made them more inclusive, as there was no travel involved. This was therefore much easier for those members for whom travelling can be problematic.

During the pandemic there was more funding available to help DPOs – and other organisations – with the new ways of working that became paramount –

We had already switched to Office 365 for security and convenience reasons- we have 2 trustees with IT knowledge who support significantly with this. Staff are all reasonably IT literate and we have received funding to support with equipment upgrades.

In total five DPOs mentioned the new equipment that was required to be able to work remotely –

We gained a grant to ensure all staff have laptops we outsource IT and they set everyone up remotely

Three DPOs described the external support they had used to help them to move more online –

We adapted quickly and learnt fast. We found Good Things Foundation and Technology Trust to be very helpful

Two DPOs described how difficult it can be for small organisations with little or no budget to move online –

As a small DPO we do not the know how or equipment to do this.

Often it is these very small organisations that provide vital services and links for the most excluded disabled people. It is the responsibility of the broader sector to help these DPOs survive this storm.

Several DPOs have talked in various questions about how they have had to change their IT systems –

We have completely changed our IT system, so we can access all files by remote working.

And two DPOs described how they specifically produced 'postal materials' for digitally excluded people –

Providing video meetings, providing freephone dial in to group video meetings for participants who aren't online, providing postal services for those who can't receive email

We provide a quarterly newsletter by post.

## DPO Buildings/Services

### ***Digital Inclusion***

In relation to Question 19 – What digital inclusion issues have you dealt with in this time? 32 DPOs answered.

21 people talked about the issues being faced by their clients/customers in relation to digital inclusion. 2 DPOs listed a range of issues faced by their clients/customers which sum up this question for these people –

1. people without the skills. 2. people without the tech. 3. people with the skills and the tech but no connection (previously would use public access wifi but this hasn't been available to them)

Some people have not had access to digital equipment to enable them to participate in on-line activities. we secured some funding to purchase a few tablets and data to support this, digital inclusion is particularly hard for people with a learning disability who may need support to use the technology, social distancing has made it really hard to support people to learn how to use equipment. Providing IT is relatively straightforward but on-going wifi or data access is harder for those without money

The biggest issue discussed here was listed in terms of the numbers of the DPO clients/customers who do not have digital access –

one third of disabled clients not able to access internet

About 20% of our clients are not online and have missed out a lot. There's a presumption that everyone is online and its just not the case.

This impacts on the ability of a DPO, along with other service providers, to reach these people –

Concerned that there are many people we aren't reaching due to lack of digital access

Seven of the DPOs talked specifically about the lack of technology that many disabled people have –

iPad loan scheme for digitally excluded service users

Offered clients loans of tablets/data to do form filling and research

Some staff and customers not used to working and/or accessing online support and ways of working. Many customers can not afford hardware other than smart phones and some of them and their PAs do not have smart phones

Disabled people are the poorest people in our society, which is a situation that is not going to improve any time soon. Buying technology is not high on a list when having enough food and warmth are already major personal issues.

There are also budgetary issues for the DPO here, as the DPO will need to be able to purchase and maintain a supply of devices in order to be able to loan them to clients/customers.

As well as the relevant hardware the data costs can be prohibitive for disabled people, and one DPO described securing funding to help with this –

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Securing funding to provide a tablet and 12months of data sim allowance for digitally excluded Disabled people who want to be online. We've also had to use phone engagement with those who are digitally excluded (to keep, if on low income, to borrow, if not).

In many parts of the country having the equipment is not enough to enable digital inclusion –

Poor quality of local broadband services

Although this is beyond the direct control of a DPO, it could be a campaigning issue for the organisation.

One DPO talked about the inaccessibility of the digital world for many disabled people –

Many of our service users cannot/will not manage remote activities . Although the majority have mobile phones or tablets their use and understanding is limited. Issues for those on the autism spectrum accessing activities over zoom due to sensory issues. Many with mental health issues need face to face contact

So for some people 'Digital Inclusion' will always be an issue. As a result, some of the DPOs discussed other ways to maintain client/customer contact, including the phone and paper-based information –

Customers who do not have an email addresses/access issues have had to continue to receive post. Safe and Well checks carried out by telephone with over 7000 disabled people a week to recognise digital exclusion.

Two DPOs described this as a particular issue for older disabled people –

Our members many of whom are older do not use technology so we have had to rely on telephone.

Older people were less likely to engage online and received more telephone support

Three of the DPOs discussed how they had provided support and training for digitally excluded people –

we got funding to provide digital inclusivity - support and training to disabled people to learn how to use online. over 100 disabled people learned. more to come but we need more funding to continue delivering training and support

Members and users who do not have digital skills/experience and/or don't have access to technology.

Lack of skills, technology, internet access, motivated. Time spent with clients is longer as need to talk them through the tech.

In this time of pandemic one of the key issues for these DPOs is the lack of personal, face to face contact with clients/customers, including in relation to training/education in IT –

not being able to give IT support in person/f2f

## DPO Buildings/Services

One DPO described this as an opportunity for “Making website accessible”, while one DPO found this was an opportunity to overcome the barriers experienced by many people in relation to digital inclusion –

Surprisingly few. Many customers have resisted previous organisational ambitions to move more services online but when forced to have embraced the new way of receiving services! We have supported a number of customers to receive equipment and data. Where digital access provides a significant access barrier we have been able to visit in 'virtual' person using a telepresence robot

Five of the DPOs talked about the digital inclusion issues in relation to their own staff and working practices –

As question 19 - this was a considerable piece of work and luckily, we had a member of staff with good IT skills. 2) We have developed a COVID Information hub on our web site and was able to obtain additional funding for this. 3) Staff and board members have had to learn to use Microsoft Teams and Zoom in order to take part in meetings, etc.

Installed MS teams, bought laptops and use VPN so people can access shared drives

Some disabled people, including people with visual impairments and learning difficulties, encounter barriers to accessing digital services –

not everyone can do video-conferencing

One DPO stated how –

we have campaigned and worked to ensure digital inclusion throughout

One DPO talked about how this has been a starting point for working with other organisations –

We are just starting some work with partners locally on digital inclusion though as it is an issue. We however don't have the resources/time to be sufficiently digitally inclusive.

Two of the DPOs remarked how these digital systems were “Already in place” and “already available”.

### ***Usual Projects/Services?***

Question 22 asked

Have you been running your usual projects/services during this pandemic?

24 said yes, 12 said no.

Question 23 asked

If No, which projects/services have you continued to run, and which have you had to close?

19 people answered this question. The uncertainty for DPO service providers is summed up in this statement from one DPO –

## DPO Buildings/Services

Altho I say no, this is only because the accessible walking project we started at the beginning of March had to be postponed. All projects running in Dec 2019 continued to be run but in somewhat different form. We also had to change timelines e.g. work that was going to happen in parallel were altered to happen sequentially. In addition, the second and third lockdowns (and the month in between) we could not run our digital inclusion and outreach projects.

The answers can be grouped into four categories, with the largest of these being eight people who talked about face-to-face contact –

Our face to face services have been suspended at the moment.

Although it is possible to run many DPO services remotely, using technology including telephones, some services – particularly social/leisure activities, often require face to face contact –

We continued everything bar the majority of young people befriending provision

We have run all services apart from the Stroke Choir which has stopped because we haven't found a way to run safely in person and the group doesn't want to meet online.

Welfare benefits support has continued to run all be it in a different way. Our social inclusion activities have had to close but we maintain contact with all members on a regular basis.

Many DPOs are running wellbeing services at this time, involving telephone or virtual contact with disabled people, to reduce social isolation –

no face to face appts except digitally

Although more time consuming some of the information/advice work carried out by DPOs can be done in other ways –

Completing forms over the phone, no drop ins.

Services have continued to run, but office closed to visitors and all interviews, set up of direct payments, etc have been by phone or other media as required.

Five of the DPOs talked about how they had to stop their 'indoor' work –

Previously ran a cafe supporting people with disabilities with work placements which has closed . We also ran a large weekly autism group (30-40 people attending per week) which we had to stop and offer one to one mainly around crisis management.

Not able to provide bi monthly meetings or our informative quarterly newsletter.

we've been able to run everything bar our library services, which were suspended for a while

Some of the services that have been impossible to run are income-generators for DPOs –

## DPO Buildings/Services

Mostly yes, with adaptations but some services such as our accessible venue hire and shopmobility scooter hire have had to pause

While some services have closed others have seen an increase in demand –

Closed Shopmobility service and Special Olympics, increased case work for disabled people and handyperson service

Two DPOs said they had stopped their outreach work –

Most running but outreach and home visiting stopped

Outreach, we used to visit existing groups but only now are a few of those groups starting to meet digitally.

Many DPOs talked throughout the questionnaire about how they have had to move services/provision online –

Continued most (though moved online), one which involved community access to toilets has had to be suspended as everything is closed.

Some services have been able to continue even during the pandemic –

Our research and education work is continuing as normal

### ***New Ways of Delivery?***

Question 26 asked

Have you delivered your existing projects/services in new ways during the pandemic?

36 people answered with 35 answering Yes, and 1 answering No.

Question 27 asked

If Yes, in what ways?

with 34 people answering this question as follows –

One organisation listed the range of ways their services have had to change during the pandemic –

1:1 work has had to happen online or by phone, have also met 1:1 outside, used social media to host 'strive to thrive' events and do targeted work e.g. encouraging people with LD to take up vaccine

It is interesting how creative and responsive this answer illustrates some DPOs can be under this pressure. Of course it is situation-specific, as many DPOs do not have the ability to meet up outside due to a lack of confidential outside space.

20 people answered in relation to using online or remote communications, rather than in person –

More use of phone and Zoom. We are not seeing people face to face at this time.

more telephone and online support etc

## DPO Buildings/Services

Providing advice by phone/online; holding meetings (consultations and social) online

We are now only online

One DPO admitted how this situation has forced them to think in new ways, and to consider things they had not thought of before –

online support (never considered online personal assistance before!)

One DPO talked about delivering training online –

More online training for academics in health and social care.

One organisation operated online as well as through making home deliveries –

Online and telephone services. Wellbeing packs, delivering resources.

We have had to do everything over the phone, or wear protective clothing to go to clients houses

During this time some DPOs worked to develop pandemic-specific support for disabled people and their PAs –

Online and developed tools such as risk assessment template for returning PAs to work after first lockdown and beyond

By home working. Increased use of email. Taken part in telephone and video representations for benefit appeals.

Eight of the organisations talked about how they had been operating their provision remotely –

adapted to changing beneficiary need so adapting content, as well as moving to remote delivery

Benefits service went remote only, all our other services also made adaptations.

welfare benefit work over telephone rather than face to face

Home visits became something that DPOs increased, reduced or stopped entirely –

Some small group activity switched to Zoom , more one to one, more home visits

No home visits

One DPO described here how they had –

worked closely with the LA to sort out key worker letters, vaccine information, employment rights of PA's, etc.

### ***New Projects?***

Question 28 asked –

Have you devised, and run, new projects to meet local needs during this pandemic?

36 answered, with 24 saying Yes and 12 saying No.

Question 29 followed with –

If Yes – what are these new projects?

25 people answered as follows –

14 talked about developing new Wellbeing services in a range of ways –

Delivery of PPE to people who employ their own PAs, emergency PA register, inclusive cycling project delivered virtual physical activity sessions and scheme to provide exercise equipment to people at home, Sheffield Voices expanded sessions including self advocacy, health and wellbeing, writing group, evening social amongst others.

Providing financial support to Disabled people struggling to pay their energy bills; digital inclusion project; outreach project to support individual Disabled people to regain their confidence to go out and about; created a Coronavirus News magazine for the digitally excluded, covering those details of local changes due to Covid that were not being provided in print - and for Disabled people who are on online but have accessible comms needs that weren't being met. In addition we began a new co-production project that is unrelated to Covid-19, funded by the NL Climate Action Fund.

These comments show how diverse the support offered by DPOs can be, in response to local need and demand.

Eight of the DPOs discussed the help they were offering to specific groups of disabled people –

Increased mental health support for people with Autism, increased Carers support

Online peer support group, men's online mental health support group. Delivering of wellbeing packs and winter warmth packs.

covid-specific befriending and ongoing support for isolated disabled people

Safetynet - welfare calls to people feeling isolated and lonely.

Self Directed Support Planning aids, adult befriending, new support navigator service

Some outreach/befriending by phone

Some small group activity switched to Zoom , more one to one, more home visits

we are linked with a local Helpline to help people during the pandemic

Four of the organisations discussed what they were doing to help disabled people with specific issues –

Financial & Energy help, mobile broadband tablets to keep in touch

Handyperson service, keep fit at home, in depth case work

Prescription delivery, ditto food parcels etc

Safe and Well checks, delivery of PPE, new general advocacy service to support disabled people impacted by the pandemic

## DPO Buildings/Services

Two DPOs said they were now offering a “Counselling service” –

Emergency volunteer project, Disability Connections project, Counselling service

while another two discussed how they were collecting stories from disabled people –

lottery funded project adapted; now focused on collecting stories from people who have been shielding and labelled 'vulnerable' in order to ensure they have a strong voice in how community recovers. Set up the tablet loan scheme enabling people to 'try before they buy' and encouraging people to get online. Run surveys collecting people's experience of lockdown, set up zoom events etc

hearing disabled people's voices re covid and more user voice work

Three DPOs discussed technical/Online activity they had started as a result of the pandemic –

COVID 19 internet hub

loan and support service users with digital needs

Digital Inclusion project

Two DPOs said they were operating more Information/Advice provision during the pandemic –

Disability helpline and info' service (which has a Covid-19 focus).

more advice and advocacy

One DPO said it had –

Devised but not set up because all resources, including staff time, taken up with the additional work caused by the pandemic.

### **Conclusions**

This questionnaire was answered a year into the pandemic. Many organisations closed their premises quickly and thought they would never reopen, only to change their mind after a period of time when they saw the value of having a physical presence for their organisation. However some of these did not change their minds, and will remain closed.

While it is clear this is a very small number of DPOs that have answered this question, it is also clear that the national DPO landscape will have changed as a result of this pandemic.

The uncertainty that forms a regular part of life as a DPO (irregular funding streams, short term projects and contracts, etc.) has been exacerbated by the pandemic, with a lack of clarity about when it will be safe to reopen, and how safe disabled members of staff and volunteers will feel to return to shared spaces again.

## DPO Buildings/Services

The responses to these questions demonstrates DPO operational agility. It also suggests the need for collaborative campaigning as a cohort to create national digital inclusion policy for disabled people, using DPOs as a delivery mechanism.

One of the key areas of DPO activity that has been hindered by this pandemic has been DPO provision of social and leisure activities, many of which have stopped.

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<sup>i</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)00625-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)00625-5/fulltext)

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/publications-and-technical-guidance/mental-health-and-covid-19#:~:text=As%20the%20coronavirus%20pandemic%20rapidly,also%20expected%20to%20rise.>