



An alliance of Disabled People
& our organisations in England

Reclaiming Our Futures Alliance - ROFA

An Alliance of Disabled People and Our Organisations in England

June 2022

Rights – Going Backwards



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Life for the 13.3 million Disabled people living in the UK is getting worse not better.

- Historic exclusion / discrimination + rising poverty and inequality as a result of austerity – UN = **‘a grave violation of Disabled people’s rights’**
- Twice as likely to live in poverty and be unemployed
- Daily barriers / exclusion / poorer outcomes in all areas of life
- Hate crime against Disabled people up by one third
- Huge reduction in statutory support including social care

Covid



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Covid: structural inequality in action - 6 out of 10 deaths are Disabled people

- **Our worth:** DNR notices, social care cut & ignored, our voice not heard, no guidance, no BSL interpretation, Disability Strategy written without us
- **Lack of access to:** food, health & social care, PPE, benefits , community face to face services
- **Erosion of rights :** Care Act 'easements'; access to health treatment, transport
- **Isolation** = lack of support, increase in mental health distress
- **Shielding:** long term impact on our rights and inclusion; abuse, discrimination & employment

DPO Research



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Despite our track record in achieving real change DPOs are ignored, marginalised and chronically underfunded

Why and how best can we respond?

Funding from National Lottery to :

- Map the DPO sector in England - 395 DPOs were identified across England
- Identify: the movement building, voice & representation and organizational & infrastructure capacity building needs of our sector
- 96 DPOs completed in-depth survey and 60 DPOs taking part in focus groups

Key Research Findings



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Organisational challenges:

- **Funding:** chronically under-resourced service delivery & its impact, high uncertainty, lack of long term core funding, very little funding for core DPO work on empowerment, rights & peer work that transforms our lives
- **Trapped on the treadmill of imposed 'more with less' service delivery:** decreasing influence over quality & focus of services
- **Lack of capacity & resources:** to build staff & members skills, provide accessible training & support, develop new leaders, carry out planning and development, grow our reach and membership, keep innovating, collaborate & do long term planning
- **Meeting increasing needs Disabled people:** massively reduced statutory support + covid, isolation, mental distress, poverty, daily discrimination and hostile environment

Key Research Findings



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Movement building & voice challenges:

- **Fragmented and isolated DPO sector:** next to no capacity for collaboration, sharing learning, creating peer networks and building a collective voice at a regional or national level
- **Capacity & resource constraints to:** do new engagement, embed intersectionality, engage younger Disabled people, people in institutions, grow membership, link with other movements and sectors
- **Leadership:** little capacity to bring on next generation of Disabled leaders, do intergenerational work, diversify our leadership or support current leaders
- **Lack of knowledge of the social model of disability:** little opportunity to create spaces to discuss and educate

Key Research Findings



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Key external challenges:

- **A hostile environment - DPOs unheard and marginalized by Gov't and decision-makers:** not valued, not included, very little opportunity to build relationships and influence, no scope for critical friend role, often silenced, big non user-led orgs get facetime with decision-makers
- **Funders still don't understand disability equality or the power of DPOs (as grassroots user-led organisations):** short term, project/output focused, contract culture creates unhelpful competition, little funding for structural inequality and empowerment/rights work, little understanding of difference between DPOs and disability charities that often undermine inclusion/equalities approach

References



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ROFA Website: <https://www.rofa.org.uk/>

National Independent Living Service – ROFA Vision:
<https://www.rofa.org.uk/nils/>

ROFA International Committee: <https://www.rofa.org.uk/rofa-international-committee/>

Understanding the Needs of DPOs in England
<https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/uncategorised/understanding-the-needs-of-ddpos-in-england/>

UN CRPD Shadow Report by English DPOs:
<https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/uncrdp/shadow-report/shadow-report/>

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