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Working to ensure that disabled people's voices are listened to, and their rights respected

Nothing About Us Without Us

## COVID-19 Updates

# Reflection: One year on since the first COVID-19 lockdown

*Posted 25.03.2021*

**Tuesday of this week, 23 March, marked a year since the first COVID-19**

## Latest

**A sad farewell to our former Board member and Chair,**

**lockdown in Northern Ireland and much of the rest of the world. The pace at which the global pandemic took hold was truly unprecedented; in a number of weeks, everything we all knew to be 'normal' changed utterly.**

Even before N.Ireland went into its first lockdown what became very clear, was our community felt that their voices were being lost in the noise or worse simply ignored in the confusion and panic that was unfolding. During this time, like so many, we diverted our resources to doing what we could to support our community.

- **Our people:** We put in place measures to protect our staff, volunteers and all those who we engage with on a daily basis
- **Our work:** We changed the way we worked to ensure continuity of service and to support as many disabled people as possible during this period. Our Job Match team has exceeded their targets in helping disabled people find paid work, Workable NI continue to support disabled people in the workplace, Training & Education have delivered disability support to TfS Trainees, Apprentices and Training providers across N.Ireland, DATS has adapted their service to provide transport assistance to the most vulnerable in our community and ONSIDE has focussed their efforts on equipping and upskilling participants to get online; lockdown has taught us the importance of

**Ian Elliott.**

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'connection'. (**click here to watch a video from the ONSIDE team**)

- **The impact of COVID-19 on disabled people in NI survey:** We undertook one of the largest surveys in our history to gather the experiences of disabled people, their families and carers during this time. The data gathered gives a clear picture in time of the reality for disabled people on the ground in N.Ireland as COVID-19 hit and the report, with recommendations, was shared publicly including with the NI Executive. Some of our recommendations have been implemented including *the timetabling, development and resourcing of a new world leading disability strategy for N.Ireland*.
- **Human Rights:** We called on NICE to include specific further guidance in partnership with disabled people and their organisations. It was important our healthcare professionals had guidance which included and fully reflected disabled people in this difficult time. NICE listened to us and other patient groups and amended their advice about the application of their rapid COVID-19 critical care guideline
- **Human Rights:** We called on the BMA to reach out and meaningfully engage with Disabled People's Organisations as participation is central to a rights based approach to health
- **Human Rights:** In the absence of an Ethical Framework for treatment of Disabled People during COVID-19 specific to Northern Ireland we called on Minister for Health Mr Robin Swann, Chief Medical Officer Dr Michael McBride and Chief Social Worker Mr Sean Holland to publicly

commit to a number of fundamental NHS Principles. The Minister responded swiftly and fully publicly endorsed these principles

- **Influencing government:** We have been in regular contact with respective Government Departments and all Political parties to ensure, as far as possible, interruption to services were minimised and supports for disabled people continued.

Going forward, Disability Action will continue to liaise and work with all allies. Our truly dedicated staff will continue to provide much need services to our community. We are reminded daily of the resilience, ingenuity and leadership of the disabled community we work with, support and represent.

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Join Disability Action for "EAT WELL, SPEND LESS" with Paula McIntyre



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Disability Action, Portside Business Park, 189 Airport Road West,  
Belfast, BT3 9ED

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