

## Nazmul Hasan

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**From:** Nuala Toman  
**Sent:** 25 November 2021 16:36  
**To:** 'private.office@health-ni.gov.uk'  
**Subject:** Urgent Meeting Request re Covid-19 planning  
**Attachments:** DoHFINAL.pdf

Dear Minister Swann,

I hope you are well.

Please see attached communication from Andrea Brown, CEO of Disability Action requesting an urgent meeting regarding Covid-19 planning.

This request has been made in the context of the large proportion of Covid-19 deaths which are d/Deaf and Disabled people and continued disruption in essential health and social care services. The request has also been made in the context of the ongoing decline in the physical and mental health of d/Deaf and Disabled People and the absence of the inclusion of d/Deaf and Disabled people in decision-making.

We would appreciate a quick response in the context of the ever changing situation and the ongoing impact upon our lives.

Thank you and take care,

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**Nuala Toman**  
Head of Policy



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## **Urgent Meeting Request Re Covid-19 Planning**

Dear Minister Swann,

Disability Action is the largest pan-disability organisation in Northern Ireland. We have an advocacy service located in Carrickfergus serving people within the Northern Trust Area. Our Resource Centre staff in Carrickfergus have dealt with 7883 enquiries for the period from 1 October 2020 – 30 September 2021.

We are writing to on behalf of the d/Deaf and disabled people who we represent to raise our concerns regarding the absence of d/Deaf and Disabled People in planning associated with Covid-19 including the Covid-19 recovery plan. We are seeking an urgent meeting to address the current deficit within the Department of Health in addressing the needs and priorities of d/Deaf and Disabled People which has had a devastating impact upon our lives.

Almost two thirds of people who have died due to coronavirus were d/Deaf and Disabled People. Research undertaken by Disability Action regarding the experience of disabled people during the pandemic has shown that health social care services for disabled people had experienced significant disruption and that many disabled people have experienced a decline in physical and mental health. This was a result of the removal and reduction in access to key services and support. Our research also showed that disabled people had challenges in accessing medication and food.

We are concerned about the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on access to essential health and social care and essential services by d/Deaf and Disabled People many of whom continue to experience declining physical and mental health.

We are asking the Department of Health to:

**Disability Action (NI), Portside Business Park,  
189 Airport Road West, Belfast, BT3 9ED.**

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- Take account of Articles 10 (Right to Life), Article 11 (Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies) and 25 (Health) of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in its approach to dealing with COVID-19, by providing disabled people, older people, and carers with reassurance they will have equal access to hospital treatment, health, and social care services.
- Establish without delay, a mechanism to consult with and actively engage with disabled people (including disabled children) in planning and delivering its response to COVID-19 in line with Article 4 of the UNCRPD (General Obligations). It is essential that the needs of d/Disabled people are addressed within every plan and change in regulations
- Commit to a legislative programme which will incorporate the UNCRPD into law and provide adequate protection for d/Deaf and Disabled People

Given the timelines associated with the proposed Disability Strategy and the ongoing transitions associated with Covid-19 we are seeking an urgent meeting to address our concerns and we ask for a speedy response.

Personal Data

**Andrew Brown**  
Chief Executive

**Disability Action (NI), Portside Business Park,  
189 Airport Road West, Belfast, BT3 9ED.**

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