

**COVID-19 INQUIRY
M9 PRELIMINARY HEARING**

**SUBMISSIONS OF DISABLED PEOPLE'S ORGANISATIONS (DPO):
DISABILITY RIGHTS UK, DISABILITY ACTION NORTHERN IRELAND**

The following addresses [I] Context [II] Scope [III] Human Rights [IV] Expertise & Witnesses and [V] Listening.

[I] CONTEXT

1.1. DISABLED PEOPLE'S ORGANISATIONS ('DPO'): DPO are representative organisations of Disabled people pursuant to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ('UNCRPD')¹ (in that they are majority led, directed, governed, and staffed by Disabled people). DPO use the 'social model' of analysis and policy that deliberately questions notions of disability, vulnerability and resilience in order to deepen the understanding that many of the hardships Disabled people face are determined by social, economic and political choice, and therefore can be altered in change of awareness, values and rights.² Further to Article 1 of the UNCRPD, it is the "*interaction*" between an individual's impairment/condition with various barriers and attitudes that importantly may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Informed by this approach the above DPO have acted as Core Participants in Inquiry Modules 2, 2A-C, 4, 6 and 8.

1.2. ECONOMIC STATUS QUO: The DPO emphasise that the Government's economic response must be recognised for two things: first, its funding of the status quo (such that the Government's actual Covid economics were not radical at all, even if the circumstances were), and second, its deliberate failure to distribute to those most in need. Mr Sunak, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, on 11 March 2020 made a promise "*to support...the most vulnerable people in the form of a safety net for those who could not work, whether they were ill themselves or not at work as they were self-isolating*".³ Under this notion of vulnerability the safety net would only exist for those who had been *able* to work, but were *able* to do so no longer. The provision of extra funding was to maintain the status quo *for these people*, to provide temporary assistance to the politically idealised person under our contemporary economics, who is able, autonomous, independent and self-sufficient.⁴ For

¹ UNCRPD, [General Comment No. 7 on Participation](#) §§11 & 13

² [DPO M2 Written Opening](#) 26.09.23 §§1.4, 1.7-1.10

³ Cabinet Meeting Minutes 11.03.20 [M2/INQ000056132/4]

⁴ Fineman M. (2008) *The vulnerable subject: Anchoring equality in the human condition*. Yale Journal of Law & Feminism 20(1): 8–40

spending comparisons, during the pandemic 1.5 million Bounce Back Loans were provided to business. £9.3 billion additional Department for Work and Pensions ('DWP') spending during the Covid period was allocated predominantly to the in-work population, who were deemed temporarily unable to work. Informed by the social model, the DPO see these economic choices as maintaining a status quo which hinders the full and effective participation of Disabled people in society on an equal basis with others.

1.3. NO REDISTRIBUTION: The Government's economic response did not redistribute money and resources. There was no proper safety net for those deemed "*unproductive*", or recognition that those only just scraping by after a decade of cuts to benefits and services would face further financial hardship. The primary steps taken by the DWP to support "*vulnerable individuals*" were easements to conditions and procedures for claiming benefits and not losing entitlements, which in normal times are notoriously harsh for those obliged to comply with them. For adults over 25, Universal Credit was topped up by twenty pounds a week, but there was no equivalent top up for those on legacy benefits⁵ (who number approximately 2 million people, the vast majority of whom were Disabled people⁶). Neither was there top up for Carer's Allowance in England, despite demand on carers' responsibilities and time increasing sharply. In the early days of the pandemic 100,000 unpaid carers were using foodbanks and 226,000 cut back on food just to get by. Financial sick pay was insufficient to assist part time and zero-hours workers who, already in poverty, continued to work. For low paid care workers in particular, HM Treasury ('HMT') failed to create a furlough solution to prevent care workers continuing to work in multiple locations, who were inadvertently spreading the virus (see further §2.4 below).

1.4. AUSTERITY ECONOMICS ARE A CHOICE: Disabled people make up almost a quarter of the population.⁷ They were one of the most financially at-risk groups at the start of 2020 and were then disproportionately impacted by economic decisions and events during the pandemic. The Inquiry has already heard evidence about the disability employment gap, the disability pay gap, higher levels of poverty and deprivation and extra costs associated with disability, meaning poverty has a disproportionate impact on Disabled people.⁸ Austerity economics are not target neutral. They are policy choices to asset strip from benefits and care services, rather than maintain those provisions, or spread the burden of contribution, by way of taxation on higher incomes and suspension of other income and market privileges that benefit the more affluent.

⁵ Legacy benefits include Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support and Jobseekers' Allowance

⁶ In Northern Ireland the majority of benefit recipients were on legacy benefits due to transitional arrangements

⁷ House of Commons Library [UK disability statistics: Prevalence and life experiences](#) (23 August 2023)

⁸ Watson & Shakespeare [M2/[INQ000280067/8](#) §§17-19]

1.5. AUSTERITY INDUCED “VULNERABILITY”: The austerity choices therefore had particularly severe consequences for Disabled people.⁹ Disabled people’s cost of living is inescapably higher because their impairments create expenses that others do not have.¹⁰ The ‘Bedroom Tax’ victimised Disabled people for the extra space they require either for equipment - such as wheelchairs or hoists - or else for sleeping, or personal assistance. It also aggravated pre-existing housing insecurity for those who had to move because they could not pay rent for homes that had taken years to acquire.¹¹ Social care funding was scaled back, not just in care homes, but for those in domiciliary care,¹² and it was vastly underfunded compared to the NHS.¹³ “Core” social care funding, excluding additional pandemic-related funds, declined from around £22.5 billion in 2019/20 to around £19.8 billion in 2020/21.¹⁴ Carers Allowance for those who provided more than 35 hours unpaid care a week, and hence so much that they often cannot have other jobs, was £67.25 at the height of the pandemic.¹⁵ The average pay for support workers in England who assisted people to live independently in the community was £17,695 or £9.05 per hour.¹⁶ This economic and financial reality created risk and “vulnerability”¹⁷ for Disabled people before the pandemic, which was then compounded and exacerbated by the Government’s economic interventions (and the lack thereof).

[II] SCOPE

2.1. STRUCTURES: The Provisional Outline of Scope identifies that the Inquiry will consider within Provisional Issue (1) how economic decision making was structured and undertaken by the UK Government, the Devolved Administrations and Local Government and how wide was the consultation as to the range of economic measures considered or implemented. CTI adds that this will be “a forensic examination of the systems and structures that were in place across government in order to shape the economic response to the pandemic”.¹⁸ Given the Covid-19 pandemic was a cross-government emergency with health, social and economic impacts, it is important that the Inquiry looks at systems

⁹ Watson & Shakespeare [M2/INQ000280067/10-11 §§30-36]

¹⁰ Watson & Shakespeare [M2/INQ000280067/6-7 §19]

¹¹ Watson & Shakespeare [M2/INQ000280067/7 §§20-21]

¹² Pearson, C. et al. *Covid-19 and the Crisis in Social Care: Exploring the Experiences of Disabled People in the Pandemic*. (2022) *Social Policy and Society*, 1-16, pp 4, 12-13

¹³ Daly M. *COVID-19 and care homes in England: What happened and why?* (2020) 54 *Soc Policy Adm*, 985–998, pp 993-996

¹⁴ Health Foundation, *Social care funding: Three key questions about funding in England* September 2024 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-and-pension-rates-2020-to-2021/benefit-and-pension-rates-2020-to-2021>

¹⁵ Inclusion London, *Westminster Government Civil Society Shadow Report* (March 2022) [M2/INQ000279965/27 §55]

¹⁶ *DPO M2 Written Opening* 26.09.23 §§1.9, *DPO M2 Written Closing* 15.01.24 §58

¹⁷ CTI Note 02.10.24 §32

and structures “*across government*” and at the width of any consultation undertaken both within government and beyond it.

- 2.1.1. INTEGRATED-GOVERNMENT: Disabled people suffer from being an afterthought of government in part because they do not enjoy high levels of “cross government” awareness. Unlike the Department of Health and Social Care (‘DHSC’) which stood up the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (‘SAGE’) to consider initial health impacts and, to a lesser extent, social impacts, HMT did not set up a similar body to consider the impact of economic interventions. Proposals from other government departments to establish a cross-departmental group to discuss economic impacts were similarly vetoed by senior HMT officials.¹⁹ This had the consequence of excluding external advisors from a diverse range of backgrounds, including Disabled people and DPOs. With no cross-government group set up to discuss economic impacts, there was also limited opportunity for HMT to hear from other departments such as the DWP on the impact of schemes such as furlough.
- 2.1.2. MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT: The Inquiry has already seen that the machinery of government responds badly to the unequal impact of disasters, because it does not have the effective mechanisms or ministerial led systems to act on behalf of marginalised parts of civil society when disasters strike.²⁰ For Module 9, the problem is well exemplified by the ineffectiveness of the Disability Unit (‘DU’) and Minister for Disabled People in shaping pandemic economic policy formation, as opposed to attending to the rudiments of business continuity of the DWP.²¹ This was a problem seen in other devolved administrations, with benefit payments and telephone lines being essentially the only thing that the NI Department For Communities sought to plan for.²² Of the DU, especially given the limited number of 20 staff who were deployed to other departments for the first weeks of the pandemic, consideration should be given as to how poorly that Cabinet office portmanteau system of Directorate government fared in preventing Disabled people from being left out of Covid economic policy and planning beyond the limited priority of business continuity in the benefits sector.
- 2.1.3. BEYOND GOVERNMENT: The Inquiry will need to explore whether there were appropriate systems and structures to enable HMT and wider Government, including the Devolved Administrations and Local Government, to consult and to

¹⁹ IfG, The Treasury during Covid [M2/INQ000226497/6]

²⁰ [DPO M2B Written Closing](#) 05.04.24 §§22-24

²¹ [DPO M2 Written Closing](#) 15.01.24 §§22-23

²² [DPO M2C Written Closing](#) 06.06.24 §38

receive relevant advice about the impact of economic interventions on Disabled people from DPO (which necessarily goes beyond “*economic advice*” narrowly construed). The issue extends to the varying degree to which Disabled people and DPO were treated as relevant actors in the formation of economic policy in the same way that business and unions were. On this both government witnesses and human rights obligations have aligned around the language of co-production and co-design.²³ This is relevant to Provisional Issues (3) and (4) as regards criteria for establishing interventions, and the mechanisms for their delivery. However, the practice and positive results arising from the discipline of co-production and co-design during the pandemic remained embryonic. Even when funds were announced it was often unclear how they were used and/or how they could be accessed, and with that a risk of rendering the effort as tokenistic. Going forward the DPO have already asked the Inquiry to consider the greater potential of human rights-based budgeting, involving proper equality impact assessment, but also genuine collaboration between different layers of state and civil society in the development of emergency funding and its targeted delivery.²⁴

2.2. DATA: During the spring and summer of 2020 the DU began to obtain data about the harm being done to Disabled people during the pandemic.²⁵ Disabled people made up 59.2% of the first wave fatalities²⁶ and lifestyle surveys showed that household finances were affected with a higher proportion reporting reduced income and struggling to pay bills.²⁷ From July to September 2020 the DU commissioned research from the Policy Lab that (unlike the Public Health England work on disparities and ethnicities) was not published until July 2021.²⁸ The study established that the pandemic had exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities experienced by Disabled people, creating new social barriers to inclusion. In relation to work and finance, the study found that “*COVID-19 has brought up a whole new set of experiences of being disabled. In some cases, it has presented additional challenges to contend with. In others, it has reformulated and reframed existing barriers.*”²⁹ This included negative impact on Disabled people’s options to seek additional sources of income.³⁰ These studies raised key questions for Government, including in relation to the criteria and mechanisms for economic interventions, as contemplated by

²³ [DPO M2 Written Closing](#) 15.01.24 §33, [DPO M2B Written Closing](#) 05.04.24 §§28-30

²⁴ [DPO M2A Written Closing](#) 23.02.24 §§28-29, [DPO M2B Written Closing](#) 05.04.24 §40

²⁵ Bell [M2/INQ000198850/27 §§61-62]

²⁶ ONS Death rate 19.06.20 [INQ000089756]

²⁷ ONS Opinion and Lifestyle survey April – May 2020 [INQ000089755]

²⁸ Bell [M2/INQ000198850/26 §62] and Ex. MB/49 DU [M2/INQ000089747] ‘The lived experience of disabled people during the COVID-19 pandemic’ 20.09.21 (first published 28.07.21 according to Gov.UK website)

²⁹ [M2/INQ000089747/11]

³⁰ [M2/INQ000089747/12]

Provisional Issues (3) and (4). How was data about Disabled people taken into account as part of economic decision making? What consultation with DPO took place, if any, as to the range of economic measures and mechanisms for their delivery? How was the equality of impact of policies and their delivery monitored and disparities reduced?

2.3. COLLATERAL IMPACT: In considering the equality of the impact of economic interventions under Provisional Issues (3) and (4), the Inquiry is asked to consider not just specifically or exclusively the impact on “*those who were at greater risk or otherwise vulnerable*”, but collateral impact issues that would ultimately affect the “*at risk*” or “*vulnerable*” people. For the DPO, this includes amongst other things, the following:

2.3.1. CARERS: Decisions about economic interventions targeting carers of all kinds, for risks to them can be inextricably bound up with far greater risk to Disabled people. That includes care workers in care homes, temporary, bank and agency care workers who work in multiple locations and settings, Personal Assistants who are employed by Disabled people themselves as paid carers using the direct payment scheme, and unpaid and informal carers (see further §2.4 below).

2.3.2. JOB RETENTION AND BUSINESS SUPPORT: Not for the first time, it must be underscored that Disabled people are not inherently “*at risk*” or “*vulnerable*”, and for some Disabled people their condition/impairments may not have especially made them especially so during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, Disabled people *are* more likely to be in insecure employment than non-Disabled people and more likely to face redundancy,³¹ and Disabled people who own businesses or work in the informal economy may need particular support to be able to maintain their livelihoods.³² Hence, decisions about economic interventions such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and support for businesses and the self-employed should be considered with the economic insecurity of Disabled people in mind, and beyond the economic support measures delivered to (or intended for) “*those who were at greater risk or otherwise vulnerable*”.

2.4. THE CARE WORKER ECONOMICS OF INFECTION PREVENTION: Although all of the economic interventions were underpinned by the aim of infection prevention, it is important that across Modules 6 and 9 the Inquiry examines the issue of staff movement and infection prevention.³³ In July 2020 the Vivaldi study³⁴ on the situation in care homes during the

³¹ Trades Union Congress (‘TUC’), [Disability Pay and employment gaps 2020](#) (12 November 2020)

³² United Nations, [Policy Brief: A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19](#) (May 2020), p 13

³³ See, generally, [DPO M2 Written Closing](#) 15.01.24 pp 26-27 §§41-42

³⁴ [Vivaldi 1: COVID-19 care homes study report](#), 3 July 2020 [M2/INQ000211984]. See also Hayward [M2/INQ000267868/6 §§3.9-3.10] and Technical Report [M2/INQ000087225/297-298]

first wave found that care homes that did not pay staff during periods of sickness absence and had higher numbers of agency staff were at greater risk of Covid-19 outbreaks. This led Minister Whately in December 2020, with her Secretary of State's backing, to recommend a furlough type scheme that would have directly compensated workers for lost earnings as a result of no longer being able to work in more than one place.³⁵ The Treasury did not accept that proposal,³⁶ despite recognition by Covid-O in its minutes of 22 December 2020 that there was a "*clear and shared understanding of the need to stop staff movement between care homes*".³⁷ The matter was left in Module 2 with the then Chancellor of the Exchequer needing to reserve the HMT position as to why this was the case, as he had not been directly involved in the decision making.³⁸ If not in Module 6, the resolution of that line of enquiry should be completed in Module 9.

- 2.5. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT: The DPO welcome the inclusion within Provisional Issues (3) and (4) of the consideration, if any, given to the equality of impact of the economic support delivered, how the equality of the impact of support was monitored and whether steps were taken to reduce any disparities. DPO further welcome the indication from CTI that "*[c]onsideration of the equality of impact of the support that was provided will run through all aspects of the investigation with a focus on what consideration, if any, was given to those who were at greater risk or were otherwise vulnerable, how equality of impact was monitored and what steps were taken to reduce any disparities identified*".³⁹ DPO are particularly concerned to understand what equality impact assessments were carried out and whether such assessments were monitored and updated once any unequal impact was identified. By way of example in relation to ending the £20 Universal Credit uplift, a detailed impact assessment would include "*carefully identifying who will be affected by the cut and how it will affect their standard of living; examining whether affected families and individuals will be guaranteed of an adequate standard of living and social protection after the cut; and exploring whether alternative and less restrictive measures could be implemented*".⁴⁰ DPO have called for equality impact assessments to be released by HMT in respect of economic interventions and welcome the Inquiry's commitment to exploring this issue.

³⁵ Whately [M2/INQ000267868/54-55 §§236-239], Hancock [M2/INQ000232193/121-122 §§486-492]

³⁶ Whately [INQ000273897/55 §237]

³⁷ Covid-O Action and Decisions 22.12.20 [INQ000091096/1], Helen Whately [M2/INQ000273897/52-53 §§224, 229]

³⁸ Sunak [M2/T33/163/21-168/22] [M2/T33/194/5-196/9] Cf. Technical Report [M2/INQ000087225/305 §3]

³⁹ CTI Note §32

⁴⁰ UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, [Letter on plan to cut an uplift to Universal Credit](#) (13 September 2021)

2.6. THE TREASURY SIDE OF THE STORY: As this Module will come after Modules 3, 6 and 8, thought should be given to the major economic issues that will arise in those Modules and then be considered in Module 9, in effect the HMT side of the story: i.e. what is the account of HMT witnesses, both Ministers and senior civil servants, as to how, and whether, they registered certain exceptional areas of economic need? Examples of significant interest to DPO include funding for the voluntary sector, digital access, SEND (both in school and online), and all forms of paid and unpaid care (including the issue of care home worker infection prevention, as per paragraph 2.4 above). As foreshadowed in Provisional Issue (7), regional and devolved disparities are of particular interest, including disparities in Carer Supplement payments, with Wales and Scotland making them, but England and Northern Ireland not.⁴¹

2.7. BUILDING BACK 'BETTER'?: Finally Provisional Issue 5 asks "*How were decisions taken to end the support provided and what criteria determined the timing of the cessation of support?*" That is obviously a valid question, but it carries with it a troubling, related question that DPO are particularly anxious for the Inquiry to consider: *What happened to funding for support services that were stopped during the pandemic; and to what extent has the crisis resulted in services not being resumed?* For all its professed "*transformational approach*",⁴² '*Build Back Better*' continued pre-pandemic economic priorities, and their resultant inequalities, which even a global disaster could not dislodge. There was continued reliance on unpaid and low paid labour to provide care and other essential services through a largely commercial public service industry, combined with retrenchment of benefits and economic support for vulnerable people, including Disabled people across the UK. For DPO, this was *building back worse*.

[III] HUMAN RIGHTS

3.1. HUMAN RIGHTS: In previous submissions the DPO have sought to encourage the Inquiry to utilise the tools of Human Rights analysis as a means of understanding what action the state should take to plan for, respond to, and recover from emergency. That commended approach will continue in Module 9, by reference to the UK's obligations under the UNCRPD.⁴³ Although evidence to date across Module 2 showed that awareness and application of a human rights approach to pandemic management was not as it should have been, it is helpful to bear in mind the relevant questions that it was incumbent on State Parties to the UNCRPD to consider:

⁴¹ [DPO M2 Written Closing](#) 15.01.24 §45

⁴² [Build Back Better: our plan for growth at a glance](#) (March 2021)

⁴³ [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol](#) (2007) (UK ratified 2009)

- 3.1.1. PLANNING: Whether “*all necessary measures*” were taken to ensure the protection and safety of Disabled people during the pandemic pursuant to Art. 11 UNCRPD, bearing mind that this is an enhanced treatment obligation and not just an obligation of formal equal treatment;⁴⁴
- 3.1.2. CONSULTATION: Whether there was “*close consultation and active involvement*” with Disabled people and their representative organisations in decisions around these matters pursuant to Art. 4(3) UNCRPD including (as recognised by General Comments of the CRPD Committee);⁴⁵
- 3.1.3. INDEPENDENT LIVING: Whether there was “*full inclusion and participation [of Disabled people] in the community*” pursuant to Art. 19 UNCRPD;⁴⁶
- 3.1.4. WORK AND EMPLOYMENT: Whether with a view to realising the right of Disabled people to work on an equal basis with others, there was sufficient “*assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment*” and sufficient promotion of “*job retention and return-to-work programmes for persons with disabilities*” pursuant to Art. 27(1) UNCRPD;
- 3.1.5. STANDARD OF LIVING: Whether economic interventions respected the right of Disabled people to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing and housing and access by Disabled people and their families living in situations of poverty to assistance with disability-related expenses, pursuant to Art. 28 UNCRPD;
- 3.1.6. DATA USE AND COLLECTION: Whether economic interventions were sufficiently informed by information, including statistical research data, on Disabled people, that was sufficiently disaggregated in relation to specific impairment, and also intersectional in its focus across race, ethnicity, sex, gender, income and geography, pursuant to Article 31 UNCRPD.⁴⁷

[IV] EXPERTISE & WITNESSES

- 4.1. LABOUR MARKET AND INEQUALITY: The DPO welcome the CTI proposal for expert evidence on the labour market and inequality (CTI Note §54(d)). Given the extensive literature and analysis available of the unequal impact on Disabled people, DPO suggest it will indeed be “*possible*” for expert/s to consider this; and for Disabled people the core matters related

⁴⁴ UNCRPD [General Comment No. 7 on Participation](#) (2018) §78

⁴⁵ See above §2.1.3

⁴⁶ UNCRPD [General Comment No. 6 on Equality and Non-Discrimination](#) (2018) §58

⁴⁷ [Concluding observations on the initial report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: CPRPD/C/GBR/CO/1 \(03.10.17\) §§64-65](#)

to structural discrimination against Disabled people in employment and pay were already introduced by the report of Professors Watson and Shakespeare in Module 2.⁴⁸ These existing inequalities were exacerbated during the pandemic with the disability pay gap increasing from £1.65 per hour in 2019 to £2.10 per hour in 2020.⁴⁹ The DPO would be happy to assist further in identifying relevant issues and material for consideration in formulating the instructions to the expert in order to deal with labour market inequality as it affects Disabled people.

4.2. BENEFITS: Expert evidence on benefits (CTI Note §54(e)) should reflect the context of social security cuts since 2010.⁵⁰ It should also consider the (in)flexibility of benefits and funding models. During the pandemic Disabled people faced obstacles in using direct payment funds to pay for pandemic-associated costs (for example, transport costs to access community and day centres in other towns if their own local centre had closed), despite it being clear in their care plan that accessing community services was an eligible care and support need. Disabled people were also charged by local authorities for services they were no longer receiving due to the pandemic and have struggled to recover this over-charging. The unequal support provided across the UK must also be considered. For example, Carers UK described themselves as “*deeply concerned about the inequity across the different nations for unpaid carers.*”⁵¹ Also, Scotland provided a Carer Supplement payment worth £500 per year made in two six monthly instalments and Wales provided a £500 payment for carers in receipt of Carer’s Allowance but Northern Ireland announced that a similar payment could not be made due to outdated administrative systems and England made no such promise to specifically recognise the increased costs of carers.⁵²

4.2. RULE 9 REQUESTS: Aside from wishing to provide statements themselves detailing their discrete knowledge, the DPO suggest that a Rule 9 request is issued to:

4.2.1. DISABILITY BENEFITS CONSORTIUM (‘DBC’): DBC is a national coalition of over 100 charities and other organisations that represent Disabled people and their families. Disability Rights UK is a member. Using their combined knowledge, experience and direct contact with millions of Disabled people, people with long-term health conditions and carers, DBC seeks to ensure that Government policy reflects and meets the needs of all Disabled people. Of relevance to Module 9, during the

⁴⁸ Watson & Shakespeare [M2/INQ000280067/8 §§17-19]

⁴⁹ TUC, [Disability Pay and employment gaps 2020](#) (12 November 2020)

⁵⁰ Women’s Budget Group (‘WBG’), [Who bears the brunt? Intersectional analysis of social security cuts since 2010](#) (June 2024)

⁵¹ Carers UK [M2/INQ000099707/9-10]

⁵² Ibid. p 10

pandemic DBC wrote to the DWP on 27 March 2020 addressing proposals for additional short-term measures to protect Disabled people's incomes,⁵³ responded to the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee on DWP's response to Covid-19,⁵⁴ conducted surveys on the impact of economic interventions on benefit recipients⁵⁵ and reported on pandemic poverty and issues faced by Disabled people on legacy benefits,⁵⁶

4.2.2. WOMEN'S BUDGET GROUP ('WBG'): WBG is a UK-wide think tank focused on exploring the economy through a gendered lens. While WBG's primary focus is on gender equality, WBG reflects the intersectional nature of inequality in their work, including the position of Disabled women. WBG published reports on the Covid-19 economic response, including drawing on surveys of women across the UK, and has worked extensively on assessing the equality impact of economic measures.⁵⁷ Assistance from WBG in this module would have an added bonus given the absence of women's focused representation amongst the core participants.

4.2.3. RESOLUTION FOUNDATION ('RF'): RF is an independent think-tank focused on improving the living standards of those on low-to-middle incomes. RF conducted research and surveys and published reports on the labour market and the impact of Covid-19 economic interventions such as Test and Trace Support Payments, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and changes to Universal Credit and Employment and Support Allowance.⁵⁸

4.3. More generally DPO note that the 56 recipients of questionnaires (which CTI says will inform issues to be raised in subsequent Rule 9 requests)⁵⁹ are, generally speaking, organisations with an industry and/or business focus. The DPO is pleased to see Transport for All included within this list and express the hope that the Inquiry will expand the pool of recipients to include others with a focus on public services (including at local

⁵³ Disability Benefits Consortium ('DBC') [Letter to Secretary of State on emergency covid-19 measures](#) (27 March 2020)

⁵⁴ DBC [Written evidence](#) [SWP0043] (April 2020)

⁵⁵ DBC ["It would mean not having to skip meals" – the emergency need to #IncreaseDisabilityBenefits](#) (27 April 2020); DBC [How the Government have continued to prop up a two-tier welfare state by ignoring 2 million people during this pandemic](#) (2 December 2020)

⁵⁶ DBC [Pandemic Poverty](#) (February 2021)

⁵⁷ For M2 impact statements, see WBG [M2/INQ000099712] and NI Women's Budget Group [M2/INQ000099693]

⁵⁸ Resolution Foundation's reports and briefings relating to Covid-19 are available on its website [here](#).

⁵⁹ CTI Note 2.10.24 §§37-38

government level and in the DAs), the voluntary and community sector, benefits and sick pay and support for vulnerable people.

[V] LISTENING

EVERY STORY MATTERS

- 5.1. PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY: As to the target groups for Every Story Matters, the list of target groups in CTI Note §57 includes people who were unemployed and people who were economically vulnerable. It is essential that the Inquiry also hear from people living in poverty and below the poverty line, who may, inadvertently, not be caught by the current description of target groups. Economic interventions have a heightened impact on people living in poverty and below the poverty line and this group is disproportionately made up of Disabled people: in February 2020, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published that nearly half of all individuals living in poverty in the UK were either Disabled or lived with a Disabled person.⁶⁰ The Inquiry is invited to add this target group to ensure their voices are heard.
- 5.2. EACH TARGET GROUP: The DPO stress that Disabled people are part of each of the groups listed in CTI Note §57(a)-(f), as a reflection of Disabled people within society as a whole. As with other Modules,⁶¹ DPO urge the Inquiry to hear from Disabled people across *all* of these groups, in order to gain an understanding of the diverse realities and experiences of Disabled people during the pandemic. The DPO also reiterate the need for reasonable adjustments to be made so that all Disabled people can access and participate in the Inquiry's work, including Every Story Matters for Module 9.

DANNY FRIEDMAN KC

MATRIX CHAMBERS

KATE BEATTIE

DOUGHTY STREET CHAMBERS

SHAMIK DUTTA

CALEB SIMPSON

BHATT MURPHY

14 OCTOBER 2024

⁶⁰ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, [UK Poverty 2019/20: Social security](#) (February 2020), DR UK [Nearly half of everyone in poverty is either a disabled person or lives with a disabled person](#) (6 February 2020)

⁶¹ [DPO M8 PH Submission](#) 27.08.24 pp 12-13 §5.3, §6.1