

29th March 2021

Dear North East MPs,

We are Difference North East – a disability rights charity giving a voice to disabled people from across our region. We are run by disabled people for disabled people, and our aim is to change perceptions of disability, eliminate discrimination and build a fairer, more equal north east in which to live, work and study.

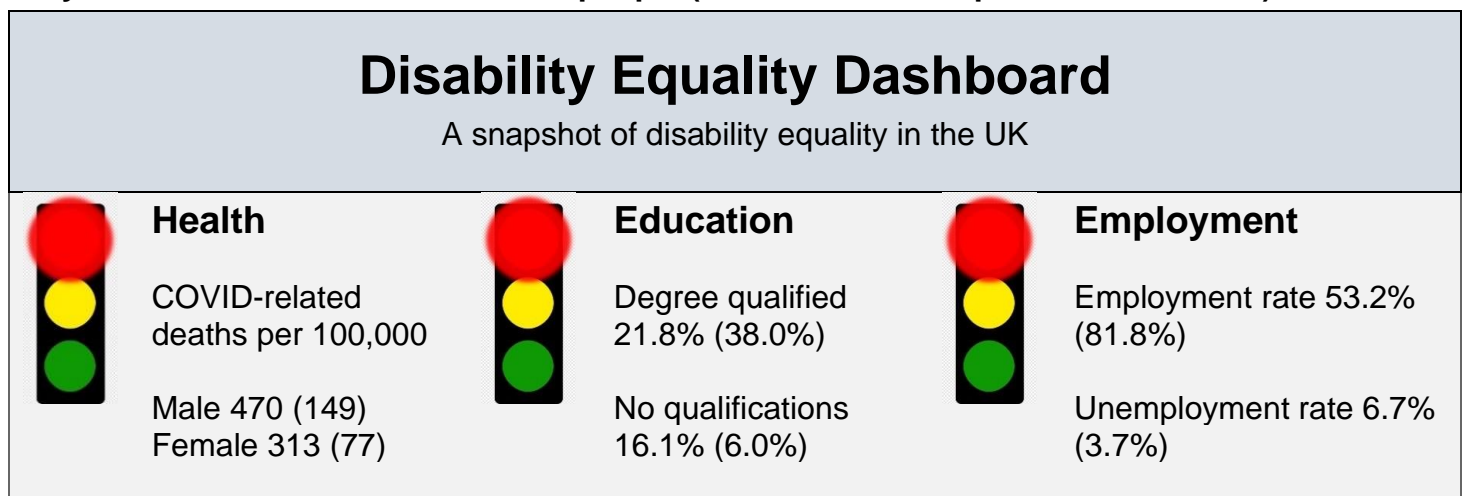
To be effective, we need your support. Unfortunately, UK Parliament is sadly reflective of the lack of participation of disabled people in public life. We believe less than 1% of our MPs are disabled. So, we need your help as allies and our democratic representatives, to help effect change.




### What are the key issues?

There are so many. And given that the north east has the highest proportion of disabled residents in the UK (around 1 in 4, compared to 1 in 5 for the UK) it is even more important for your constituents that disabled voices are heard.

As the below 'dashboard' aims to convey, inequality linked to disability is experienced on a wide range of issues.

**\*Key: Data shown relates to disabled people (non-disabled comparator in brackets)**



 <b>Incomes</b>	 <b>Housing</b>	 <b>Justice</b>
Median Pay £10.63 (£12.11)	Rent social housing 24.7% (8.2%)	Adults experiencing crime 23.1% (20.7%)
Proportion living in poverty (after housing costs) 26% (20%)	Homeowners 42.4% (53.2%)	Victims of Domestic Violence 14.1% (5.4%)
		Female victims of Sexual Violence 5.7% (3.0%)

Data Sources:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability>

<https://www.scope.org.uk/media/disability-facts-figures/>

Disability discrimination is complex. Often, as disabled people, we experience multiple layers of discrimination, at an individual and institutional level.

Campaigning often focuses on one issue at a time, which is understandable – it helps to focus on the detail of people’s real-life experiences and what needs to change.

However, we also need to see the bigger picture, the combined effects of all these interacting forces.

It is these multiple disadvantages which can result in devastating outcomes, the likes of which we have seen in terms of the disproportionate death toll as a result of COVID. In its latest analysis<sup>1</sup>, the ONS concludes that,

“This means that no single factor explains the considerably raised risk of death involving COVID-19 among disabled people, and place of residence, socio-economic and geographical circumstances, and pre-existing health conditions all play a part; an important part of the raised risk is because disabled people are disproportionately exposed to a range of generally disadvantageous circumstances compared with non-disabled people.”

So, we need you to consider these inequalities in all aspects of your work, and ensure that when, as a region and a country, we ‘build back better’, and ‘level-up’ we do this in a way which is more inclusive, fairer and more equitable.

Given the appalling data showing the impact of the COVID pandemic on disabled people, we feel that this is the area of most concern to our members and where we currently most need your support. It is vital that any enquiry into the pandemic and the Government’s response, looks in detail at aspects of policy and practice which have contributed to the disproportionate impact on disabled people and their families.

1

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/coronaviruscovid19relateddeathsbydisabilitystatusenglandandwales/24januaryto20november2020>

We would urge you to read our '[Manifesto for a Better Normal](#)' which captures learning from experiences of disabled people impacted by the pandemic in our region.

We will seek your support for specific campaigns, but in the meantime you can support our work in these ways:

- ✚ [Join us](#) – we need disabled and non-disabled allies alike
- ✚ Like and share our [Facebook page](#)
- ✚ Follow us on [Twitter](#)

Thank you in advance.

**Richard Boggie**

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Difference North East