**Prime minister refuses to criticise Tory peers who made disablist comments**

The prime minister has refused to criticise four Conservative peers who made discriminatory and disablist remarks about disabled peers working in the House of Lords.

Boris Johnson’s refusal to speak out came in response to a disabled constituent who wrote to him after reading [last month’s Disability News Service (DNS) story](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/tory-silence-after-four-peers-aim-disablist-barrage-of-attack-on-disabled-colleagues/) about the comments made by Lord Farmer, Lord Howard of Rising, Baroness Noakes, and Viscount Trenchard.

They had been speaking [during a debate](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-05-20/debates/1A303224-207C-4131-96B2-4A07DE9CF3D8/HouseOfLordsRemoteParticipationAndHybridSittings) on the continuing use of remote participation and “hybrid” sittings, which have been introduced in the Lords during the pandemic.

All four argued that the Lords should quickly return to “normal” and end the adjustments that have allowed disabled members and those shielding from coronavirus to vote and contribute to debates from their homes\*.

One of the Tory peers argued that “personal infirmity should not provide grounds for exemption from normality”, while continuing the adjustments post-pandemic would be “extending the logic of equality beyond reason”.

Another suggested that those members who “cannot or will not” attend the Lords should retire as peers, while a third said it was “inconceivable that those who aspire to take part in the governing of this nation should not make the effort to attend parliament, whatever the difficulties”.

Deborah King, co-founder of [Disability Politics UK](https://www.disabilitypolitics.org.uk/), who lives in the prime minister’s Uxbridge and South Ruislip constituency, told the prime minister in an email that she was “very concerned” about the attitudes of the four peers and was sure he would want to act on them.

She asked Johnson to contact the government’s chief whip in the Lords to “let him know that one of your constituents does not have the same views of disabled people as they do” and that she values the contribution made by disabled peers.

She added in her email: “This is particularly so when the perceived stigma of disability means that some [prospective parliamentary candidates] do not even mention their disability during election campaigns for fear of prejudice affecting the result.”

King told the prime minister that hybrid proceedings were “important in ensuring proper access to the proceedings of Parliament and help to ensure proper representation of disabled people”.

But when Johnson replied, he ignored the concerns she had raised about the four Tory peers.

Instead, he said only that the government “values the vital contribution all members of the House make to legislative scrutiny”, and then wrote at length about hybrid proceedings and remote participation.

Johnson’s decision to condone the comments made by the four Tory peers comes in the same week [that he failed to criticise](https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/jun/07/boris-johnson-refuses-to-condemn-fans-booing-england-taking-the-knee) England football fans who booed players taking a knee as an anti-racism gesture before two recent friendly internationals.

The Conservative party has refused to answer questions about the comments made by the four peers, or to say if it believes they were disablist and discriminatory, or if it would take any action against them.

Justin Tomlinson, the minister for disabled people, [issued a statement](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/minister-for-disabled-people-refuses-to-criticise-disablist-comments-of-tory-peers/) that also appeared to condone their comments.

The disabled Liberal Democrat peer Baroness [Sal] Brinton, who took part in the Lords debate virtually, as she has had to shield from the virus during the pandemic, told DNS this week that the silence from the prime minister, from Tomlinson and the Conservative party “speaks volumes” at a time when there are “substantial barriers for disabled people in politics”.

She said: “Does this mean that the prime minister is condoning the discriminatory and disablist comments by members of his own party?

“I had hoped that he would lead by example in light of his government’s intentions to finally publish their disability strategy.”

Baroness [Jane] Campbell, a disabled crossbench peer, who also took part in the debate virtually as she has been shielding, said she was “disappointed that party leaders have not yet openly demonstrated some acknowledgement” of the discrimination faced by disabled peers, or proposed any ideas on how to tackle it, but she said there was “still time”.

She said she had found the Tory peers’ comments “unpleasant to hear and wished all peers were more aware of the consequences of such discriminatory remarks”.

She said: “The majority of my fellow peers work in a mutually supportive way with one another, but we know that there are some who hold the same out-dated attitudes as many people outside the Westminster bubble.

“The debate on remote participation has offered a timely opportunity to tackle disability discrimination head-on and change it.”

She called on all peers to “come together to create an environment where everybody no matter what their disability, can contribute equally.

“The responsibility to take this forward must not be simply left to disabled members to raise, it is not our problem alone.

“We are a self-regulating House and therefore it is everybody’s duty to tackle discrimination on every level.”

Baroness Campbell said she now wanted to work with the authorities in the Lords to ensure there was “meaningful consideration and action, especially regarding reasonable adjustments”, so that “equal participation” and the Equality Act “become a reality across the parliamentary estate”.

Vicky Foxcroft, Labour’s shadow minister for disabled people, said: “It is alarming that both the prime minister and his minister for disabled people appear to condone the comments made by these peers.

“This only serves to reinforce the message that the government does not take disabled people’s rights seriously.

“With so few disabled politicians in parliament, it is obvious that the way we do business needs to change, reform and become more inclusive.

“Disabled people must be at the very heart of our decision-making.”

A spokesperson for Number 10 had refused by noon today (Thursday) to say why the prime minister had failed to criticise the comments of the four Tory peers; why he was apparently condoning their disablist, discriminatory comments about disabled people; and why he had refused to take any action.

But she said in a statement: “The government is committed to supporting disabled people play an active role in all aspects of life, and will deliver a National Disability Strategy which will be underpinned by their direct insight and lived experience, as well as guidance from charities, stakeholders and disabled people’s organisations.

“We value the contribution of all members of the House of Lords make to legislative scrutiny, and want to ensure all members can continue to participate.

“It is for the House of Lords to make a final decision about the form proceedings should take after the COVID-19 pandemic has ended.”

*\*Lord Farmer, a former treasurer of the Conservative party, said that extending hybrid arrangements post-pandemic would be “another example of extending the logic of equality beyond reason”.*

*He said that “for the sake of the public who are paying our way, personal infirmity should not provide grounds for exemption from normality” and that “parliamentary participation is for those able to bring vitality to proceedings”.*

*He said that “if infirmities of mind or body make that vital contribution impossible, any permanently lowered bar to participation serves peers’ interests, not those of the public.*

*“The previous norm should be reinstated: those of us who cannot come to the House cannot contribute.”*

*His colleague, Lord Howard of Rising, called for the Lords to “resume our usual proceedings at the earliest possible opportunity” and said it was “inconceivable that those who aspire to take part in the governing of this nation should not make the effort to attend parliament, whatever the difficulties”.*

*Baroness Noakes called for the Lords to “get back to normal as soon as possible”.*

*She told fellow peers that there were “no good reasons for hybridity in future” and that “those who are ill or otherwise unable to attend for periods of time can take leave of absence”, while those who “cannot or will not, for whatever reason” attend in person can retire instead.*

*A fourth Tory peer, Viscount Trenchard, made it clear that he did not believe that “those with disabilities, in poor health or pregnant should be allowed to continue to participate remotely”.*

*He said it was “an unfortunate fact that if a noble Lord’s condition or circumstances prevent his or her attendance and ability to participate fully, it is hard to argue that that member is fully capable of exercising his or her functions as a legislator”.*

*He added: “I welcome the fact that it has become easier for those with disabilities to participate fully, but exceptions to physical attendance requirements should be minimised.”*

**10 June 2021**

**Ministers ignore accessible housing while spending millions on thousands of new homes**

Ministers are to spend £30 million on projects across England that could lead to more than 17,000 new homes, but they are refusing to insist that a single one of them is built to strict accessibility standards.

Despite announcing [funding for more than 160 projects](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/public-estate-funding-aims-to-create-19000-jobs-and-17000-homes), ministers have imposed no requirement for any of the housing schemes to include any accessible homes.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) says the plans for better use of public land could see more than 17,000 new homes being built, with funding awarded through the Land Release Fund (LRF) and the One Public Estate programme.

But MHCLG confirmed this week to Disability News Service (DNS) that there would be no obligation for any of the projects to include a certain proportion of homes built to the M4(2) standard, which includes 16 accessible or adaptable features, or to the M4(3) standard, for homes that are fully wheelchair-accessible, or can easily be adapted to be so.

Instead, it will be left to local authorities – which set their own policies on how much new housing should be built to M4(2) and M4(3) standards in their own areas – to decide how many of the homes should be built to higher access specifications.

Cllr Pam Thomas, a disabled city councillor in Liverpool and chair of the city council’s corporate access forum, said the government’s failure showed “that the voice of developers is allowed to take precedence over the voice of disabled people”.

Disabled campaigner Fleur Perry, [who has previously written to housing secretary Robert Jenrick](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/government-faces-legal-action-threat-over-accessible-housing-failure/) to warn him that his failure to act on accessible housing could be unlawful, said the government’s refusal to set minimum numbers of accessible homes with the new funding was “a missed opportunity to build accessible housing”.

An MHCLG spokesperson said: “The number of accessible homes has nearly doubled in a decade and we have recently consulted on ways of improving the accessibility of new homes.

“Councils are best placed to decide how much accessible housing is needed in their area, and set these requirements in their Local Plans.”

But Perry said: “We know that 1.8 million people [live in houses that do not meet their needs](https://www.habinteg.org.uk/hidden-housing-market), and we know (from personal experience, anecdotes, and research) that this has a huge impact on the day-to-day lives of disabled people.

“We also know that some local authorities aren’t doing anything.”

She said that more than half (52 per cent) of local authorities [have failed to include any accessible housing requirements in their Local Plan](https://www.habinteg.org.uk/localplans), which may be a breach of the Equality Act’s public sector equality duty.

And she pointed out that the Equality and Human Rights Commission [found in 2018](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/housing-and-disabled-people-role-local-authorities) that 84 per cent of local authorities surveyed did not feel that they had good data on the number of disabled people currently inappropriately housed.

She said this cast doubt on whether local authorities really were “best placed” to choose how much of the £30 million should be used to build accessible housing.

She said: “This is an assumption, not reality, and I will be writing to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to ask them to reconsider.”

A consultation on whether the government should introduce higher accessibility standards for new housing in England ended last December, with ministers yet to announce their next steps.

Perry said: “We need more accessible housing.

“It’s a key component of independent living and the lack of accessible housing is a solvable problem.

“We know that this a national issue and I think that central government need to be acting. I look forward to reading the results of last year’s consultation.”

Thomas, who has a PhD on the physical inaccessibility of homes for owner occupation, said MHCLG’s response suggested that it was “out of touch with, or doesn’t care about, the research and reality of the dire shortage of accessible and adaptable housing”.

She said that the “doubling of a totally inadequate number of accessible homes in a decade means very little”, particularly as most of them appear to be in London, [which introduced stricter standards](https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2017/1915) for new homes in 2004.

Ministers have been repeatedly warned about the chronic shortage of accessible housing, with the equality and human rights watchdog [warning three years ago](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/disabled-people-face-hidden-crisis-in-accessible-housing/) that more than 350,000 disabled people in England had unmet housing needs, with one-third of those in rented accommodation living in unsuitable properties.

That same year, [research by Disability News Service](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/concerns-over-industrys-repeated-objections-to-councils-accessible-homes-plans/) showed how representatives of the home-building industry were engaged in a countrywide campaign to defeat attempts by councils to ensure more accessible homes were built in their areas.

Thomas said Liverpool City Council had included a requirement in its draft Local Plan several years ago that 90 per cent of all new homes should be more accessible and adaptable for people with mobility limitations and 10 per cent should be easily adaptable for wheelchair access.

The local plan “is still going through the very long statutory process to gain the approval of the government’s planning inspector”, with developers objecting to the accessible housing requirement and insisting, she said, that “the case has not been made that accessible and adaptable housing is wanted or needed”.

She said: “We have been able to get the agreement of some developers through persuasion that it need not cost them any more to use inclusive design from the design stage, but because the law does not give us the power unless the Local Plan is approved, we cannot insist if the developers refuse.”

[Only last August](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/governments-contempt-for-disabled-people-as-planning-white-paper-ignores-accessible-housing/), the government was accused of “showing contempt” for disabled people after publishing an “utterly shameful” 84-page white paper on the future of the planning system without including a single mention of disabled people, disability or accessible housing.

And [in January this year](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/ministers-sat-on-accessible-housing-research-for-up-to-four-years/), DNS revealed how ministers had delayed publishing a report that called for more research into the benefits of accessible housing for up to four years.

Despite its latest failure to address the accessible housing crisis, the government announced that the new funding was part of its so-called “levelling up agenda”.

Some of the funding will help to create feasibility studies and design work for potential development sites, while the LRF funding will support councils to regenerate mainly brownfield sites for housing by providing capital funding for infrastructure work.

**10 June 2021**

**DWP admits carrying out more than 175 secret reviews into benefit deaths in nine years**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has carried out secret reviews into more than 175 deaths of benefit claimants since February 2012, including 80 in the last three full calendar years, new figures have revealed.

The figures also suggest that DWP has now carried out more than 200 secret reviews into the deaths of claimants over the last decade.

Information released to Disability News Service (DNS) through a freedom of information request shows that DWP carried out 40 internal process reviews into deaths in 2019, the last full year before the pandemic.

There were another 22 reviews into deaths last year, and in total there were 126 reviews in the five years between January 2016 and the end of December 2020.

Figures previously released to DNS showed there were 49 secret reviews into deaths between February 2012 and the autumn of 2014.

But because DWP has now destroyed records of reviews carried out before 2016, it claims it is not able to say how many were carried out in the 2014 or 2015 calendar years, although previous freedom of information responses show there were nine reviews between August 2014 and April 2016.

DWP did not keep a central record of reviews carried out following the deaths of claimants before February 2012.

It is the first time that accurate numbers have been secured to show how many reviews DWP has carried out each year since 2015, and the freedom of information response shows there were 17 in 2016, 29 in 2017, 18 in 2018, 40 in 2019 and 22 last year.

The figures should add weight to calls for an independent inquiry into DWP failings that have led to the deaths of claimants, and whether there has been misconduct by senior civil servants and ministers.

There is added urgency to those calls as DWP says it has already destroyed its own reports into deaths that took place pre-2016.

[Only last month](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/dwp-lied-about-duty-to-keep-benefit-claimants-safe-document-suggests/), DNS revealed that new evidence suggested that DWP had lied when it claimed that it had no “duty of care” to protect disabled benefit claimants.

This follows a decade of cases linking DWP’s policies and practices to the deaths of disabled people, particularly those who were being assessed for [employment and support allowance](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/dwp-the-case-for-the-prosecution/) and [personal independence payment](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/philippa-day-flawed-pip-system-led-to-young-mums-death-says-coroner/) and had experience of mental distress.

**10 June 2021**

**Government Grenfell proposals suggest disabled residents might need to pay to keep safe**

New government plans that would protect some disabled people from the risk of fire in residential buildings do not go far enough, and even suggest that disabled residents might have to pay for measures to keep them safe, say campaigners.

The Home Office this week launched a consultation on how to implement recommendations made at the end of the first phase of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry in October 2019.

The inquiry concluded that there were no plans in place for evacuating Grenfell Tower, which contributed to the loss of 72 lives in the fire, on 14 June 2017, [including many disabled residents](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/disabled-grenfell-residents-were-repeatedly-failed-in-years-before-fire-inquiry-finds/).

Among its recommendations, the [inquiry said](https://www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk/phase-1-report) that owners and managers of high-rise residential buildings should be legally required to prepare personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) for all residents who may find it difficult to “self-evacuate”, and to keep up-to-date information about these residents and their PEEPs in an on-site information box.

[The new consultation](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/personal-emergency-evacuation-plans), which closes on 19 July, asks for views on the government’s draft proposals to implement these two recommendations.

It comes only days after disabled campaigners and allies [shared an open statement](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/anger-over-horrifying-slow-pace-of-governments-post-grenfell-action/) with the home secretary, Priti Patel, and the housing, communities and local government secretary, Robert Jenrick, calling for long-overdue action on the recommendations.

The Grenfell inquiry did not define a high-rise residential building, but the government has said that its proposed new safety rules should apply only to those buildings at least 18 metres in height or having at least seven storeys.

Disabled campaigners and their allies say this will leave many disabled people living in multi-storey residential buildings below this height unable to benefit from the PEEPs proposals and therefore left at risk.

Sarah Rennie, co-founder of [Claddag](https://twitter.com/claddag), a leaseholder disability action group, said: “Everyone should be able to evacuate a building in an emergency.

“We do not accept the proposal that only disabled people in buildings above 18 metres should be allowed a plan.

“No disability-specific research is offered to support the distinction.”

Rennie said the government’s consultation document also holds open the possibility that disabled residents will be charged for any measures that need to be introduced to allow them to evacuate in an emergency, according to their PEEP.

She points to a section in the document which states: “Putting a PEEP in place for an individual should not of itself give rise to a requirement that any person has to incur a cost or bill (but it cannot be excluded that this is a possibility).”

Rennie also warns that the government does not explicitly state that disabled residents cannot be charged to have a PEEP drawn up.

She said: “This wholly contradicts the principle that disabled people must not be charged for reasonable adjustments.

“What’s more, the consultation does not propose a central fund for the costs of evacuation aids, either.

“Many of us opted to live in buildings we were told were safe, but the building safety crisis is revealing that we are living in very dangerous buildings.

“It should not fall on us or our neighbours via a service charge to foot the bill for our evacuation costs and that must be made clear. It’s a recipe for disability hate crime.”

There are also concerns over the government’s proposals to require disabled residents to “self-identify” as unable to self-evacuate, with the fear that some landlords might not do anything to encourage residents to apply for a PEEP.

The government document says there will have to be “meaningful and sustained engagement with all residents whereby the [owner or manager] proactively encourages residents to come forward if they consider they may need a PEEP”.

But Rennie said: “How are these processes going to be transparent and accessible?

“Without a clear duty to reach out to residents, this encourages landlords to stay quiet so as not to invite requests for evacuation plans.”

A spokesperson for the [Grenfell Next of Kin support group](https://twitter.com/GRENFELLNEXTOF1), which represents the next of kin of 31 of the 72 people who died, said in a statement: “Nearly half the disabled residents in the Tower were killed. Some of them our mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters and children.

“Alongside them other members of the family also perished as they stayed together in those horrific terrifying conditions.

“This is the reality of not having PEEPs or any attention paid to disabled residents and in high-rise buildings and especially so with social housing tenants who are often the most marginalised.

“We are determined this does not happen again and necessary changes are made to avoid the consequences of such discrimination.”

**10 June 2021**

**DRILL’s five years ‘leave independent living legacy that can be used to push for change’**

A pioneering five-year programme, led and controlled by disabled people, has left a legacy of independent living research that can now be used to lobby for change in policies and services across the UK, according to a new report.

But it has also shown that research can be done in a “truly co-produced way” and has increased the ability of disabled people’s organisations (DPOs) to influence change.

The independent report, which analyses the impact of the [Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning (DRILL)](http://www.drilluk.org.uk/) programme and is published today (Thursday), says it has “demonstrated that co-production works and that disabled people are the experts on their own impairments”.

The five-year, £5 million programme has researched subjects such as the barriers disabled people face in renting accommodation; violence and abuse against disabled women and girls; participation in civic and public life; and barriers to employment in the legal profession.

The programme was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, and has been managed by the national disabled people’s organisations (DPOs) [Disability Rights UK](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/), [Disability Action](http://www.disabilityaction.org/) (in Northern Ireland), [Inclusion Scotland](http://inclusionscotland.org/) and [Disability Wales](http://www.disabilitywales.org/).

The aim was to “build better evidence” on different approaches to enabling disabled people to live independently”, to use that evidence to influence changes in policy and service provision, and to “give a greater voice to disabled people in decisions which affect them”.

When the funding [was first announced nearly six years ago](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/drill-could-help-fight-back-against-impact-of-austerity-on-independent-living/), DRILL was described as the world’s first major research programme led by disabled people, with disabled people involved in the design, management and delivery of research projects.

In all, the programme handed out funding to 36 projects, with 85 organisations involved as partners.

Nearly 5,000 (4,856) disabled people took part, and 313 of them fulfilled leadership roles.

The report found that three-quarters (76 per cent) of project representatives said DRILL had increased their organisation’s ability to influence change, and nearly two-fifths (38 per cent) said it had helped them secure new funding.

One of the members of the steering group from [People First Scotland’s](https://peoplefirstscotland.org/) project on decision-making by people with learning difficulties said: “This kind of research makes people think differently about us.

“People can see that we have a voice.”

Another project representative described how, of 15 peer researchers who took part, five of them found jobs as a direct result of their work.

The representative of another project said their work had demonstrated that research can be done “in a truly co-produced way” and had “demonstrated the value of working together from the very start”.

But the evaluation report also says there is still “a lot more work to do to realise the impact of DRILL, to change attitudes, influence policy and change practice”.

And it says that the extent of its success in delivering change to services, policy and practice will probably only become clear over the next two to three years.

DRILL’s major success, the report concludes, has been in “achieving the participation levels it did, in securing leadership roles for disabled people and involving disabled people in co-producing projects and research”, which has “created the conditions and the impetus for significant policy change”.

It is now hoped that the findings from the 36 projects will provide a platform for “a period of extensive lobbying and engagement”.

Andrea Brown, from Disability Action, which managed DRILL on behalf of the four national DPOs, said: “It’s hard to understate how important DRILL has been.

“The positive effects on our organisations, partners and disabled people as a whole over the last five years has been huge.

“It’s shown how and why disabled people can and should be at the centre of projects affecting them.”

**10 June 2021**

**Campaigners prepare for last-ditch rally to prevent Osime Brown deportation**

**By Chloe Johnson**

Campaigners are set to protest outside the Home Office this weekend to call on the government to abandon plans to deport a young, black autistic man to Jamaica, a country he has not visited since he was four.

They say the way Osime Brown has been treated is a “miscarriage of justice” and that his life will be at risk if he is deported to a country where he has no family or friends to support him.

The Home Office is set to review his case on Tuesday (15 June).

Brown – who also has PTSD and a heart condition – faces deportation after serving half of a five-year prison sentence following a conviction for robbery, attempted robbery and perverting the course of justice, in connection with the robbery of a mobile phone.

He has always insisted he is innocent of the charges and one witness said he attempted to stop the crime.

His two co-defendants pleaded guilty and did not receive custodial sentences, [and his lawyers](https://dpglaw.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2966133-OB-press-release-06-10-20.pdf) (PDF) have said that grounds for concern about the safety of his convictions “include the role played by the discredited and discriminatory legal principle of joint enterprise”.

His mother, Joan Martin, says that her 22-year-old son – who spent time in care as a teenager – is a victim of institutional discrimination.

She says he is traumatised from his time in prison, where he frequently self-harmed, and believes he will die if deported to Jamaica.

She told Disability News Service: “We live in perpetual grief.”

She and fellow campaigners believe the deportation is the culmination of a series of institutional failings across the care, education and justice systems as a result of the failure to provide adequate support for him as a disabled person, intersecting heavily with racial discrimination.

She said: “I am saddened, as I have come to realise that what happened to Osime happens to so many children who are autistic and have other learning disabilities – and to black children, boys in particular.”

She said her son now lives in fear of being separated from his mother.

She said: “When he hears the doorbell ring, he asks: ‘Are they coming for me?’”

Emma Dalmayne, chief executive of [Autistic Inclusive Meets](https://autisticinclusivemeets.org/), who has worked closely with Martin and her son, and is herself autistic with autistic children, began [a petition against the deportation](https://www.change.org/p/home-office-stop-the-deportation-of-vulnerable-autistic-man-osime-brown-2f671100-bd95-423c-a547-c8b04da2a75a), which has reached more than 400,000 signatures.

Dalmayne is appalled at how Brown has been treated.

She said: “It’s a miscarriage of justice, it shouldn’t be happening.

“It is a common misconception with deportation that there will be somebody waiting for you at the airport.

“He would arrive with a suitcase and have no one. He will step out to no-one, and he is vulnerable.”

[More than 75 MPs have voiced concerns](https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/57531/justice-for-osime-brown) about the deportation in an early day motion, which calls on the Home Office to “remove the call for Osime’s deportation, and see that Osime finally receives the support he needs”.

[On Saturday (12 June)](https://www.facebook.com/events/770881843625736/?ref=newsfeed), campaigners will be outside the Home Office in Westminster, before moving to Parliament Square, for a rally to protest at his treatment and call on the government to cancel his deportation.

Martin plans to attend the rally, and speakers will include Labour’s former shadow chancellor, John McDonnell, and a representative of Neurodivergent Labour.

The aim of those organising the rally is “to ensure that those in power are fighting with their conscience as they settle the fate of a young, autistic black man deemed to be a criminal by a racist and ableist justice system”.

Martin spoke at another protest in Birmingham last Saturday (5 June), while a parallel online protest had campaigners tweeting #TimeIsRunningOut.

A Home Office Spokesperson said: “We only ever return those who we and, where applicable, the courts are satisfied do not need our protection and have no legal basis to remain in the UK.

“It would be inappropriate to comment further while legal proceedings are ongoing.”

**10 June 2021**

**Employers often failed to protect disabled workers during pandemic, says TUC**

Employers have frequently failed to take action to protect disabled workers who were at particular risk from coronavirus during the pandemic, according to the “frightening” results of a new survey carried out on behalf of the TUC.

Of those disabled workers who discussed the extra risks they faced with their employer – including many who were supposed to be shielding from COVID-19 – one in four said their boss had taken only some of the action possible.

And seven per cent of those disabled workers who discussed their health and safety concerns said their employers had taken no action at all.

The survey of more than 2,000 disabled workers – carried out by YouGov for the TUC – also found that more than one in five of those who had been advised to shield continued to work outside their home during the pandemic at least some of the time.

All workers who were advised to shield and could not work from home should have been furloughed to protect their health, says [a report based on the survey](https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-06/Outline%20Report%20-%20Covid-19%20and%20Disabled%20Workers.pdf) (PDF).

It adds: “They should not have had to choose between their livelihoods or their health.”

The TUC report describes how disabled workers raised concerns with their unions about the actions of their employers during the pandemic.

Some employers pressured workers who had been advised to shield to return to work outside of their homes.

Others placed disabled workers on furlough instead of making the reasonable adjustments that would have enabled them to work from home.

The survey also found that nearly one in three disabled workers (30 per cent) said they had been subjected to unfair treatment since the start of the pandemic.

One in eight said they had been bullied or harassed at work; seven per cent were questioned about their commitment to their job; and four per cent said they were given harder or less popular tasks compared to colleagues in similar positions.

The survey also showed that many disabled workers continued to struggle to secure the reasonable adjustments they needed during the pandemic.

Of those who had a need for reasonable adjustments, only 56 per cent of those who asked for reasonable adjustments said they were implemented in full by their employer before the pandemic.

About the same proportion – 55 per cent – said they had asked for additional or different reasonable adjustments during the pandemic which had been fully implemented.

Ann Galpin, co-chair of the TUC’s disabled workers’ committee, and chair of the National Union of Journalists’ disabled members’ council, said the polling “exposes what is already well known to disabled workers: many employers de-prioritise us and see our requests for reasonable adjustments as an inconvenience”.

She said that reasonable adjustments were a “vital tool to ensure disabled workers’ full and safe participation at work.

“That some employers managed to treat their disabled workers pretty well during the pandemic shows that it is possible – and that it makes economic sense too.”

She added: “The findings mirror what we are hearing in our trade union health and safety briefings too.

“Employers’ failures to review or implement reasonable adjustments, together with lack of insight into how to support disabled workers or address the impact of Long Covid, are recurring issues.”

Other issues have included rising workloads and the failure of employers to recognise their duty of care to their staff, she said.

Galpin said the TUC was calling on the Equality and Human Rights Commission to update its employment code of practice and carry out targeted enforcement action around reasonable adjustments.

Dave Allan, the disabled members’ representative on the TUC’s general council, and Galpin’s co-chair on the disabled workers’ committee, said the report’s findings were “frightening”.

He said: “The pandemic has brought to the foreground many of the issues facing disabled workers and disabled people.

“We have seen disabled workers step up and support our employers in less then ideal circumstances.

“We have continued to work from home, something we had been told for years was not possible, without the reasonable adjustments we needed.

“However, it is now more than a year on since the first lockdown and many disabled workers are still working from home without the adjustments we need.

“We have heard that a year on some disabled workers are still working off of ironing boards, or without specialist software they require.

“This is not acceptable.”

He added: “Workplace protections under the Equality Act have not changed under the pandemic, employers need to meet their legal duties and put in place the adjustments workers need to do their job.

“Our members should not dread going into work because they believe they are being set up to fail.”

**10 June 2021**

**Campaigners call for local authorities to become ‘No Bedtimes Councils’**

A group of self-advocates are calling on local councils across England to change their contracts with support providers so that service-users with learning difficulties have the freedom to stay out as late as they want.

They have written to every director of adult social care in the country to ask them to ensure their council’s contracts with support providers make it clear that they must operate flexible rotas.

This will allow service-users the chance to enjoy the same kind of social life as people who do not rely on council-funded care and support.

The [Stay Up Late campaign](https://stayuplate.org/) delayed writing the letter for a year because of the extra pressure councils have been facing during the pandemic.

The charity says that institutionalised practices and inflexible support leave far too many adults with learning difficulties unable to enjoy the things they want to do, such as enjoying clubs, pubs and music gigs.

Jason O’Neill, one of the self-advocates who has sent the letters, said: “I think we need to help people with a disability or a learning disability to stay up late and go to gigs.

“For example, going to a pub or a music concert to have fun, just like other people do.”

Shannara Woodward, another self-advocate, added: “I want councils around the UK to listen to us and get involved.

“Once a council finds out about it and they start work then it’s like a domino effect.”

They say in the letters: “We know of some great support providers who have flexible rotas meaning that people with learning disabilities can be supported to live the lives they choose – which of course includes the right to Stay Up Late and have a good social life too.

“We know how important this is ourselves and makes us happy in our lives.

“Sadly though we see and hear of lots of examples of where support is inflexible.

“Before lockdown you could go to any club night for people with learning disabilities and watch the dance floor empty at 9pm.”

They and their fellow campaigners want every local authority that commissions social care to become a “No Bedtimes Council”.

The charity previously carried out a survey which found that, at 8.30pm on a typical Friday evening, 69 per cent of people with learning difficulties were either in bed or ready for bed, and only seven per cent were out socialising.

The letters were sent out by self-advocates from across England who act as ambassadors for the charity and campaign for “no bedtimes” and for adults with learning difficulties to live the lifestyle they choose.

They also want members of the public [to contact their own local councillors](https://stayuplate.org/the-stay-up-late-campaign/no-bedtimes-campaign/) to support the campaign.

**10 June 2021**

**News provided by John Pring at** [www.disabilitynewsservice.com](http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com)